

## THURSDAY 25 JUNE 2009

The Speaker, Rt Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea took the Chair at 10.08 am.

Prayers.

### ATTENDANCE

At prayers, all were present with the exception of the Minister for Planning & Aid Coordination, Justice & Legal Affairs, Foreign Affairs & External Trade, Commerce, Industry & Employment, National Unity, Reconciliation & Peace, Women, Youth and Children's Affairs, Environment, Conservation & Meteorology, Communication & Civil Aviation, Lands, Housing and Survey, Agriculture & Livestock Development, Home Affairs and the members for New Georgia/Vona Vona, Central Makira, North West Choiseul, West Are Are, East Makira, North West Guadalcanal and South New Georgia/Rendova.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### **Progress of NPF and HFC combination**

**162. Hon. SOGAVARE** to the Minister for Finance & Treasury: Can the Minister inform Parliament of any further progress made in the policy to combine the Home Finance Corporation and the NPF Housing scheme into one affordable housing scheme”?

**Hon. RINI:** Mr. Speaker, the government has been committed to an ambitious economic reform agenda, and an important part of that agenda is reforming state owned enterprises. We want to ensure that our SOEs deliver essential services to ordinary citizens, and equally important we want our SOEs to achieve their full potentials.

Mr. Speaker, the Home Finance Limited is one of such SOEs and its sale to the Solomon Islands Provident Fund was completed at the end of April 2009. Mr. Speaker, the Home Finance has been sold to NPF and the NPF board now

considers combining the NPF Housing schemes and also the Home Finance loan scheme. The board is now discussing how to put these two entities together.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Supplementary question. These two organizations are addressing a very important policy that deals with government's strategy to address one of the millennium developments goals, which is housing for all.

This question is asked because the NPF is only dealing with members in Honiara and the Home Finance Corporation looks not only at members but also people who are not members and also those outside of Honiara.

When the Minister said that the board is still looking at it, now that the sale is complete what is the timing to look at this scheme, when the scheme will be actually established and is there intention here to actually include people outside of Honiara to also benefit from any schemes that will be established under the joint scheme?

**Hon. Rini:** Mr. Speaker, yes, these are the issues that the Board is looking into in trying to put these two organizations together. The problem here is that whilst the scheme intends to spread out to the provinces, security will also be looked at because funds will be on loaned to whoever is going to borrow funds to build a house. I think the NPF has the experience of financing the rural housing scheme and it burned its fingers on that simply because people did not pay back loans and houses were not on registered land, and because of that the NPF has difficulty getting back the money or even taking people to court to take back the money.

These are the issues that they are still looking into. But for sure they will be looking into extending these facilities to people in the rural areas when land is secured and registered and people who are going to borrow the money are able to repay the funds. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have any further supplementary questions, but we just encourage government to continue to develop this policy so that when it is implemented no one burns its fingers again from it.

### **Banking services through agency set ups**

**169. Hon. SOGAVARE** to the Minister for Finance & Treasury: Concerning banking services rendered by the Commercial Banks through their agency set ups in the rural areas not accessible by road from Honiara, can the Minister inform Parliament as follows:-

- (a) Range of services rendered; and
- (b) Cost per transaction of services rendered.

**Hon. Rini:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Leader of Opposition Member for East Choiseul for that, his very, very important question.

The answer to (a) is, the agency set ups on commercial banks in rural areas varies in terms of services rendered. If we take ANZ, as an example, customers still get the desired information from their agencies or branches including loan assessments, forms and funding, doing interest bearing term deposits, credit card applications, fund withdrawals whether it be through machines, funds transfer point of sale or the teller counters. These are now done in agencies and branches excluding Honiara.

The cost per transaction, in answer to part (b) of the question, the cost of providing financial services to rural areas not accessible by road is very high. Banks can only recover these costs through transaction fees or account keeping fees. The cost per transaction of services rendered is the same for all commercial banks regardless of whether it is from the agencies or branches. For example, all ATM transactions from any of the banks, the cost per transactions is \$1.00 and this is for both the ANZ bank and Westpac Bank.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister has only given one example, and that is ATM and the ATM is probably only available here in Honiara and the place is accessible to Honiara by roads, and that is \$1.00. What about the other services? What this question is really asking for are the services rendered in the rural areas, so that we can look at the kind of costs incurred by people when using the services of the banks.

The Minister has said it is very high, but can he say, for example, maybe withdrawal from a bank in the rural area. What is the administrative cost involved a customer needs to pay when using that service in the rural area?

**Hon. Rini:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have the figure at the moment on the administrative cost per transaction but it varies from province to province, and as I have said it is quite high. I do not have the actual cost but we can give the Honorable Leader of Opposition the actual costs when I contact my Ministry if they can analyze the costs, and that is an average cost. But as I have said they are quite high and they differ from province to province. Thank you.

**Mr. Oti:** Can the Minister let Parliament know from information sourced from the commercial banks, what are the prerequisites or what are the conditions that

must prevail within the setting where the bank will either move from being an agent to a branch, upgraded to a branch or to open a branch in the rural areas? What are the requirements that must exist in these places?

**Hon. Rini:** Mr. Speaker, the first criteria is economic activities developed within an area. That would be the first priority the banks will look into. They must make sure in setting up of the branches or even the agencies, the agencies are adequate enough to mobilize funds within that area.

Secondly, if they want to set up a branch they have to look into the economic activities happening within an area and make sure those economic activities can support the branch.

Setting up a branch is very expensive and the issue the banks will be looking into is viability of setting up a branch there. The viability must be supported by the economic activities developed in an area. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Speaker, just for interest sake. Would the cost be different if it is a branch set up or an agency set up? Would the cost be different?

**Hon Rini:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, the cost will be different and is a very big difference. If an agency is set up the banks will only be using existing facilities to whoever is going to set up the agency. But if a branch is established it would involve capital costs. It would mean building of a branch if there are no facilities available or it might be renting of a very expensive building. Equipments will also be needed in setting up of a branch. Equipments like computers and things like that so that they can have easy access to the main office.

Setting up a branch is much, much expensive than setting up of an agency. Thank you.

**Mr WAIPORA:** Mr. Speaker, supplementary question. Today, it is very difficult in terms of expenses or costs in the setting up of agencies and branches in the provinces. Are there any alternatives the government is looking at?

I am asking this question because accessing banking services is a problem that is affecting teachers very much. There is much absenteeism in the provinces, not only this time but for a long time now.

If say today a teacher goes to Kirakira, for example, it is very likely the teacher is going to be in Kirakira for two weeks just to access banking services there in Kirakira. Is there any other alternative since we find banking services very costly in our rural areas? I am raising this concern because it is causing a great problem especially to our teachers and nurses who are posted out in the provinces because it takes them about two weeks to go to the agencies and to go

back to their schools. I am giving an example of this problem in my own island of Makira because absenteeism of teachers is very much high because teachers are going to Kirakira for their salaries. Thank you.

**Hon. Rini:** Mr Speaker, that is a very genuine concern and also a fact. As I have said commercial banks are not charitable organizations but they are set up to make money and if they see no activity in a particular place to support the setting up of the agency or the branch then they would not establish in that area.

The government is now working with the Central Bank to see if the Central Bank can also assist to subsidize the setting up of branches or agencies in various provinces. I think we have been doing this before when the National Bank of Solomon Islands did set up a lot of branches and a lot of agencies throughout the provinces. They even used boats to go from one island to island or from village to village providing service. This service came to a stop when the Bank of Hawaii came in and took over the shares of the Commonwealth Bank and they saw that it is not viable and so they stopped that service.

But as I have said the government will be looking seriously into this. I have started consultations with the Central Bank to see if the Central Bank can assist the commercial banks in setting up agencies or branches in the provinces. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, just a supplementary question. We appreciate the concern of the banks and the commercial activities in the rural areas.

The NBSI has been the only bank that has agencies and branches throughout the country and it pulled out almost 10 years ago. I do not know whether analysis is continuing to address the concern that banks have, whether we still continue to assess the viability of banks established in the rural areas. And you can only get it through establishing the level of local GDPs. For us in East Choiseul, 8 years ago almost \$6million was moving around our area and I think by now the local GDP should be about \$10million. I do not know whether this assessment is continuing, and if it is not so, will the government get its influence and get the banks to start to make some serious analysis of the local GDPs.

There is more reason to do that. More funds are flowing into the rural area, even through government sources. About \$2million is going to each of the constituencies, and rural funding projects go direct to the rural areas. In terms of the continual assessment of the local level GDPs, is that continuing, if not what is the government doing to urge banks to continue to make these assessments?

**Hon. Rini:** Mr Speaker, in my discussions with the Central Bank that is also what we discussed. If there is any shortfall in the viability the Central Bank can assist. I think the Central Bank has been doing this in the past during the time of the NBSI.

The point raised by the Leader of Opposition is very, very important, which we will certainly take note of. In our next discussions we will discuss this with interested parties, which are the government, the Central Bank and the Commercial Banks.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr. Speaker, supplementary question. The banking service we have heard about a lot that is going up to the CDC and all those other areas, does this service still continues and if it still continues is it viable or not viable?

**Hon. Rini:** Mr Speaker, I have answered that question in my earlier answer but for the sake of the Member, yes, the service still continues and is doing very well. People up there are having easy access to banking services. People can deposit their money straightaway in the villages instead of coming down to Honiara or they withdraw money in the villages instead of coming to Honiara. The service still works very well. Thank you.

**Mr Oti:** Mr. Speaker, supplementary question. Perhaps the Minister or the government for that matter could give some assurance to Parliament and to the people of the country, particularly those who are not in the banking service not by choice but by virtue of the policies of the banks, the requirements that banks have, the government's somewhat lack of support or interest if not it maybe not timely yet for the people.

I alluded to in one of my interventions yesterday regarding a lot of programs that are coming up, both foreign aid funded and local or domestic on programs for the rural area. I would like to draw the attention of the House and the Minister in this regard to this rural development program, a multi-million dollar program of the ADB, the World Bank, AUSAID and the rest. Its next component will be access to capital by entrepreneurs, and that is first if you are located in the provinces. Secondly, if you are in Honiara or in the urban centres but the activity you want to engage in will have impact in the rural setting, which means that with this kind of policy only the entrepreneurs in Honiara will access the banks because they are here and those in the provinces will not. But it is a policy of one arm of the government pushing this way whilst the other one is not supporting it.

I want some assurances that in this kind of situation we have to come up with alternatives or practical ways of ensuring these programs are delivered at

that level, especially when these are multi-million dollar programs that did not reach our people in the rural setting because of the absence of the banking infrastructure in those places. It raises a lot of questions and interests but it did not reach the rural settings. Some assurance that the government and perhaps through the Minister of Finance, and as you have said Minister that you have had dialogue with the Commercial Banks and the Central bank so that this is complementary to other programs that the government came up with.

Maybe an assurance, and I trust what the Minister said and his dialogue now with the Commercial Banks through the Central Bank, we can have this sort of difficult situation made easier for our people. Thank you.

**Hon. Rini:** Mr Speaker, that is a very valid and very important comment. As I have said that is what we are doing at the moment. The Central Bank with the Government are looking into spreading excess funds in the rural areas. The second phase of the rural development project is exactly what we are discussing. In our discussions they are now looking into the various options and how the second phase should be implemented. But I can assure the honorable Member that this will cover all provinces and that is the intention of the program. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, before I thank the Minister, we would appreciate receiving the statistics he has mentioned on the range of services and the costs per transaction; the average of the actuals from the banks. With that I thank the Minister for answering the question.

### **New bridges and roads**

**172. Mr. OTI:** to the Minister for Infrastructure Development: Which locations in the country is the government planning to build new roads and bridges to stimulate economic development?

**Hon. SOFU:** Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the Member of Parliament for Temotu Nende for this very important question, which even the public too would like to know.

Mr. Speaker, these answers are given to the question.

- (1) The southern east of Guadalcanal providing link from Honiara extending to the east road which goes through the Koimate/Poisughu and Marau roads.

- (2) The west coast of Rendova, which links coastal villages to the constructed wharf at Ughele.
- (3) The southern part of Vangunu linking the wharf located on the eastern and northern side of the island.
- (4) The road linking Munda to Seghe, which is currently in the Ministry's work plan for surveying.
- (5) The road linking Buala to Haevo/Kaevanga and Allardyce. This road is important to boost agriculture and commercial activities there.
- (6) The road linking existing Kolombangara to Ghoe to mainland Taro.
- (7) The network which links the east and west coast of Makira where surveys were already conducted;
- (8) The road which links Wairaha, Waisisi, Maniaha and Masupa in the Are Are region.
- (9) The Vanikoro coastal road which links the coastal communities with the wharf and airstrip; and
- (10) The transular road from Numbu to Kuma in the Weather Coast and then Gesa/Koidali at East Central Guadalcanal. The eastern coast of Malaita which links the inland area areas from Atori to Atoifi wharf. In South Vella La Vella Constituency, the road linking the wharf to the school and clinic in that constituency in the Western Province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the questioner, Members of Parliament and even the public that those are some of the roads which are in the plan and have already been surveyed some are in the plan but not surveyed yet. But some are still coming. I want to comfort every Member of Parliament not to worry because your roads are still coming. The responsible officer is not available as is still on leave and he is yet to come back. But may be this is for information in the pigeonholes or through questions that will sometimes come.

Mr. Speaker, for the information of this Parliament there are some roads that have been surveyed a long time ago and they are still there. Therefore, the Ministry through the Policy and Planning Division are working hand in hand with the Ministry of Development Planning in trying to put something together so they revisit some of the roads that have been surveyed a long time but are still there yet.

Mr. Speaker, I have answered a question yesterday from the same questioner. I think it is important for roads to be constructed where economic activities are happening.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that submission coming from our provinces in consultation with National Members of Parliament is very important so that when road infrastructures and wharf infrastructures are put in



certain locations we must utilize them and use them otherwise at the end of the day a lot of resources were allocated there but are of no use.

That is the Ministry's stand or the government's stand on our infrastructures. Thank you.

**Mr. Oti:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for the response. This is a supplementary question just for the records so that I do not have to come back tomorrow to ask you the same question. This is for the records. Can the Minister assure the House that also in the pipeline would be the north east coast of Santa Cruz road that is linking Luesalo to Kala bay where a marine infrastructure wharf has been completed, the rural training centre, one secondary school, three clinics, five primary schools, one secondary school? This is about 25 kilometers of road.

Can the Minister assure the Honorable Member for Temotu Nende, the people of Temotu Nende Constituency, the Temotu Provincial Government and the Parliament of Solomon Islands that this one is in the pipeline taking into regard the social economic infrastructures that are already in the village? Thank you.

**Hon. Sofu:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Honorable Member for Temotu Nende for this very important question and concern for infrastructure activity in his constituency. I want to inform the concerned Member and even Parliament and those he mentioned, like in my first answer I stated that it is still coming, we are waiting for officers to do the groundwork. I mean when they complete their reports and they bring the report to us then we would know what to do. But I have been to Temotu and I can say that they need a road because I have seen the place he talked about and it really needs a road.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot confirm anything at this time or we even cannot assure Parliament because we must be telling the truth, and so it depends very much on the program timing money and other things involved.

Sir, I want to inform the honorable Member, my good colleague for Temotu Nende that I think only time will tell. Thank you.

**Mr. Taneko:** Mr. Speaker, I stand up because I did not hear Shortlands, which is a very economical place.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform Parliament that Bikoi 2 is fully loaded with copra expected to arrive here in Honiara this afternoon. I have mentioned this on several occasions, and I want my good Minister to assure Mono and Maleai where otherwise we have the vessel to bridge the islands to take their commodities. Maleai is like Yandina itself where not one road was ever

constructed by the Western Provincial Government, which is a bit frustrating for the last 10 years. But I can assure this House that Maleai is very economical, but the wharf is not in good state, a road is needed very much.

Sir, I want my good Minister to assure us with these two things that we need a bridge and road in Mono and a wharf at Maleai as well as a main road around the island. Thank you.

**Hon. Sofu:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the MP for the very important supplementary question asked by the Honorable Member of Parliament for Shortlands. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in my answer to the question regarding the question asking rehabilitation program, I made mention yesterday that Maleai and Mono rehabilitation is also included. But it is the new road that I want to know the government's plans for new roads in our country.

I would like to inform the Member concern that yesterday I answered his question that Mono is under rehabilitation. Thank you.

**Mr. Oti:** Mr. Speaker, supplementary question. In some of the new undertakings read by the Minister, where there is a possibility for the communities particularly with the experience they have with the Solomon Islands Roads Improvement Project or (SIRIP) in labor based construction.

Should some communities decide to go ahead now that they are in the plan, what sort of support can the Ministry or government give to communities like this because they cannot wait because of the long list the Minister has read out it will take a long time for it to happen. What sort of support can the Minister assure such interest that might want to go ahead with their road?

**Hon. Sofu:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that when roads are constructed in those places, the policy of the present government is encouraging rural participation. By that time it reaches the place, when the Ministry sees it fit then it will involve the participation of engineers and the planning unit of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development.

**Mr. Zama:** Mr. Speaker, firstly I would like to thank the Minister for assuring Parliament, and especially the MP for South New Georgia/Rendova/Tetepare for that commitment, which is very good news for my people and constituency, especially people who are living in the western part of Rendova.

This Parliament has recently passed a national transport plan and a national transport fund for the Ministry to use in funding some of these new roads and bridges. What I want to say is that the list is a very long one, I think it is up to 20 in terms of priority or maybe just a listing, but where will our friends

come in to help us? The Solomon Islands Government is going to fund some of these and where are the donors going to fit into these programs?

**Hon. Sofu:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question being looked into by the Ministry at the moment with other stakeholders to know which comes under which and which projects will be funded under the Ministry of Infrastructure Development. That is how I can answer that question because this question is already in an order paper by the same questioner the next time.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm to us that all of these roads have been fully surveyed, the planned roads? If that is so, how far have we gone on to actually formalizing the costing? If we had done that how much will it cost the country to build all the roads the Minister has listed to us?

**Hon. Sofu:** I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition for this very important supplementary question. Costing to some of the roads have already been done and some are still in the plan to be done. Its total costing will be known when it is completed. I will bring to Parliament the total costing of the roads when it is completed, which is quite a big task as it needs wider consultation with stakeholders who are involved. Thank you.

**Mr. Waipora:** Supplementary question. I have been listening to the list and I am just wondering which projects belong to the provincial governments and which ones belong to the national government. In terms of roads, for example, the road in Santa Cruz, I put it that way because we built it, right from the station up to the head road is the national government's responsibility. When you talk about the piece of road that goes to Noipe and Nemba then that is the provincial government's road.

I want the Hon. Minister to divide them or you are making the national government to shoulder everything. Thank you.

**Hon. Sofu:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the MP for West Makira for asking this very important supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that if you look at the provincial budget by past governments and even the present government, it is divided very clearly which ones are feeder roads for the provinces and which ones are roads the national government is responsible for.

This arrangement works when there are not many roads, but today is quite different. It is different in a sense that there are many roads. You are talking about nine provinces and the tenth is the Honiara City Council.

When budgetary allocations are made and given to the provinces, the expectation of the government is that each province is responsible for its own feeder roads. However, the allocations are inadequate and not able to meet the repair of roads. I believe all of you will agree with me on this. This is talking about maintenance of 5km of feeder roads and therefore \$400,000 or half a million dollars allocated for road maintenance is just not enough. There are times that the national government has to step in and so it falls back to daddy, which is the national government. The Ministry of Infrastructure Development has therefore seen it fit to step in.

You can see the City Council roads, which I am going to cite as one of the classic examples, it is the Ministry of Infrastructure Development that went in because the City Council cannot do it under its recurrent budget. That project is still on but when the need arises the national government steps in through the Ministry of Infrastructure Development.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, luckily feeder roads and other roads in the provinces is taken up by programs like the SIRIP, the CSP and so forth. We want to thank aid donors for its great assistance in providing infrastructure to our areas. That is all I can answer my colleague Member for West Makira. Thank you.

**Mr. Oti:** Mr. Speaker, I have no further supplementary question and so I would like to thank the Minister for his comprehensive answers and assurances to the House.

### **Tobacco Product Control Bill**

**178. Mr. OTI** to the Minister for Health: Mr. Speaker there is a small amendment I think to the question, and I will read it the way it should be read. What further progress has been made in getting the Tobacco Product Control Bill to Parliament?

**Hon. SOALAOI:** Mr. Speaker I rise to respond to Question No. 178 from the Member for Temotu Nende.

Mr. Speaker, progress on the Tobacco Product Control Bill, as of yesterday we submitted an electronic copy of the 2007 draft bill to the Attorney General's Office and therefore if things go as planned, it should go to Cabinet again next week.

**Mr. Oti:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for his short response. This is a well overdue bill, which has been subjected to many lobbying all over the place who

have interest in this excluding smokers like some of us. But definitely for the commercial interest that has been pushing for this. Can the Minister assure the House again that since the present draft was in the making since 2007 and now almost two years that we will be able to get this on the floor of Parliament before this Parliament dissolves?

**Mr Speaker:** That concludes question time and could we proceed on to other business.

**Hon. Soalaoi:** Mr. Speaker, I though he was asking me to reassure the house that the Bill will come before Parliament before this House ends.

Mr. Speaker, I must also thank the Member for his commitment to be the person to stop smoking to comply with the bill when it comes into force.

Mr. Speaker, I must say here that this Bill truly has been around for some time. Those of us who were in the previous government would remember that I took it as far as the Cabinet. But because of what happened I failed to bring the Bill to Parliament. Now that I am back in the Ministry I must assure you that I am still committed to see it come to the floor of Parliament.

Like I have said, consultations have started when I came into office, and as of yesterday we furnished the Attorney General's Chamber with the necessary documents. We are looking forward to next week which should be the next stage of working on the bill. But I am still determined to see this Bill come to Parliament, and it should be passed before this House dissolves. Like I have said if we are successful next week, I am hopeful that we can have it during this meeting if not then the November meeting. But we want to pass it before we go for the elections. I hope this country is waiting for this Bill.

There have been a lot of speculations on why this bill never comes to the floor of Parliament. I am aware of that and so I must assure the House that the Bill will come to Parliament before we go for the elections next year. Thank you.

**Mr. Oti:** Mr. Speaker, I have no further supplementary question neither comment on the Minister's assurance. I thank the Minister again for his response. Thank you.

## **MOTIONS**

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, yesterday, the proceedings of the Committee of the Whole on the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the April 2006 Riots was adjourned to this day. Accordingly, the House shall now resolve into a Committee of the Whole House".

## Committee of the Whole House

**Mr Chairman:** Honorable Members, today we continue with our consideration of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2006, Honiara Civil Unrest. Please be mindful that while discussions maybe extended over all the details contained the Paper, I will not put any question or allow any amendment in relation to this report. We shall continue from where we left yesterday at page 18, Annex I.

### Page 18

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Speaker, just to open up the discussions. On the bottom of page 18, Parliament and the Constitutional Review Commission should ensure that person with bad characters by their very presence in Parliament do not demean the office of leadership.

Mr. Chairman, this is the thinking of the Commission and the way it recommended it, in fact encourages all Members of Parliament to reflect on this conclusion. It begs the question that we are taking things a bit too far. There are, of course, institutions that are there to address these issues if Members of Parliament put their foot in the wrong place. There are laws and institutions that govern that and if they are seen to be that then they are taken up.

But to come up with any, I do not know any law that tries to address the issue of persons with good character or bad character is quite a very difficult task and I do not know how we will really address issues like that.

The government's response is that the governance reform in respect to the political party integrity bill will address that, and I know that paper went through some lengthy discussions in this Parliament. I think it addresses areas like that. But for us to try and address moral, legislate moral standards and such, Mr. Chairman, I think we are thinking things a bit too far. I do not know the views of other Members of Parliament on this, but we are confronted with some serious recommendations that are made to us by the Commission of Inquiry report. Thank you.

**Hon. Wale:** Mr. Chairman, I suppose by way of a response to the comment by the Honorable Leader of Opposition, the various works that are happening here in Parliament in so far as the proposed new Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament certainly within the House and hopefully also covering conduct outside of the House. That coupled with the work and when the bill and the empowering constitutional changes come to the Bills and

Legislation Committee, those different bits of work will go somewhere towards mitigating against the objectives as I supposed that led to this comment.

The comment by the Leader of Opposition is quite right in that we cannot in anyway preclude people that the Commission may think or people may think are not fit to be in Parliament in terms of their character or bad character and so forth. This is a very difficult thing and although it is a right consideration, we generally want to have good people in Parliament. But in saying that we pass judgments that are probably uncalled for and perhaps unnecessary. The work that is happening with the Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct will go a long way, I think in helping us to ensure that conduct of Members of Parliament are ethical and above board, and in any case where they are not above board or ethical there will be processes in place that such behavior and conduct could be kept in check.

With the proposed reforms on the political party integrity framework, that will place a lot more authority with political parties that will have their own party rules perhaps conduct of their Members of Parliament and that too will help with discipline by political parties themselves. But in broad terms I agree that such opinionated statements are a little difficult and so let us leave it open like that. Thank you.

**Mr. Oti:** Mr. Chairman, I also would like to add my voice to the comment and point raised by the Leader of Opposition and the Minister for Education.

For what the recommendations are worth in the Commission of Inquiry report, I think this is a bit going too far. Qualification to be a Member of Parliament for that matter is already inside the Constitution, section 48. Disqualification is already in the Constitution - section 49. We can be rest assured that for what it is worth we can leave the matter at rest. Thank you.

**Mr. Waipora:** Mr. Chairman, I just want to comment on page 18. If you see the first column on top on "all Members of Parliament to reflect on these conclusions, and then it comes down to column three and then the other ones. This is to do with all Members of Parliament. I want the Prime Minister to elaborate further on this, but before I could ask the honorable Prime Minister to explain the government's comment on this one, if it is all Members of Parliament how could all Members of Parliament discuss this issue when all those benches over there are always empty. I think somehow and somewhere it has to be improved so that we are together. I appreciate that all of you know it already and that it is only us on the Opposition side who do not know, and so now is our opportunity to know. But at least all of us must be present so that we listen. It is a give and take thing. But that is beside the point. All I want is for the honorable

Prime Minister to explain the government's response on all Members of Parliament to reflect on these conclusions. Thank you.

**Hon. Sikua:** Mr. Chairman, the comment that comes under the category of the government's policy response is the comment of the Commission of Inquiry itself and not the government.

Mr. Chairman, I do take it that this is an opportunity the government has given to all Members of Parliament to reflect on the conclusions, findings and recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. Whether my members on this side of the House are present or not is beside the point because everything we say in this House will be inside Hansard and the government will have the opportunity to reflect on every comment made by the other side of the House to review what we have in the matrix we have discussed at a later time, with the view to improve it and input any other things the government needs to consider. Therefore, whatever the Member for West Makira might want to say he can go ahead and say them despite of empty seats on this side. Because we are going to collect all the comments we are making in this report and review the matrix we are discussing and improve on them with the view to implementing the other suggestions that colleagues in the House are making. So this is an opportunity for all of us.

The Cabinet has already gone through this and we have already made comments before it comes to Parliament. Like I said yesterday we will take note of the comments that are coming from the other side of the house unless we have any substantive things to say, the opportunity is given to Parliament to say whatever it wants to say. We will take note of everything that is said in here. If any of my Ministers wants to make any comments they can do so. If not we will just sit down taking note of any comments with the view to go back and improve on whatever is there.

#### Page 19

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Chairman, in fact we are taking this word 'all' very seriously and that is why we commented like that. We expect all of us to sit down here and listen because not everyone will read the Hansard reports too.

Anyway page 19, in fact it goes on in this page to keep telling us, keeps Parliament to reflect on this. I think one serious recommendation here, which I think Members of Parliament need to seriously reflect on is this recommendations by the Commission where it was claimed 'that to the extent the events of the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2006 are matters for the Leadership Code commission then the Commission should address those issues. That means we



need to submit these things to the Leadership Code Commission to seriously look at, and by looking, if it amounts to misconduct in office then it will take up appropriate actions under the Leadership Code Commission Act.

This is a tough decision that all of us need to take and I think the question that is appropriately paused here is, what does it take for us to go all the way? Or is there a better way of addressing this, since we are talking about reconciliation, talking about understanding, acceptance, understanding each other, put the past behind, go forward. Can we maybe blend these kinds of ideas into how we address this issue; bring this kind of thinking inside. Can we leave out the Leadership Code Commission from this and approach it in another way? But as I said it is a very tough decision to take and it posed a question as is said what does it take for us to go all the way? If we believe in transparency, if we believe in standing up and answering what we are doing then let us go all the way, bring it to the Leadership Code Commission let them assess it, if the conduct of Members of Parliament amounts to breaking of some rules then it is taken up. Are we willing to face that, is a question that each one of us needs to reflect on Mr. Chairman? I just want to pose that because from this page onwards further down, it poses the serious question, it wants all Members of Parliament to seriously reflect on the recommendations that the Commission submits.

I just want to comment like that and may be get other colleague Members of Parliament to also share their views on this issue as to how we collectively address this issue because it directly affects all of us.

**Mr Taneko:** On the government's policy response on pages 18 and 19 under the political party integrity bill, Mr. Chairman, that is the message to all leaders of the nation of Solomon Islands. The Political Party Bill is a policy document but the human mind has to be changed as well as the character, the attitude and the behavior. That is the only way the political party bill integrity will work. You can have all the best policies but if the human being does not change, the political party bill will not work. My only plea is that we are going to have the code of conduct in the House of Parliament, which we urgently need to come so that it can strengthen our leadership conduct, our code of ethics in relationship with our behavior in the House of Parliament as leaders. That is the message.

I appreciate very much the recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry. But again it is up to all of us in this House to seriously take on board what that message is asking us leaders. The message is asking us and we are beacons and models of leadership in this nation. May be the code of conduct for Members of Parliament is very much needed now. It must urgently come in so that it can well relate with the policy that is coming up, the political party

integrity bill, for all of us and future leaders coming in. In that way, Mr. Speaker, there will be discipline, tough discipline that will make more leaders to be humble taking up leadership positions for the future. That is how I see it through this small comment I am sharing with you.

**Hon. Sikua:** Mr. Chairman, the events of 18<sup>th</sup> April 2006, when reflected on them even at this particular point in time more than three years after it is still fresh in our minds. It is something we cannot forget, for those of us who have gone through this particular experience.

Mr. Chairman, the experiences we have gone through have affected individuals and groups of us who are here at that time. The way I look at it in reflection is that it is still affecting the views and behaviors of a lot of us personally and probably as a group. The group has now changed as it were; it changed soon after April 2006 and it changed again in December of 2007. So the groupings and the movements have been different.

I feel that some of these personal hurts and feelings can be taken in our own traditional custom ways to settle them as leaders and as Members of Parliament. When I heard the Member for Central Guadalcanal making his statement, it affected me because when he said those of you from the other group went out, boarded a bus, ran away from us leaving us behind to be thrown at with stones. That kind of statement, as I reflected upon is very true because I seem to have abandoned my colleagues. When I heard the Member for Central Honiara, in the general debate said what he said that he spent time in jail and spent time in the high court and he is someone who has gone through a lot of suffering, I feel for him, as I reflected on what happened. Every time when we talk about this motion, I can see my Minister of Finance not around. I think he still has a lot of personal hurt in talking about the incident too and so he usually absented himself as we go through this report at its various stages.

I also heard the Member for Vona Vona alluding to something when he contributed in the general debate. We need to check the Hansard for the accuracy of this. But I think he was suggesting something to do with ourselves reconciling in our own custom way after our term in Parliament ends to show we have put this thing behind us and we wanted to move forward, as the honorable Leader of Opposition mentioned that we identify the groups, the individuals that were affected and hurt and we reconcile with each other in our own traditional custom way here on the grounds of Parliament when we finish Parliament. I will put this forward as a suggestion to the House and if it is something that gets the support of honorable colleagues in the House Mr. Chairman, it is something in reflection I see as important for us to do in moving forward. I think the whole idea of bringing this to Parliament is to see a way forward for all of us, and not

only for ourselves but our country as a whole. But the particular part of reconciliation, I feel is a good thing for us to do to reconcile with each other as individuals and as groups when we finish Parliament. Thank you.

**Hon. Wale:** Mr. Chairman, I rise to support the initiative by the Prime Minister and the Honorable Leader of Opposition as a very good thing. I am someone who just came into Parliament for only well over one year and I have seen a lot of the conduct and our behavior here is affected by the events of the April 2006. Therefore it is good that reconciliation must happen and for reconciliation to be meaningful, because we also know that in some reconciliation, crocodile tears were shed but there is no meaningful healing because issues of truth did not come out and also acceptance of responsibility for roles that certain individuals playing. I think it is important that we seek reconciliation that is meaningful based on the truth of our various roles in what has happened.

My final comment is we want to be forward looking. If there is to be any reconciliation we are to take between us Members of Parliament it is only so that we can put the past behind us as useful as that is, it is only half the equation. The other half is to look forward and to renounce violence and to say we will not condone nor participate in violence even when such violence on whatever scale presents us with opportunities perhaps to benefit politically.

I think this is a very important consideration. My sense of April 2006 was that however shuttle it was there was a perception that out of the violence some benefited politically and therefore to that extent although they did not participate nor encourage, but condone the fact that it happen. It is in the spirit of moving forward that I think this is really important for us as leaders of this nation and in the spirit of reconciliation that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will continue to work on, it is important that we show leadership in this matter as well, and so by way of support to the idea proposed by the Honorable Leader of Opposition as outlined and supported as well by the Prime Minister. Thank you.

**Mr. Boseto:** I also see this as touching the focus because as individuals we have fragmented hopes. The difference in us perhaps based on our faith, based on our ideologies, based on the way we want to see this nation reach its goal, that goal might not be the same and therefore you have to touch diversity; diversity of hopes, diversity philosophies, diversity of doctrine and theologies.

Only when we come to reconciliation would we be able to see the real essence of national unity. National unity cannot be regulated in an institutional human structure. That is what the tower of Babel had wanted to do; one language, one mega culture, one structure, but God said no, I dismantled you into different languages. Pentecost is the time when God brought them to be one

in fellowship but recognizing the diversities of languages but to understand the deep meaning of God's languages and the language of love. Therefore, we have touched what I have foreseen in the government statement in the earlier days when we started, and so I support this move.

We cannot practice reconciliation unless we reconcile ourselves, unless we are forgiven, forgiven and forgiving, reconcile and reconciling, it must start here. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Taneko:** I raised this same concern earlier during our discussion of this very important document. I raised this concern question ourselves in here. I just want to thank the Prime Minister for his very positive comment in Parliament this morning. Three quarters of the page have gone, and maybe as the Minister for Education and Opposition Leader have said, it is done in the spirit of the future of our nation with very open heart giving a position move at the conclusion of this inquiry to give our nation peace for the new door of our nation.

I want to give my thanks because that was the spirit I was thinking about. Forget about the past and let us look forward for the betterment of the nation of Solomon Islands having peace and reconciliation. The book of Proverbs 22:4 says, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life". Unless we humble ourselves, unless we fear the Lord, all the blessings of the land of Solomon Islands will come to us and other nations will respect us and our good citizens, our people and our children will enjoy the environment of the nation.

I am glad for the very positive move by our leader, the Prime Minister for having a spirit for the new nation. Nobody is going to tell us what to do to our nation but we leaders in here. The message is coming out loud and clear after three quarters of the report has been covered.

I just want to express my support, because I expressed very strongly why we bring in here when we have the government policy responses are there, the comments are there, some of them maybe negative and some are positive, but that is the message to us as leaders in having the ownership of this nation for the benefit of our children.

**Hon. Tora:** I too would like to talk in support of the wisdom by the honorable Prime Minister for coming up with the positive idea for the House to be reconciled.

Despite of the many diverse cultures we have, I look at all of us here in this honorable house as brothers in the Lord. It is very important that we, the leaders need to have this reconciliation program before we go out to our people. All of us here also need to reconcile with our communities, with our

constituencies. This program will go on and on because the Lord has shown us the right way of doing it.

As Minister responsible for police, keeping law and order in this country, I want to ensure that this program eventuates for all of us because some of us in here need to be reconciled with each other, not only those from the government side with those from the opposition. No, even within the government circle too, we need to reconcile with each other before we move forward. Reconciliation needs to begin with ourselves as leaders before we go out. Otherwise we go and preach about reconciliation to others but we ourselves are not reconciled. I support the initiative for Parliament to be reconciled as leaders of this nation. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Since it requires us to continue to reflect on these conclusions, I guess we should start reflecting on the other section, and that is the destruction of property, which flows on to pages 20 and 21.

At a later stage and in fact reading through the recommendations and what the government proposed as its response in line with what the Commission tried to recommend, the first time I find it very hard to reconcile the recommendations, and I think as we flow on it is becoming clearer and we can see why the Commission has recommended it that way.

In terms of the destruction of property there are people who are still hurt outside because their properties have been destroyed. I think within the spirit of what we are saying in here that we need to reconcile with each other in here, there is also the need, I guess appreciate the feelings of people who also lost their properties during that time. The Commission has taken a very cautious part in here in not trying to put finger on who is responsible for this. Several times I tried debating with them in my own mind, and I think eventually we can see the wisdom in how the Commission is trying to put this issue.

It is very easy for anyone of us to jump into the conclusion. For example, the thinking that always jumps into the minds of Solomon Islanders that RAMSI has taken over the security of the country in 2003 and so they are in full control when the riot happened in 2006. The full control as it were of the security needs of this country is fully in their hands. It is very easy to jump to the conclusion using the reason of negligence to say they are negligent and so they must take up the responsibility.

The Commission did not take that path. And reading through the Commission's report you begin to appreciate the reason why because if the Commission had taken that path, what about the groups and individuals also mentioned in the report. The report mentions NGOs, groups at the IBS, the involvement of Members of Parliament in China Town. That is what the report

mentions. It is very easy to jump and say they are the ones causing it, and so they have to pay. We can see the wisdom of the Commission in the report here for not wanting to pin down anyone as being responsible and so they must take up the liability. It did not do that. In fact, it took a very, very neutral path by saying this is a problem that should be jointly addressed by every people in this country. I think the path it recommends is the most appropriate path for us to seriously look at in coming up with some kind of a legal framework to look at the issue of liability.

I think in the absence of that and I think the Attorney General also said to us that a court case has been taken up on this and the decision has been made well after the Commission came up with its report. It is very interesting that the decision of the court and the way the Commission approaches it is agreeing to it.

But more specifically on this area, I think one very important lesson that came out very forcefully that we learn from at that time about Solomon Islands policing in terms of police/people relationship in Solomon Islands is that Solomon Islanders respect their own kind, their wantoks. I think that comes out very forcefully.

People revolt, openly revolt when they see different people standing up to face them. This has been the culture of policing in Solomon Islands. Therefore, although we do not have it, in fact rarely did our police officers here addressing riot by using lethal weapons. Nothing at all! They have been able to address it through the fact that wantoks go and face their wantok and telling the police not to do such a thing. So that has been the culture of policing.

I think the question that comes, okay GCCG has been in the past, would it have made any difference at that time, and we are just reflecting, if our local police officers and its command system have taken the front line in addressing the problem in 2006? Would it have made a difference? I believe it would have but that is past, and now we are looking forward and we are going forward.

As some former police officers who are now in the House are saying, our police and all of us know that our Police Force is probably one of the best in the region when it comes to addressing things like that and addressing the security need of our country. It was just affected by the events in 2000 that undermines the quality, the effectiveness of the Force that has been graded as one of the best in the region. Therefore, all it needs to do here is to back to the way it used to operate in the past and it will be effective.

I just want to reflect on that, and I think all it needs now is that with our friends who are still here to continue to improve the Force so that at some point in time, when they left, just in terms of logistics and equipments and so on. But when it comes to handling of our own people it is a culturalist matter and it goes with wantok. You put the wantoks in front and they will go and make those

people remain quiet. That has been proven time and time again when riots and things like that happen in this country. Thank you.

**Mr Taneko:** Page 22, Mr Chairman if you look at the recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry and the government's policy response and the analysis column says "The Commission knows that such ideas are not new. In the United Kingdom, policing is entrusted to Police Authorities at county or city level. Police Authorities are public bodies with a broad board membership and powers for administering policing".

Sir, this is partnership in enforcing peace within a town or a city. I do not know but maybe in the future, the question we might be asking is disturbance from unemployment. May be it would be a good idea, and I am just saying this so that it is recorded in Hansard because whatever we say in here are going to be taken onboard.

Community policing is for the police to be in partnership and ownership with youths in the city. I think the government of the day should allocate something for school dropouts at the age of 18 or whatever to be engaged in cleaning our city. The city can be zoned into four areas and all the responsibilities come under the authority of the Ministry of Police. It is better to allocate a mini budget towards this cause engaging them in cleaning up our city. Indirectly, we are giving them something to do rather than leaving them free to roam around the city. That is how I look at it. May be we can talk about community policing but may be more of that. Establish a partnership police, as the Leader of Opposition has said, police is people relationship, it is friendship, partnership, participating so that peace reigns within our city.

I am just suggesting things that can be taken up or an idea that can strengthen community policing allocating something for the youths and zoning the city and looking after their own zones under the leadership of police inspector, directors may be we can control our city by having those youths doing something in our city. Thank you.

**Hon. Tora:** Mr Chairman, I wholeheartedly support the comment made by the Honorable Leader of the Opposition. I think we have learned from what we have experienced in April 2006. As I have said in one of my responses to my colleague Member for West Honiara's question, culture is something very important in handling cases. During that time I was outside there. When stones came flying this direction I was at the front door talking with the Commander of the Honiara City twice at that time advising him to put aside the PPF or the military component of RAMSI and instead our local police officers to handle the situation because I know there is the connection there in our culture. The people

would be hesitant in stoning their own people. How can you shoot another person's wantok whilst you are standing there? That is our culture. If it happens like what the Leader of Opposition has said the angry mob would have disbursed on the spot.

Anyway, Mr Chairman, I take note of the comments raised by my colleague Member for Shortlands that we must recognize and take interest in our youths by involving them in community work so that they forget about the plans they may have against the police or against us as leaders. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, I thank the comment by the Minister of Police, and may be we will need him to also brief Parliament on an area here. The Commission has recommended, which I think is a very appropriate recommendation. There needs to be formal mechanism for different parts of civil society to be able to assist in policing, not just at the community level but also with policy in broad administration business, women, youth, churches and community leaders and all stakeholders in policing along with others. This is quite a very important statement. As a due response, Mr Chairman, this is now being integrated into the work plan of the Ministry of National Security, Police and Correctional Services. Maybe just for the interest of the House, would the Minister be able to brief us as to what the Ministry is really in taking up this one. It is to question, what specific action is the government taking in the proposed integrated program before we are rudely interrupted by that phone?

**Hon. Tora:** I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition for that very important comment and points he has raised. Right now I am not in a position to inform the House but through these recommendations from the Commission, the Police and the Correctional Services will be looking at this in my Ministry.

**Mr Agovaka:** Mr Chairman, leading onto the question by the Leader of Opposition, I would like to ask the Minister, and I am not questioning this report, but I would like to get an answer from the Minister of Police about our riot capability. Should there be a riot now how capable and how ready are we in curbing a riot if it so happens now. What is your plan in training our police officers to be ready should there be a riot? If you can explain to the House the chain of command from the PPF down to SIPS and the RAMSI army contingent. What is the line of command should a riot happen?

**Hon. Tora:** Mr Chairman, in answer to the question by the honorable Member for Central Guadalcanal, I want to assure the honorable House that there are two response units in the RSIPF and the Correctional Services, and from time to time



these two units usually come together to carry out the capability exercise in preparation to respond to any social unrest or rioting in the city.

In regards to the second part of the question, the two components of the PPF and the RSIPF are working in partnership to ensure they are ready to respond to any social unrest in the city of Honiara. Until our friends, the PPF or RAMSI go back we can then look at how they used to handle riots in the past. For instance, one of the biggest riots in the country was way back in the 1970's and I was in the Police Mobile Unit at that time. It only took one unit to disperse a crowd of about 2000 people at that time right in front of the Honiara Police Station. The mob was just about to go across to the Government House when they were stopped there by the use of teargas as mentioned by the Minister of Provincial Government. It is very important that if the Response Unit is not rearmed, the use of teargas is paramount to be provided for the Response Unit. Teargas is not for killing of people but it is for dispersing of crowds very easily. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Page 23. I think the last heading there on RAMSI Intervention. My only concern here is how it is going to influence forward looking in here, and that is the observation by the Commission that RAMSI and PPF personnel numbers were short by about 150 members at that time. And as I said my concern here is how that will influence our forward looking.

I do not want it to influence us to think that every time something like that happens we need a foreign force to land here. That seems to be what is coming out. The Commission seems to think that if 150 more of the foreign personnel in addition to the army and military personnel who had been here in Honiara the rioting would not have happened. I do not believe those additional personnel could have helped to sort the situation out. I just want to put that across. Even if the number was 400 foreigners it would still not have contained the riot for the reasons I have told you earlier on.

The issue, I believe, and I thank the Minister of Police for agreeing with this thinking, has to do with the culture of people, police relationship in Solomon Islands. It is to do with people respecting their own kind. I will keep repeating this, and I believe very strongly in that.

I just want to put the view across that we might be in danger of thinking that this might influence our thinking that our capacity to contain anything like that will only depend on foreign forces landing in this country to contain riots. I do not think that is the case. I believe we can do it if we re-strengthen our police force with the right kind of logistics they need they will do it, they can do it.

**Hon. Haomae:** Mr. Chairman, the state of play on that particular day, I think was reflected by the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister of Police in responding to the Member for Central Guadalcanal in dealing with the unlikely situation when a riot breaks out. I think the commission chairman on the first point on page 23, the implicit in there is a preventive strategy, and that is the inclusion of public input into policing nationally, provincially and all that. I think that is a way forward and implicit in that so that we prevent this rioting happening rather than when it happens, of course, then we have to address that when it occurs. But the suggestion implicit in the recommendation is forward looking and also on the side of preventing any riots. I would just like to make that point.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Chairman, page 24. Again my concern is on how those kinds of recommendations or responses like that will influence our minds as to how we move forward.

Probably when the report of the Foreign Relations Committee comes, we will seriously look at this issue. But in the third column the Commission did made some serious observations here. The need to make it plain that there is a clear chain of command between any visiting contingent and the Solomon Islands government and its officers. Those are serious observations. And it went on to say the arrangements covering conflict situations, public order, riot capability, the use of lethal and non lethal force need to be well defined.

What I am interested in is that there seem to be the view of the Commission that the chain of command and communication were not flowing rightly at that time, and so there was confusion as to how things should have happened on that day.

What happened on that day as we all have accepted as it has happened and what we are trying to address here is how to move forward. My view and concern is that as long as we have a parallel force mentality in the Solomon Islands Police Force and the PPF organization, this problem will still continue. And so how are we going to address this? Regardless of what people say about this there is always this mentality in the minds of people, even those within the force have expressed this feeling.

I do not know but in forward looking and RAMSI time and time again have come out very clear that they are not going to be here forever but they are going to leave us one day. I think may be it is not really appropriate to call for that matter now since the group is still here and they still need to finish some very important tasks within the Force. But there is always this feeling. In the interest of getting a Solomon Islands Police Force Commissioner to be able to control and run an effective security service in the country, is it not really

appropriate, even if the group is still here, it has five more years to be here, the Commissioner of Police takes over the joint Solomon Islands Police Force PPF operations in Solomon Islands. I do not think it is an unreasonable suggestion. It is a good experience for a Commissioner of Police in Solomon Islands even if he is a local man or an overseas person. But he takes on a challenging responsibility although we will probably will not face any riot, and we hope we are going to have any riot in the next five years or so, but it is important, and one of the issues the Commission came out very clearly on is that communication was not flowing, there is no clear change of command and so people do not really know what to do and there was total confusion. Because as I said as long as this foreign force mentality is still there, we will still continue to have this problem, even not only to address a riot but to address the simple law and order situation in Solomon Islands.

**Hon. Tora:** Mr. Chairman, the Police Force has a Commissioner of Police assisted by the most senior police officers of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force who normally come together to look at the plans and policies of the government of the day for their operational purposes. I believe that through a collaboration exercise the Police have, whenever our friends go back I believe they can capably handle whatever social unrest in our city or in our country.

As rightly stated by the Honorable Leader of Opposition, they should not only be trained to capably handle riots and problems but they also be capable of handling natural disasters, such as handling rescue operations. The police must be well prepared to handle whatever situations like flooding and changes caused by climate change such as rising sea level. I know that we are now looking at relocating people living in low lying islands. The police must be ready to rescue people who are in such situations. They must be well trained to quickly respond to such situations.

The Government through my Ministry will certainly look into these areas of recommendations and the Government's policy response to the recommendations also the comments made by that side of the House in ensuring our Police Force are effective in their performance. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** This is for the Minister to respond to in regards to intelligence. The government's response is that the review RAMSI should capture these findings and the current work in the police. What do we really meant by that government response?

**Hon. Tora:** Mr. Chairman, in terms of national intelligence in the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, right now I do not know the manpower capability of the

Force now. But I have taken note of the very important point raised by the Leader of the Opposition to ensure there is enough manpower.

For the information of this House, I myself also found out when I visited the two provincial centres of our two big provinces of Malaita and Western in Gizo and Auki that this unit was no longer established there. But I see the importance of having an intelligence unit in the bigger provinces so that they assess the security situation in the provinces for onward submission to the Commissioner of Police and from the Commissioner to the Government. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Chairman, the revelation by the Minister of Police is quite serious when it comes to intelligence. Intelligence is talking about the lifeblood of security operations in the country and the Solomon Islands Government must always be six steps ahead when it comes to issues of security and as far as the work of intelligence is concerned. If what the Minister has been telling us now that this unit has been watered down and there is no one responsible for intelligence work in those two major provinces, and it should not only be those two major provinces but every province in this country then we are confronting a serious situation here. What is the status of intelligence unit in the Police?

**Hon. Tora:** Mr. Chairman, as I have stated in response to the Leader of Opposition's first question, I do not think there is manpower provided for intelligence in the Police. As I have said it is very important that bigger provinces should have this unit established in the provinces. For instance, Mr. Chairman, in the past there were about 13 of us in Honiara doing that work and other provinces also have branches of intelligence in their set ups. Our work is every month the intelligence officers patrol all the islands to gather information. This is very, very important because any government of the day cannot do its work properly if they are not fed with information. Information is important for planning purposes for any operations, for instance the riot that happened in April 2006. I can say here that not enough information was collected at that time to be provided to the Commissioner for onward transmission to the Government.

I would like to make the assurance here that I will ensure this unit is established in the provincial set ups. And it is up to this government to ensure that budgetary provisions for the police are increased to cater for this. Without law and order in this country there would be no investment or development in the country.

**Hon. Sikua:** Point of order. I just want to express the desire of this side of the House in getting through this report to be completed today.

Mr. Chairman, I feel that we have spent enough time on it. As I have stated every government's response are already there on the recommendations and if you expect all my Ministers to explain everything in detail, I think this is going to take us another week the way we are going.

I therefore want to ask the indulgence of the House if we could finish this report at the committee stage today as I want to move on with other government businesses next week. I do not know if this is agreed on but my Ministers will only take note of any comments. I do not want them to answer in great length. We will note any comments that come from other side and the other side is free to do what it wants to do as I am desirous in getting through this report today.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Chairman, I think if what the Prime Minister has stated to us is the approach then you should just circulate the report to us and then ask us to make a written submission to the government. The questions we are raising, in our judgment, the responses to us seem to be inadequate and that is why the questions are raised. When the Prime Minister moved the motion he wants these things to be discussed by Parliament. And I am really disappointed with the excuse by the Prime Minister that Cabinet has already deliberated or commented on the report and so forth. I heard a number of Ministers and those on the government side saying they are not really happy the way this report is handled. If we need to debate that aspect of the way this report is treated, I think the best that the government can do here is to at least allow us to discuss this very abridged version of this report. We are hung between the views of the government making reference to the views expressed by the Commission and then trying to get the response of Parliament and reflect on those issues.

I am disappointed at the level of reflections being made to this report by Members of Parliament. If that is the way the Prime Minister wants this report to be handled and probably he is referring to the way the Leader of Opposition is handling its report now. We are willing to stop right now discussing this report. We can move on and allow Parliament to move the motion that it has considered the report and for us we will just probably make a written response to issues we feel that we need to put our views on them. But we feel this is a matter that is affecting the lives of so many people and are listening to our discussions. It is not something that is only affecting us, and so we took the opportunity to question the report.

I am really disappointed because we wasted one full week on this report debating it. No one is debating this report, it is only this side that has put in substantive views in our debate. We wasted a whole week on this when we

could have gone straight into discussing the substantive matters of the report rather wasting time on other areas we have been concentrating on.

This report, as rightly pointed out is repeated four times. The executive summary is summarizing everything that we are talking about now. It looked at the views of the Commission and it reported on the same thing. When it comes to the recommendations it repeated the same thing, and then it repeated the same thing in the annexes. That is why in the beginning I did raise that we go straight to the annexes because that is where it summarizes everything and we could have gone through it a long time ago. But you wanted us to go the way we are going and that is why we are like this.

Mr. Chairman, I rest my case and I am willing to stop discussing this report. Maybe the Prime Minister because it is only this side that is talking and I am willing to stop talking and also maybe to make a written submission to the government to do justice to our views on this report. With that I rest my case and I will stop discussing this report.

**Mr Chairman:** The agreement from the outset of our meeting on this particular document is that we handle it just like any other document or another paper presented hence decided to go through it page by page and we will continue to do that. In terms of comments it is up to Members making their comments or withholding their comments.

**Mr BOSETO:** Mr Chairman, I have a suggestion to make. It seems we are prolonging this issue. I notice that the government as put its statement at the beginning and also the matrix is under six (6) headings as land, environment collapse, governance, corruptions, social conditions and leadership and the dignity of Parliament.

I am wondering if we want to cut it short maybe the Cabinet should come up with a summary, just to summarize to focus, the wholeness of addressing this and bringing together those six sub headings. That is where it talks about land because that is very good. This is just a suggestion that you may or may not accept it. But I think it would be better to link your statement in relation to the focus of these six sub headings. That is just my thinking. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** As I said, we have already decided according to Standing Orders to treat this document as a paper tabled before Parliament and the decision from the outset was to go through it page by page and we will continue to do so. If Honorable Members want to make comments then it is up to them. Of course, the Honorable Prime Minister is also concerned about the timing factor because there are other government businesses but that does not change the fact that the

Parliament has already decided to treat this paper as any other paper presented before Parliament.

Pages 26 to 53

No comments

**Mr. Chairman:** That concludes the consideration of Paper No. 13 of 2009 at the Committee of the Whole House.

(Parliament resumes)

**Hon. Sikua:** Mr Speaker, I wish to report that the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2006 Honiara Civil Unrest National Parliament Paper No. 13 of 2009 has passed through the Committee of the Whole House.

**Mr Speaker:** Honorable Members, the Honorable Prime Minister has reported according to Standing Order 18(2) that the Committee of the Whole House has considered the report. Standing Order 18(3) allows the House to go a step further and agree in principle to the proposals in that report. There is no requirement for the Prime Minister to move that Motion under Standing Orders although he is at liberty to do so at some time on a later date after notice.

I also wish to remind Members in that regard and because of comments made on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June by the Attorney General on my previous ruling in relation to a motion moved to agree to the proposals according to Standing Order 18(3), should at sometime in the future be moved by the Honorable Prime Minister. Under the Standing Order if Parliament agrees to the proposals contained in this report, this gives the government the Parliament's blessing to go ahead and explore whatever the approach or policy it wishes to develop to address the recommendations in that report. However, this blessing is in no way blanket approval or resolution of the Parliament giving in advance to those actions. Any action the government may wish to take following its exploration of approaches in the riot report would, where necessary, require separate legislative action or budget approval which obviously must be put before Parliament for its consideration and approval. Notwithstanding its general approval given under the provision of Standing Order 18(3) the House reserves its right to consider separately, whenever the need arises and to approve or reject any legislative reform, constitutional amendment or other actions that maybe proposed on this report.

Honorable Members that concludes consideration of that report and we shall now proceed to our next item of business.

## **BILLS**

### Bills – Second Reading

#### The Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2009

**Mr Speaker:** Honorable Members debate on the Traffic Amendment Bill 2009 commences today. As you are aware on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009, the honorable Minister in charge of the Bill delivered his opening speech but adjourned debate to this date. Members may now speak on the general principles of this Bill. In so doing, may I kindly remind Members as usual to comply with rules of debate set out in our Standing Orders. The floor is now open for debate.

**Hon. SOFU:** Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me for briefly contribute to this very important bill.

Mr Speaker, firstly I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Police for bringing this very important amendment to Parliament on behalf of the government.

Mr Speaker, the Traffic Amendment Bill 2009 intends to make improvements on the Traffic Act so that proper administration and better enforcement of our traffic laws are realized. To achieve this, a road transport board has to be established to oversee the administration as well as to formulate policies within the national transport policy.

Mr Speaker, the Bill intends to pool together the available manpower resources in the Ministry of Finance and Treasury and the Ministry of Infrastructure Development that are currently performing the duties of principal licensing officer, licensing officers, inspectors and examiners. All other recording systems will have to come under one roof to enhance effective coordination.

Mr Speaker, obviously the secretariat of the Road Transport Board will increase as implementation progresses and new policies come into force. Sir, the effective use of enforcement officers can only be realized given that they are provided with adequate logistics. In this regard, this government and upcoming governments must be serious in supporting the Ministry responsible for road transport. The maintenance of safety for all traveling public on our roads is crucially important but understandably costly. Appropriate logistics are vitally important for the success of such an Act coming into force.



Mr Speaker, I would like to forewarn this House that my Ministry is given the responsibility to maintain safety on our roads in addition to maritime safety. The establishment of the board of members spreading to almost all stakeholders is in itself a wide coverage where policy decisions can be made comparatively quicker.

Mr Speaker, whilst there be insistence for safety, road users would be demanding better and quality roads. The availability of better and quality roads would definitely reduce operating costs such as fuel and spare parts. If transport owners willingly pay up their fees and dues, it is logical that roads must of good quality too. This is therefore a call on government to provide adequate funding for road maintenance programs.

Sir, it is my belief that all revenues collected by government that relate to road transport would be brought back to the sector. In this way, there will be readily available cash for road maintenance, not only in Honiara but throughout Solomon Islands. The Government is currently collecting revenue on licenses, testing fees, import duty on vehicles and spare parts and import duty on fuel. These are areas the Board may have to consider for submission to government.

Sir, the administration of this anticipated Act will come under my Ministry, and I can see that there will be a lot of improvements on road safety administration, but at the same time more financial support would be essential. It is important to have a computerized registration system as well as adequate logistics. My basic concern is the establishment of a vehicle testing driver, testing facilities where update testing is carried out. Such facility with modern equipments will provide very specific test results, which in this case are final.

Mr Speaker, the Traffic Amendment Bill 2009 is a very good bill, however, it will need a lot of support for its administration. The road transport board will certainly come up with very good policies to make real improvements and there has to be support financially. It is for the safety of our traveling public.

Mr Speaker, thank you once again for the opportunity to contribute to the debate of this important Bill. With these few remarks, I support the Bill. Thank you.

**Hon. SOGAVARE:** Mr Speaker, I am going to talk and then the Minister will round up because we are really concerned about time. I am going to contribute very briefly to this Bill. In fact, this side of the House has no problem supporting this Bill. Its policy objectives and reasons are quite clear in that it wants to up the proposed Road Transport Board to improve the administration of our roads for the safety of people using the road.

The report of the Bills Committee has been circulated, which I am the member of and it raises several issues for the government to look at. In fact, the issue we are

concerned about Chairman is public awareness, campaign for road users on the impact of the new rules that we will establish under this new bill. I want the Minister in his round up speech or may be at the committee of the whole House will tell us of the financial implications of this Bill. And I would like to render my support to the views expressed by the Minister of Infrastructure Development in terms of introducing a user-pay kind of system in financing road improvement in Solomon Islands. If you look at the budget, \$5.5 million has been budgeted as revenue to be collected from motor vehicle licenses and driving licenses. I think inspection fee is \$810,000 and other vehicle related taxes the Minister made reference to. It is very important as we go on to implement the requirement of this particular bill that the board or whoever it is that is responsible in administering this bill is financially sound in administering this bill.

This is a two-way thing. If the government comes up with rules then the government is also required to make sure the roads are in good condition for the people using the road. It is a two way thing. Right now the road related taxes we are collecting at this time go straight to the consolidated fund and is distributed by way of appropriation when the budget is brought to Parliament and very little returns to address directly the repairs and maintenance of roads so that people in paying licenses and vehicle related taxes can clearly see the benefit of paying return to them in the good condition of roads. Right now there is a missing link there because the government is collecting revenue and there is very little going direct to improvement of roads so that people enjoy the use of roads and also see the rationale behind paying the taxes.

The Bill is also trying to establish spot fine. I guess the regulations when put together will list down all the infringements that the Police can arrest drivers right on the spot and ask them to go and pay fine in court. Or they can elect either to go to court or to pay the fine right on the spot. The administration of that is something the government will need to look carefully at. What if everyone commits infringements? Infringements, I do not know but its list is almost endless. It is spitting betel nut from moving vehicles, overloading, dangerous driving, throwing rubbish from moving vehicles, and we can go on and list them, and these are things happening every day in Honiara. Now, as we are talking things are happening. Now those will affect on the spot fine where they can elect to pay or go to court. If everyone elects to go to court we will probably have a good number of people or may be we need to set aside a court just to look at traffic offences. That is an issue the government needs to look at. I think it also brings up the policing issue as well. If we cannot, if now our capacity to even go after people that spit betel nut from moving vehicles, the overloading vehicles, the dangerous driving, the throwing of rubbish from

moving vehicles, if we cannot get those people now, we are saying now that this time those people doing those things will be caught on the spot. If we are not doing it now what guarantee is there that we are going to do it after this bill is passed. This goes back to the point raised by the Minister of Infrastructure that money collected from vehicles licensing should go direct to policing of this bill. It is not difficult for the government to purchase 20 or 30 motorbikes to be put on the road now to chase vehicles. How do you expect the police to chase an overloading vehicle to stop it? Those vehicles will escape if the police are just standing there. And so a motorbike is needed to run after the vehicles. This \$5.5 million is enough to buy a good number of motorbikes and a good number of vehicles for traffic officers to police this law. Because this is putting additional responsibility to the Police to implement and the Police are not going to do it if they do not have logistic support. This Bill and its passage, its intentions are very good as it calls on us to improve may be the capacity of the Police to implement it.

The other issue that also came up is right now the highway authority is the Permanent Secretary of the Minister of Infrastructure. With the new approach now we have actually established a board to take over the responsibility of the Permanent Secretary as the highway authority to become the national highway authority that can also delegate its responsibility to a local authority. We really need to be clear here. The bill as presented is not very clear as to what part or what aspects will be looked after by the local authority and what aspects of the requirements will be looked after by the national highway authority. When Minister comes up with regulations to implement this bill, we can address those areas.

Sir, we really have nothing substantive to say about this bill except to render our support on it. Just like any other bills and that come through this House, the real issue is not passing bills. We can pass 13 or 14 bills one time in Parliament but the real issue is implementing the bills. If we just pass bills and we do not implement them then we are wasting Parliament's time in getting these bills through.

In saying that, as I have said we have no problem supporting this bill, and so I support it and I resume my seat.

**Hon. Sikua:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the debate on the "Traffic Amendment Bill 2009" be adjourned until the next government sitting day.

Mr. Speaker, I move this motion to allow the Bills and Legislation Committee to hold its hearing on the Counter Terrorism Bill 2009 at 2pm this afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Any one else wants to comment on the motion of adjournment by the Prime Minister?

**Hon. Sogavare:** Mr. Speaker, the government is so concern about time. This House is empty as always. I do not see any reason why the Minister should now stand around our debate on this bill. We have no problem supporting it. The Cabinet has discussed this bill and so who are you going to convince. I probably oppose that motion and ask the Minister of Police to wind up this Bill for the benefit of the House. If you want to talk to convince us you are not going to convince us because we are already convinced that the Bill must go through. And the rule of debate is if it goes through this side of the House then there is no need to debate it. You are concern about time, we are concern about your time and so let us do that to be fair. Thank you.

**Hon. Tozaka:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the floor to contribute to the debate on the traffic amendment bill.

**Mr Speaker:** The discussion is on the adjournment of the Traffic Amendment Bill.

**Hon Fono:** Mr. Speaker, speaking on the motion of adjournment moved by the Prime Minister, whilst the government is conscious about time, it is important that Parliament is allowed time next week to debate the Traffic Amendment Bill. We do not need to convince the other side of the House to support this. But as you know, Mr. Speaker, during the debate there are certain points that needs to be raised in order to educate our people on what the Bill is all about. Opportunity should be given to Members of Parliament next week to further debate the Bill in order to educate our people on what this Bill is trying to achieve, what are the requirements in terms of the usage of traffic, pedestrians and all that. Time should be given to debate the Bill. If the others side of the house does not wish to debate then government Ministers and back benchers should be encouraged to debate. Thank you and I support the motion to adjourn the debate of this very important Bill to next week.

**Mr. Tosika:** Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the Bills and Legislation Committee and so I do not see any reason why Parliament should adjourn so that it gives us time to sit and consider other bills coming to our notice to be presented to Parliament. Thank you.

**Mr. Agovaka:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is good to have a motion of adjournment so that there is time to speak on this important traffic to ensure our views are also taken into consideration also considering the importance of the bill. Thank you.

**Hon. Sogavare:** Just before the Prime Minister winds up, I respect the views tendered on the floor Parliament by people contributing to the debate, and so is the report on the Commission of Inquiry. Our people really wanted to know what has happened. The way we approached it, and I am just raising this comment in the light of how we are approaching the Commission of Inquiry report, we want to quickly get over with it. This side of the house has something to say about the Commission of Inquiry report. We seem to forget very easily. We approach government businesses in different ways. I do not see any reason why we should not meet until midnight. Some of us are working until 3.00 o'clock every day, to tell you straight, preparing for meeting of Parliament whilst some people are enjoying life.

I am just raising this but we respect your decision. This is democracy and we respect the vote of the majority. And I want to see many more people to debate this bill to hear what they are going to say when contributing to this Bill. I just want to raise that point of order and the Prime Minister can round it up.

**Hon. Sikua:** Mr. Speaker, every government business is very, very important and treated with equal importance. The issues raised by the Hon. Leader of Opposition are taken on board. Since I have not moved a motion the way we usually did it and so it is still open, I am talking about the consideration of that report, for us to go ahead and look at it when I moved the motion next time.

I moved this particular motion to adjourn debate on the Traffic Amendment Bill just considering the interest of all sides and, of course, Parliament as well because the Bills and Legislation Committee needs to meet, the Cabinet too will meet at 2 o'clock, and that is in our interest as well. And as other Members of Parliament have expressed they also would like to talk but because of the limited time left, we need to have some lunch before we go for 2 o'clock engagements that I decided it is good to adjourn debate on this traffic amendment bill 2009 until the next government sitting day.

Mr. Speaker, with these few comments I beg to move.

**Mr Speaker:** The question before Parliament now is that debate on the Traffic Amendment Bill before the House be now adjourned.

*The motion agreed to*

**Hon Sikua:** Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn.

*The House adjourned at 12.55 pm*