

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

DAILY HANSARD

THIRD MEETING – EIGHTH SESSION

THURSDAY 22ND FEBRUARY 2007

The Speaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter Kenilorea took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Department of Home Affairs, National Reconciliation and Peace, Foreign Affairs, Communication, Aviation & Meteorology, Provincial Government & Constituency Development and the Members for West Guadalcanal, Central Kwara'ae, Rennell and Bellona, Small Malaita, Temotu Pele, West Are Are, South Vella La Vella, North New Georgia, West Kwaio and Ulawa/Ugi.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question No. 47 deferred

NUMBER OF INMATES

44. Mr ZAMA to the Minister for Police and National Security: Can the Minister inform Parliament in relation to the following matters:

- (a) the total number of inmates at Rove/Tetere/Gizo/Auki and any other provincial prisons?
- (b) How many of these inmates are remanded without being charged?
- (c) How many prisoners have been pardoned?

Hon TOSIKA: Mr Speaker, I thank the Member for Rendova/Tetepare for asking this question. The total number of inmates convicted was 148 and remandees 92, a total of 240.

Rove Prison 112 convicts, remandees 81, a total of 193

Auki Prison 2 convicts, remandees 6, a total of 8

Gizo Prison 8 convicts, remandees 4, a total of 12

Kira Kira 8 convicts, no remandees, a total of 8

Lata 2 convicts, remandees 1, a total of 3

Tetere 16 convicts, no remandees 0, a total of 16

Mr Zama: On the question of remandees, what is the time duration for these people to be held in custody?

Hon Tosika: My Ministry is not responsible for remandees but it is the judicial sector that is responsible for the remandees.

Mr Dausabea: In the past I understand that the time period a remandee can be held is usually 14 days or at least 28 days. But now the remand period can never be ascertained as you can never tell when you are going to be released. When were these laws changed from the British colonial laws that we are protected and served under?

Mr Speaker: That is a legal technical question but would the Minister have information on that?

Hon Tosika: Mr Speaker, I understand the remand period is 14 days. In relation to anyone who is a murder suspect he/she has to be held in custody until the case is heard and judgment made on the case. But in respect to minor cases I thought it is the responsibility of the Judiciary to see if they can be bailed on conditions. Sometimes the points raised in court were not accepted by the Prosecution and therefore a person has to stay in prison until the case is heard. From experience, any charges made against anyone has to be cleared by the Court before they can be released on bail depending on how the person presents the case to Court and if the Court allows him to be on bail it is the prerogative of the Court to say whether he can be released on bail or remain in custody.

Mr Zama: Besides the socio-economic cost to society, I would want to know if the Minister can inform Parliament of the cost of keeping 240 people in prison - the daily cost, may be or the monthly cost or the cost that is currently incurred on the government?

Hon Tosika: I take note of the question and I will further seek information on this before I can inform Parliament.

Mr Hilly: I did not seem to hear the answer to part (c) of the question, perhaps I was not listening.

Hon Tosika: Concerning prisoners who have been pardoned, the Minister of Police does not have the power to pardon any prisoner. Under the Constitution it is the Prerogative of Mercy that has the power to pardon lifetime prisoners. I only have power to license a prisoner.

Mr Dausabea: On that basis, has the Government appointed a committee for the Prerogative of Mercy.

Mr Speaker: Do you have information on that honorable Minister?

Hon Tosika: I spoke with the Chairman of the Leadership Code Commission who is the Chairperson of the Prerogative of Mercy Committee and they are now in the process of getting this committee in place.

Sir Kemakeza: With this high number of remandees in custody, 81, is it because of the unavailability of the courts, magistrates or judges or is it because of the seriousness of the nature of the case or is it because a person is held in custody before evidence is sought to prosecute him/her? What are the contributing factors of this high number of remandees on these three options?

Hon Tosika: All of those factors contribute to the high number of remandees in the Prison Service. There are a lot of cases and sometimes there are not enough judges or the Court may need further information and evidence. In most cases, as I have said earlier, those who were accused of murder have to stay in custody until their cases are heard by the courts.

Mr Tozaka: In relation to strengthening and capacity building of the judicial system, I would have thought that these sorts of problems are supposed to have been addressed by the capacity and strengthening building of both the judicial and legal system and the Police as well. Are there any dialogues with this program to address the long remanded inmates?

Hon Tosika: As far as the prison is concern, a number of prisons are going to be built in the country. That is the capacity building in the Prison Service. One would be built in Auki, Gizo, Kira Kira and Lata. In respect to the judicial sector, I am not fully aware of capacity

building in that Ministry, and so may be the Minister of Justice would have the answer to your question.

Mr Dausabea: You mentioned that the process of appointing the Prerogative of Mercy Committee is in progress. Why was the Committee dismantled three years ago? It is a requirement under the Constitution that that committee should be in place.

Hon Tosika: As I have said, the Prerogative of Mercy Committee is established under the Constitution. I do not have power to appoint anyone to the committee, and therefore I only had consultations with the Chairman so that they can have the committee in place.

As I mentioned in last year's Parliament meeting, I have released two people from Prison, one a life timer whose health is deteriorating and the other one is from France who usually went on hunger strike and so forth. Under the powers vested on me in releasing lifetime prisoners, I had to consult the Chief Justice or the Judge. In this case I discussed the issue with the Chief Justice and he consented to the release of the lifetime prisoner and the man from France.

Sir Kemakeza: According to the Minister's statement there are prisoners in provinces like Auki, Lata, Gizo, etc. Were the prison stations in these provinces already rehabilitated? In the past these stations were non operational. Were these prison cells rehabilitated before the inmates were put inside?

Hon Tosika: As I have mentioned, under the Law and Justice Program and RAMSI, the Tetere, Gizo, Auki, Lata and Kira Kira stations are projects that RAMSI will undertake this year. The project in Auki has already started after I did the groundbreaking in Auki and so there is a temporary prison in place for 100 beds. In Gizo, as soon as this

meeting is finished we will go down to Gizo and do the same. Therefore, the program for rehabilitation of these prisons to meet international standard is already on the ground and it is a commitment by RAMSI that these projects will be ongoing projects for the Prison Service.

Mr Zama: I would want to borrow the word of my good friend the Leader of Opposition, 'rumored'.

Mr Speaker, it has been said that a prerequisite or conditionality of the present contractor currently managing the prison is that the number of prisoners must not go below 200. Is that one of the reasons or conditions why we are still holding on to these 92 people as remandees so that the number does not go below the required number of 200 inmates?

Mr Speaker: You may be asking the opinion of the honorable Minister. But he seems to think he has an answer.

Hon Tosika: I am not aware of any such policy that the number of prisoners must be above 200 prisoners all the time. I deny this as one of the factors that contribute to keeping the remandees in custody. It is more or less dealing with individual cases depending on their presentation in Court and where the Court sees it fit for them to stay in custody as remandees or not. It is the prerogative of the Court to decide on those issues and there is no policy in place that there has to be 200 inmates in prison at all times. I do not think that is one of the reasons why the number of remandees is quite high in the prison.

Mr Zama: Mr Speaker, before I thank the Minister for Police and National Security I want to say that no one sponsored me to raise this question on the floor of Parliament. I did this as a leader of this country because we are dealing with human beings here. The people held in Rove are human beings. I am simply raising this question for the information of Parliament and the public.

Secondly, my raising of this question would make some of my friends on the Opposition bench think that I am anti-RAMSI.

It is far from that. I am not anti-RAMSI Mr Speaker but I am raising this question simply to clear uncertainties and doubts that lies in the minds of our people in this country. I think we talked so much about transparency, accountability, and responsibility by leaders and institutions.

One of the fundamental reasons why I raised this question is because good governance must be practiced in our institutions throughout this country whether it be the NGOs, the Government, the Parliament or institutions that uphold law and order in this country, and it is for the sake of the integrity of these institutions that I am raising this question. The bottom line as to why I raised this question is because we are dealing with human beings who have human rights, and Solomon Islands is a signatory to the treaty of this important convention. With that I would like to thank the Minister for National Security and Police for answering my questions.

INMATES HELD IN CONTRAVENTION TO THE CONSTITUTION

45. **Mr ZAMA** to the Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs: Are a number of inmates held in contravention to Section 10(2)(a) of the Constitution of Solomon Islands and if so why? Section 10(2) (a) reads, “Every person who is charged with a criminal offence (a) shall be presumed to be innocent until he is proved or has pleaded guilty”. I am asking the Minister on the basis of that point.

Hon MANETOALI: Mr Speaker, before I could answer that question, I would like to raise a point of order under Order 22 subsection (h) of the Standing Orders, in that it seeks to obtain an expression of opinion.

Mr Speaker this question could only result in the Minister expressing an opinion as there was no decision of any Court being made as to whether a number of inmates have been held in contravention to Section 10(2)(a) of the Constitution of Solomon Islands. If so then it should be ruled out of order. But I will leave it to you to decide on.

Mr Speaker: What the Honorable Minister is saying is that there are no inmates held in

contravention of section 10(2)(a). Is that what you are saying?

Hon Manetoali: That is correct.

Mr Speaker: Well, I suppose that is the answer to the Member’s question.

Mr Zama: Mr Speaker, I suppose that is the answer but that is his opinion. What I want this floor to be absolutely certain about is the period of detention of those that have not been charged. That is the issue here. It is not his opinion.

In my view, and seriously looking at the Constitution, I am raising this fundamental point from the human rights point of view because we are dealing with human beings. That is the issue I am trying to raise here. That is why I do not quite agree with the Minister’s opinion. I do not agree with that. He should have done a proper research with his department and with the officials before coming to the floor of Parliament instead of just raising an unnecessary opinion. I want a more solid and concrete response to my question because this question has been on the notice paper for a long time and he should have ample time to give me a very good answer.

Mr Speaker: I think the main question has been answered in the sense that there is no such contravention but may be the Minister would like to make further comment.

Hon Manetoali: Mr Speaker, I would like to reply to that Member’s comments. The Member has correctly cited Section 10(2)(a) of the Constitution and that provision provides the constitutional right of every person in Solomon Islands to the presumption of innocence. That is everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law or he has pleaded guilty. This provision, which is section 10(2) (a) is jealously guided by the courts. That presumption is applied in all criminal cases before the Courts of Solomon Islands. This means every person charged with a criminal offence is presumed innocent until he himself pleads guilty, in which case he may be found guilty or if he pleads not guilty, prosecution

must produce admissible evidence to prove he is guilty, if not, then the person charged must be acquitted. As a matter of law, the presumption of innocence is not breached if bail is being refused.

As far as I am aware no inmates are held in contravention of section 10(2)(a) of the Constitution.

Mr Zama: As has been alluded to by my learned colleague of East Honiara, 14 days is the maximum period for someone to be held in custody as a remandee and then you can apply for extension. Now 14 days or 28 days as against one year, two years or three years detention in custody is not justification. Mr Speaker under this Constitution I absolutely and honestly cannot find any justification for holding a remandee whether being charged for that length of time and period and especially when we are dealing with human beings.

Is the Minister aware of the likely costs, the liability to the government of this kind of treatment and the length of holding these people in custody at the cost of the government is. What is likely cost or liability to government?

Hon Manetoali: Mr Speaker, the Member for Rendova/Tetepare has again come up with the same views. In relation to holding people in detention, there are certain factors to which the Courts have to consider, and these are whether the person will turn up at court, whether the person may commit further offences, whether the person is in need of protection, whether the community is in need of protection, whether the person either directly or indirectly will interfere with or intimidate witnesses.

Sir, those are the factors that the Courts have to look at and as I have stated in my debate last week there will be a bail bill that would come before this Parliament, and I would ask the Member for Rendova/Tetepare to support that bail bill to help humans in this country.

Mr BOYERS: Mr Speaker, the issue on remand is the question at hand and on a personal position this is somewhat questionable because one of my constituents has been in remand for quite sometime and then his case was squashed. What would be the position if a case was

squashed after being on remand for say one to two years? Can anyone claim compensation for being held at such lengthy period where there is loss of income, loss of family?

Hon Manetoali: Mr Speaker, that would be a matter for the person affected.

Mr Dausabea: Mr Speaker, I think I can put some light on this question because I am someone who has experienced this so that we do not throw excuses around. Mr Speaker, how many types of bail procedures are there?

I am asking this question because, as outlined in my contribution to the sine die motion yesterday, and the Minister in his answer gave factors the court has to consider in granting bail to anyone, and one of the factors is that the person might escape. I do not escape because I am a Member of Parliament and I live in East Honiara. I applied for bail more than 10 times but has been refused bail after the PI has been completed, a long form. There are convicts that came into the Rove Prison who are convicted for three or five months, and even three years but were given bail. These are the kind of inconsistencies I am talking about. There are some poor Solomon Islanders who are yet to be tried are still held there for three years. Something must be wrong. I want the Minister to answer my question or otherwise bring that bail bill quickly to Parliament so that we can pass it in this Chamber.

Hon Manetoali: Any bail application is about freedom from detention, and freedom from detention is a constitutional right that being a freedom of personal liberty. It is a right that can however be denied by the courts in certain circumstances.

The circumstances in which a person may be denied his or her freedom of liberty are set out in Section 51 of the National Constitution. The right to freedom is therefore not an absolute right. It is a right that is qualified by exceptions. Any application for bail is a relief that is available only to accused persons who have been charged with serious offences and are remanded in custody awaiting trial.

The granting or otherwise of that relief depends upon the discretion of the court based upon the evidence before it. Section 5(3) of the Constitution requires a person arrested and not released to be brought without undue delay before a court and be tried within a reasonable time, if not then he shall be released either unconditionally or conditionally. What is a reasonable time has no formula. It cannot be assessed in the abstract. Each case must be determined on its merits. However, the three criteria must be satisfied for prolong detention to be lawful. These are

- (a) there must be a reasonable suspicion that a person on remand committed the offence
- b) there must be grounds for refusal of bail, and
- c) the authorities must be acting with special diligence.

Mr Speaker, those are some factors on bail. As my colleague, the Honorable Member for East Honiara requested the bail bill again he would be another colleague Member of Parliament who will support the bail bill when it comes to Parliament.

Mr Hilly: How many of the inmates who were kept in custody have been proven guilty of the offences they have committed? I am asking this question because whilst section 10(2)(a) has been referred to in our constitution, subsection (b) is also relevant in this discussion.

How many of those people who were kept in custody know the charges they were being kept in custody for? Because subsection 10(2)(b) of the Constitution also counts that as soon as possible they must be informed of the kind of wrong they have done.

Hon Manetoali: Mr Speaker, that is the requirement under Section 10 of the Constitution. When a person is charged they will explain to him/her what kind of charge is laid against him/her. That is a normal procedure done by the Police and also when the accuse ends up in court. The accused must know why he/her is being held.

Again section 10(2)(a) is about presumption of innocence where everybody is not guilty until someone proves in court that he/she is guilty. The evidence produced must prove that someone is guilty but normally they are innocent unless there is evidence otherwise.

Mr NE'E: Mr Speaker, supplementary comment and question. I have been in Rove for the last eight months and I have seen other inmates who have never been disclosed what their charges are.

I want the Minister to tell the House what is the possible time for an inmate on remand in prison to be made know the charges laid against him because some of the inmates do not have access to legal counsel because they were prevented from having access to legal counsel.

Hon Manetoali: Mr Speaker, both Members of East & Central Honiara are now bombarding me with questions. The right to see a solicitor is the right of the accused. They should be afforded the right to see a solicitor.

Mr GUKUNA: Can the Minister clarify whether when a man is on remand nevertheless how long one is on remand whether he is still within the presumption of innocence until proven otherwise?

Hon Manetoali: Mr Speaker, everyone is innocent until proven guilty by the courts.

Mr Zama: Can the Minister confirm whether many of the inmates have not been charged and it is now that the Police are running around looking for evidences to charge them?

Hon Manetoali: Mr Speaker, to run around collecting evidence and all that is the work of the Police, and so I am not able to answer that question.

Mr Zama: Mr Speaker, before I thank my hardworking Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs, I would like to say as I said in my earlier comments that human beings are human beings and they are different from animals. The

rights of human beings are very clearly stated in the Constitution of Solomon Islands.

Minister, I call upon you to call on your officials to put their acts together and to pull up their socks. From what you have just mentioned 92 remandees without being charged is a very big number and I think we have seriously contravened the provisions of the Constitution. This is what I want to raise.

There is very likely that there is going to be costs to the government, costs for holding these people in custody, some of whom may have been remanded for more than what is required by law if they are found guilty, and so there is likely costs to the state. This is what I call liability.

On that note I would like to thank RAMSI and every Police Officer in Solomon Islands for doing a good work in upholding law and order in our society and in Solomon Islands but we all have responsibilities. As leaders we are responsible to our people who elected us to Parliament and we are accountable to them too. The institutions that are doing this work are also accountable to the society. Therefore, I would like to call on everybody in the law enforcement institutions that they have a responsibility and duty of care to the state and the society.

Without that, I would like to thank the hard working Minister for Legal Affairs and Justice for his answers, but I think he needs to do a bit of more research for more of his answers instead of giving us opinion, I want hard facts.

Mr Speaker: I have been approached by the Honorable Member for North Malaita yesterday to ask a question without notice. He has assured me that the Minister responsible has also been consulted for proper answers. So I have given him the permission to ask the question without notice.

GOVERNMENT'S POSITION – RIPEL LAND

Mr KWANAIRARA: Mr Speaker, I rise to ask a question without notice under section 21(4) under the Standing Orders. The question is directed to the Minister for Commerce, Employment and Trade. There is one very

important project, and I would like the Minister to inform this House and the country of the Government's position on RIPEL Land on Lungga and what is the government's position of RIPEL on Russell Islands.

Hon AGOVAKA: Mr Speaker, I would like to inform the floor of Parliament that there is a report that reached our office and we follow due process, I need to table that report to Cabinet seeking Cabinet approval for that report.

The report is very important not only for the National Government but also the Central Province Government, the landowners and the investor. So it will be un-procedural for me or irresponsible for me to announce the findings of the report without tabling it to Cabinet for its endorsement.

With regards to the Tenaru/Lunga Land, the Government's policy on land as the Minister of Lands has mentioned here in Parliament, is the return of all alienated land to original landowners for development. We are working on the Lunga/Tenaru Land with the Landowners Association and to date I have placed a caveat on all perpetual titles at the Tenaru/Lunga Land.

We are just waiting for the Member of North Guadalcanal, the Member for North-East Guadalcanal and myself to talk with landowners and then we will now communicate our memorandum of understanding to the Minister of Lands so that the lands can be handed over to the landowners. That is the position on the Lunga/Tenaru Land.

The position of the Russells land, I believe there are four groups, again the Member for Savo/Russells will be working on that so that they come up with the true landowners so that the perpetual titles can be given back to the landowners. That is the position at the moment.

Mr Kwanairara: On RIPEL Russell Islands – my understanding is that a company is supposed to be operating there. What is the status of that company?

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, the status of the Company is that it still holds the foreign investment license and at the moment there is an impasse between the company employees and the landowners and I think the matter has gone

to the Trade Disputes Panel and I think also pending High Court decision.

Mr Kwanairara: Mr Speaker, what is the Government doing about government properties in Yandina at the moment?

Hon. Agovaka: Mr Speaker the properties at Yandina in the Russell Islands belong to the investor and there are share holders in that investment. The shareholders are the National Government through ICSI, and the Landowners and Employee's Association. Those are the shareholders in the RIPEL/Russell Islands Plantation. They are the owners of the assets. At the moment we are working with the Ministry of Police to try and secure the assets, and that is an ongoing matter.

Mr Kwanairara: Mr Speaker, we could therefore say that this project is being abandoned, nobody is interested in it and nobody is looking into it. Is that the situation at the moment?

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, the project is not abandoned. I have been mandated by the Prime Minister to look into the matter and submit a Cabinet paper, but as I said earlier there is a report that has been brought to our attention which we table that report in Cabinet with also a submission on how we can go forward with this national project.

Mr Kwanairara: Mr Speaker, in regards to the Lunga land, landowners who claimed ownership of the lands also included in the committee?

Hon Agovaka: Mr Speaker, as I have said earlier, there are two submissions to the government on claims of ownership to the association, however, the Government is hesitant and cautious in giving the land to anyone of the two groups without really the landowners coming together and confirming who are the real landowners. We are working closely with these two associations to identify the true landowners so that the government can transfer the undeveloped land and the perpetual title to the landowners.

Mr Kwanairara: Mr Speaker, before I thank the Minister for his answers, I would like to say that Russell Islands is a multi-million dollar investment. This country Solomon Islands is looking for money and there are lots of resources just on standby there in the Russell Islands. I think the project should be re-into because I am sure there is potential for development on Russell Islands. It will be a very big resource for this country to develop. On Lunga land, I do not know whether the Minister is aware, but people are selling land and settling there and so I think it is important not to forget the original landowners who have rights as well as to discuss the land matters.

BILLS

Bills – Second Reading

The Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007

The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2007

Hon DARCY: Mr Speaker, I rise to beg that the Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007 be now put to the second reading.

Sir, this Bill seeks to amend section 13 of the Statistics Act. This is necessary to further enhance the administration of the Statistics Act in order to improve the process of data collection, compilation, analysis, and dissemination of statistical information in Solomon Islands.

This amendment will protect both those who collect data and those who provide data and information. This includes the Government Statistician, authorized officers, individuals and households, companies and business enterprises. This amendment in section 13 is made in reference to section 5 on collection of statistical information and section 9 on access to public and other records of the Statistics Act as well as the first schedule of the Statistics Act.

Mr Speaker, the particular references to the collection of statistical information in section 5 and access to public and other records in section 9 are both two very important processes towards a quality, accurate and timely compilation of key socioeconomic and related statistics, such as the gross domestic product and the millennium development goals, which are crucial for purposes of policy planning and decision making.

These processes have been heavily hampered due to the inadequate administration of the Statistics Act. This is because the penalty fees in section 13 have been significantly reduced in real terms for the very reasons that the Act has been enacted in 1970, and that inflation rate had also rocketed since 1978. Consequently, it is very difficult to effectively enforce the Act, especially whenever section 5 and section 9 are not complied with.

Sir, the penalty fees for offences in section 13(1) subsections 1, 2 and 3 of the Act are grossly out of date. For instance a standard fine of A\$800 prior to Independence as stated in the Act in section 13(1) in 1970 was equal to SI\$800 then. This was considered to be the standard fine at the time Solomon Islands became independent in 1978 when the exchange rate between the Australian and Solomon Islands currencies were at par, but given the prevailing exchange rate and taking into account the about 1,622% increase in the consumer price index during December 1978 to May 2006. In 1978 is now worth only about SI\$49 as of May 2006. This is totally out of date and unacceptable in real terms.

Mr Speaker, numerous individuals, households, private businesses and companies have not complied with the Statistics Act in furnishing key statistic information that are required to be executed even in cases like when we carry out the household surveys, the biennial employment and annual business surveys and census. The key reasons are that the penalty fines are relatively low and out of date and that have not been enforced since 1970. As a result the enforcement of the Act has been very weak.

Sir, the Solomon Islands economy, in general, has grown over the last 36 years, in tandem the economic power of individuals, group of individuals, companies and business enterprises to pay a fine of \$800 for breach of the Statistics Act, specifically in section 13 in relation to sections 5 and 9, therefore has been the tendency and choice as opposed to the requirement of providing the invaluable statistical information and data to the Government Statistician.

Sir, the range of social and economic data when provided to the Government Statistician under certain sections and provisions

of the Statistics Act, will collectively benefit the general populace. The analysis of this statistical information will certainly bring insight to the developmental need and planning requirement of the country.

Mr Speaker, the House needs to note that the collection of data is provided for under the Statistics Act, and everyone, every citizen is equally covered. The Government Statistician and his authorized officers, though empowered to collect and compile statistical information, are also bound by the same Statistics Act to uphold the confidentiality of certain levels of data and information.

Individuals, households and businesses therefore are legally protected and the confidentiality of this data and information are always maintained to the highest level and the integrity of the Statistics Act. When individuals and businesses do not provide required information, statistical inferences could not be easily made. This makes proper and effective planning so difficult.

Mr Speaker, under the current penalty, the offender is only liable to pay a fine of only \$800. This, in my view, is unrealistic and unjustifiable to both the effective implementation of the overall Statistics Act in particular to those sections I have referred to.

As stressed earlier, Mr Speaker, this Amendment is not designed to punish those who do not comply with the provisions of the Statistics Act but to deal with the collection, compilation, analysis and the dissemination of statistical information.

Mr Speaker, it is important to note that the amendment does not propose unconventional issues toward our obligation to collect and provide statistical information. The amendment to this Statistics Act arises from a review of the functionalities of the national statistical system vis-à-vis the National Statistics Office, and further to this, this amendment is part of the revitalization process that the Statistics Office is currently undergoing since year 2003.

Mr Speaker, in short, what this amendment bill entails is that firstly on the penalty provisions; there is no change in the law that relates to the type of information that is required to be collected. The rewrite of the three main penalty provisions of section 13, updates

and improves the law and hence its administration. Also in view of the increase in the penalty fines, individuals and corporate individuals will be penalized accordingly using the new penalty fines if they fail to abide by the Statistics Act.

Also we believe that this amendment will act as an anti avoidance provision, in that the increase in the penalty fine for non compliance to the provisions of the Statistics Act is rather to be seen as an anti avoidance measure.

The amendment Bill contains three increases in the penalties so as to strengthen the implementation of the law. The increases on the penalty will systematically make individuals and corporate individuals abide by their respective responsibilities as required under the Statistics Act in a legally prescribed manner. This will also ensure that both the collectors and providers of statistical data and information do not gain an unfair advantage over each other in the process of data collection and compilation.

On cost compliance, Mr Speaker, the Bill also has the benefit especially for all those who are involved in the process of data collection, in compliance with the provisions of the statistics act or those involved in the process of data collection will not pay out a single cent of their own money, and if only they comply fully with the provisions of the statistics act concern with data collection and compilation. By not complying with the requirements of the act sir, individuals and corporate individuals are breaking the laws and in this respect will be liable to legal proceedings will definitely force them.

Mr Speaker, the propose amendment is a step forward in improving the administration of the statistics division, and thereafter, improving the timeliness and quality of statistical information in Solomon Islands. It is a step forward in further improving the process of decision making and planning by the government and institutions throughout the country.

With those remarks, Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

(applause)

The motion is open for debate

Sir KEMAKEZA: Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to contribute very, very briefly to this amendment bill moved by the Honorable Minister of Finance.

Mr Speaker, there are only two small clauses in this Bill for increase of penalties. The Principal Act according to clause 13 is quite clear. As the Minister rightly said, the situation in 1970, when this Act came into force, is not the same situation as of today.

Mr Speaker, I would like to know if there are any cases the Department might come across in the execution of its duties. One is the penalty from \$800 to \$14,000 and from \$400 to \$7,000. I think this increase will not improve the application of section 13. Instead this amendment will give more penalties to the defaulters for supplying information, providing the records or whatever. The application of this provision, as I said remains as it is.

On giving more penalties to the defaulters, I would want to know from the Minister in his reply if they had come across any cases that made it quite difficult or whether the penalty provision did not give enough force to the defaulters or is it the failure of the executors of this special provision. It makes no sense when the application of provision 13 in the principal act remains as it is but you increase the penalties from \$800 to \$1400 and \$400 to \$7000 in this bill. That is what it is all about. But what would justify the increase of penalties? One of the reasons could be, as I said in my budget speech, giving away on one side and recouping somewhere else? If that is the intention of the amendment or the intention of the government Mr Speaker, then let it be as part of its revenue collection.

Any let us see how it is going to be applied because it is only giving more penalties to the defaulters on whatever cases provided for under clause 13 of the principal act so that they can pull up their socks in future. That is why I am asking the Minister for any examples that would justify this penalty or make the executors of this provision to worker harder because of the failures of employees or all of us in this case, Mr Speaker.

I have no difficulty supporting this amendment because it is one of the government's fundraising drives for our budget or someone is not complying with this provision as provided for and therefore we are giving him more penalties so that he pulls up his socks next time.

With that, Mr Speaker, I support the Bill.

Mr TOZAKA: Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to contribute to the Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007 moved by the Honorable Minister for Finance and Treasury and the Member for Gizo/Kolombangara.

Like my colleague of Savo/Russells, I also have no hesitation in supporting this Bill basically because in general it is a bill the government has taken seriously about the leakage of information protecting government business. This bill is in respect to commercial business undertakings of the government which is very important.

Apart from what the honorable Member for Savo/Russells said about the increase on penalty, I am sure the justification will be provided later on when the Honorable Minister replies to the Bill.

But let me sidestep here, Mr Speaker, to stress the importance of government business and government information basically in government machinery. If the Minister of Finance is taking a lead on this I think we should also look at the other side, which is commercial and now the public service.

Sir, during the colonial days releasing information to the public is very restrictive, especially secretive information in relation to state matters. For example, cabinet papers, cabinet information and so on which are secretive matters. Information were not allowed to be shared around. They are very restrictive and if you see government papers that are labeled as 'restrictive' or 'strictly restrictive, for your eyes only', it means only you yourself is allowed to see that document and you cannot take it out and share it with other people or the public.

Mr Speaker, when I look at this amendment to statistics, it reminds me of one important task the government should take note

of, which should also apply to public officers right across the machineries of government.

This particular amendment Mr Speaker, I look at it as an amendment that protects the very important information that the government depends on in carrying out its business and commercial responsibility in government.

Mr Speaker, I have no objection and no hesitation in supporting this Bill and so I support the Bill.

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the two speakers who have contributed to the debate of this Bill.

Mr Speaker, as what I said, this amendment is intended to improve the way the department collects information from business houses and the people that are targeted in the way the Statistics Division operates.

As you can see in the original section 13 of the Act, Mr Speaker, the kind of information required there is very much sensitive and very secretive, and you would know exactly why the people that are targeted to provide information sometimes feel very reluctant to provide the information.

The amendment in this particular provision in this Act operates in two ways. It is to protect those that provide the information and the ones that are using that information to come up with proper analysis well assessed report of the economic situation of the country. This is what we are intending to do here. Over the years, I am sure we have all come through the system and know that the Statistics Office has not been able to publish volume form statistical information that is appropriate for our business houses and those at higher executive offices of our business houses to use for purposes of commercial division and economic divisions in the country. And for that very reason we require this amendment.

But in relation to any suggestion that this amendment is intended to raise revenue for the government, well of course any penalty will be treated as revenue to the government. But it is not for that Mr Speaker. It is really to ensure that we have effective compliance from those that are targeted to provide that information. It is to make things work. Penalties are there to ensure effective enforcement and fair

compliance from those that are targeted to make the laws to operate.

That is really the intention of this amendment Mr Speaker, and I would like to assure the House that with this new amendment I believe we should allow it to operate and to see how it can be enforced fairly on our people.

With those few remarks Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007 be now put to a second reading and I beg to move.

The Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007 is committed to the Committee of Supply.

Bills – Committee Stage

The Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007

Clause 1 agreed to

Clause 2

Sir Kemakeza: I just want to thank the Minister for this clause. There is too much important information in relation to properties especially houses that are put on high rents are convincing that this sort of information must also come to the knowledge of the Statistics Division. I thank the government for this.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, I would also like to thank the Minister first, but these two clauses 2(a) and (b) deal with the same information. One is about leakage of information and the other one is spreading of information. It appears not to cater for the use of that information, but it also applies if somebody uses that information because my interpretation on the wording here is first, it concerns employee giving out information, inside information or inside trading as it is called in big countries, and the second one seems to be talking about if you receive an information knowing that it contravenes some provisions in law but you spread it or give it out. I am just wondering if it also covers the use of that information by a person other than the employee. I just want a clarification.

Hon Darcy: Mr Chairman, in fact the use of information is really a matter for the

Government Statistician as provided for under the Statistics Act.

What is being envisaged in this particular section 13 is that when information is obtained from the public and it is used by the Government Statistician, he analyses, assesses the information and then disseminates the information to the public. If any other officer other than the Government Statistician dishes out information before it is being properly authorized by the Government Statistician under law to disseminate it, then he is contravention of this Act. But if under the hands of the Government Statistician that the information is authorized to be used by the public, then it is lawful for the public to use it.

What I am saying here is, if we read the full content of the Statistics Act we will realize that only a small section is what we wanted to enhance to improve the overall role of the Government Statistician.

Mr Gukuna: Mr Chairman, I heard what the Minister is saying. But I want to further clarify my point. Supposing an employee releases information to a shareholder, and I use that information to pay the shares, my interpretation of this clause is that only the employee will be penalized \$14,000. What about the person who uses that information to buy the shares; is he also affected in here? And just as well as I am standing up, seeing that this thing deals with the same information on the same crime, I think the penalty should be the same, just as severe to use it, to spread it as to leak the information out.

Hon Darcy: Mr Chairman, my understanding of the way companies operate in accordance with company's laws is that there can only be one way of obtaining information from corporate entities, and this is either through the chairman or the secretary of the board.

I would assume therefore that the way the Government Statistician will solicit information from individuals or corporate entities would be through the right channel as prescribed in the way the policy of a company is established. That is how I see it.

I think it would be inappropriate for us to suggest that the Government Statistician will write to any other shareholders in any corporate

entity to obtain information. Let us think positive about the manner in which the Government Statistician can obtain information from the corporate entities.

Sir Kemakeza: Mr Chairman, it therefore means that subsection (e) of the principal act on section 9 was not amended, and therefore that penalty remains as it is except for (b) and (c).

Hon Darcy: Mr Chairman, if you look at it, it also changes the application of section 9. Subsection 3(e) of the principle act of section 13 is also amended accordingly because that applies to the information that is required in section 9 of the principal act.

Clause 2 agreed to

The Preamble agreed to

(Parliament resumes)

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007 has passed through the committee stage.

Bills – Third Reading

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007 be now read the third time and do pass.

The Statistics (Amendment) Bill 2007 was passed

Bills – Second Reading

The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2007

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I rise to beg that the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2007 be now put to the second reading.

Sir, this Bill seeks to amend the operational date of effect of section 36(b) of the Income Tax Act from 1st of January 2006 to 1st of January 2007.

Sir, section 36(b) was introduced by the Income Tax (Amendment) Act 2005, Act No.8 of 2005. This Act was passed by this House in

November 2005 and it introduced the range of changes to modernize and simplify the requirements that the tax system imposes on ordinary salary and wage earners.

Section 36(b) requires banks and other tax payers of interest to residents to withhold tax at the rate of 10%. Generally most people can earn up to 5,000 in interest before the requirement to withhold applies.

Sir, when this provision was introduced the banking group who are the main group obligated to withhold the tax did not have sufficient time to implement appropriate systems and procedures to give effect to this provision by the start date of 1st January 2006. Sir, this Government therefore works with the banking sector on this issue and that we have agreed to defer the implementation date to 1st January 2007. This time frame would allow the banks sufficient time to implement appropriate systems and procedures to ensure that they can meet their obligations.

Mr Speaker, as the Income Tax (Amendment) Act of 2005 is current law, withholding has been required under section 36(b) since 1st of January 2006. This Bill will therefore provide an indemnity for the banks for failing to withhold from 1st January 2006 to 31st December 2006 on the basis of the Government's commitment to a deferral of the commencement of this provision. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, I was unable to introduce this Bill at previous parliamentary sittings due to other priorities. However, as the law was currently in place, banks knew that they would be required to withhold from any payments made after 1st of January 2007. And also I know that Inland Revenue Division has worked with the banking sector at the end of 2006 to ensure that they had the information they needed to commence withholding tax from 1st January 2007, and I am aware that some payments have now been made.

Mr Speaker, Income Tax (Amendment) 2005 was a beginning of the taxation reform agenda, and it introduces a range of changes to the way in which salaries and wage earners meet their tax obligations. This Government therefore is committed to fundamental tax reform and we must also learn from our neighbors and plan carefully for the introduction of significant

reforms such as these. We have been working closely with the experts of the International Monetary Fund and other agencies that have been helping us out in our tax reform to ensure that we plan carefully for the introduction of any major changes.

We must ensure that our tax administration is sound and that our business community is prepared and able to adjust to the changes. Therefore, Mr Speaker, the Income Tax (Amendment) 2005 was one of the first steps in modernizing our taxation system.

The difficulties experienced around one small provision of that legislation has highlighted to us the need to ensure that all reforms must be carefully planned and that the community must be well consulted and engaged in preparation for any changes. This will become increasingly important as we progress in the reform agenda and our planning must include consultative forums to ensure that we engage the community in the tax laws and the systems that we are proposing to change and build for this nation.

With those remarks, Mr Speaker, I beg to move. Thank you.

(The bill is open for debate)

Sir KEMAKEZA: Mr Speaker, I only rise to thank the Minister and the Government for further extending the operational date which the last administration put at 1st January 2006 to become operational. I thank the Minister for recognizing the categories of people that we would want to relieve them from the really good intention of this amendment bill.

As I have said this bill is only to change the operational date. I think just because the Minister puts in a lot of words and that is why it looks confusing or sometimes difficult in our eyes but it is just to change the date from 1st January 2006 to 1st January 2007. And so I congratulate him for a work well-done. The Prime Minister is also well vested with this bill because he was once the Commissioner of Income Tax. The good intention of the amendment in 2005 was taken on board again to make it become operational.

It is not a good excuse too, but we cannot help it since it is a new change and there will be a lot of figures and facts, accounting

codes and banks and so on, but whatever we are going to do, it will come and it is already in operation as after this amendment from January 2007.

I just want to thank the government and more especially the hard working Minister of Finance to see it fit to bring this amendment otherwise the categories of people that we exempt them will come back to you.

With those very brief comments, Mr Speaker, I support the Bill.

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the MP for Savo/Russells for his short contribution on this Bill. He is a former Prime Minister, a former Minister responsible for tax and so he is well versed with the taxation law of this country. Of course, he was the one who introduced the GST in this House too.

Sir, what he has stated and as alluded to in my introduction of this bill, this bill is seeking to validate two things. First is the deferral of the implementation of the Income Tax Amendment 2005 and to rectify the non compliance by those requiring enforcing the withholding of tax on interest. But what is important and what ought to be emphasized is that the threshold is \$5,000 and those of us who repay interest on \$5,000 on our loans there will be a withholding of 10% applied to those interest that are repaid. That is basically the essence of this bill. That enforcement, I believe, will ensure that those of us who have the privilege of borrowing in the bank will also have the opportunity to contribute to the poor by way of withholding tax of 10% so that we can put into the consolidated fund and spread it out to the poor in the rural areas.

I think it is a worthwhile amendment that ought to be enforced and I also on behalf of the government thank the previous government for coming up with this amendment in 2005 under the regime of the MP for Savo/Russells.

With those remarks, Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Bill passed its second reading

Bills – Committee Stage

The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2007

Clauses 1, 2 and 3 agreed to

The preamble agreed to

(Parliament resumes)

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2007 has passed through the Committee Stage.

Bills – Third Reading

The Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2007

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2007 be now read the third time and do pass.

The Bill is passed

MOTIONS

Sine Die Motion

Sir KEMAKEZA: Mr Speaker, I too would like to contribute to the motion moved by the Honorable Prime Minister for us to adjourn this meeting tomorrow. In doing so, as is customary in Parliament we have to acknowledge a number of people, and so it would be a failure on the part of the Member for Savo/Russells not to thank them for the good and bad works being done. First I would like to thank you, Mr Speaker, the Clerk and your staff as well as the UNDP team for a job well-done. Thank you very much indeed. Sometimes I stand in to relieve you, Mr Speaker, which is normal when you have other commitments.

Mr Speaker, I also would like to thank the Prime Minister, the Ministers and backbenchers for the preparation of government business, especially the 2007 Estimates. I thank the Prime Minister, his Ministers, the backbenchers and the Caucus for putting together the Estimates and brought it in time to Parliament so that as much as possible avoid constitutional impasse, which if the budget is not passed this time there would not be any money to run our country and therefore, I thank the support of this side of the House. Later on the Leader of Opposition will say his part, but for Savo/Russells, I give you support.

The Permanent Secretaries cannot leave without me acknowledging their work, Mr Speaker, as well as chief accountants of

departments and many other people who contributed one way or the other in formulating and putting together the 2007 Estimates.

I also thank the Acting Commissioner of Police for providing security during this Meeting of Parliament enabling the meeting to run smoothly and ensuring the security and safety of Members of Parliament as well as those who come in and listen to us at the gallery. So I thank people who administered this very important Meeting.

The RAMSI personnel must be also thanked for the excellent job in assisting the Royal Solomon Islands Police making sure this Meeting goes on well in discussing important businesses of the country.

The head of churches must also be acknowledged as well as our traditional leaders and people generally for their understanding of this very difficult time in our country.

The media must also be thanked, Mr Speaker, even though we politicians might sometimes not like them but we cannot help it as freedom of the press is provided for in our constitution. Even though the media praises us or criticizes us, that is their role. I am one of those whom the media always criticize but they are my good friends. So do not get angry with the media.

The NGOs too must be thanked. Not like the MP for East Honiara who criticized them badly yesterday, as well as the Prime Minister. We are not supposed to do that.

Mr Speaker, the Berlin Wall was knocked down by the civil people. Indi Amin was removed by civilians. President Marcos was also removed by civilians, so let us not criticize them like that but let us just thank them for the work they are doing.

Development partners, although did not come out very well in the Budget Mr Speaker, but the people of Savo/Russells must thank them for their contribution to both the recurrent and development estimates. The Provincial Governments must also be thanked because for its understanding and tolerance of the people of Savo/Russells. With those acknowledgements, let me look very briefly at the business of government and parliament.

As is customary, Mr Speaker, the 2007 Budget received criticisms by this side of the

House, as it is our duty to give cheques and balances on the government of the day. The government side should not be angry with us because we are merely doing our job. If you start to panic like you have a lot of nails on your chair then it means you have a guilty conscience somewhere somehow.

We have also passed three very important bills, and that is why I have noted in here to thank and support the Minister of Finance. There are more reports and more statements coming to Parliament. Thank you for that.

On questions and answers, some Ministers including the Prime Minister have given guess answers, and were not prepared to give proper answers. But let me tell you, Mr Speaker, that you are not answering a Member of Parliament but you are answering the people of this country who need to know information. We are asking on behalf of the people because they cannot come in here and ask questions. Accept questions with a good heart and do not get angry, panic, raising points of order and misbehaving. Mr Speaker, I would like to mention this, let alone arguments, but I must thank some of you who have given good answers too.

Our attendance too at parliament meetings is important. Mr Speaker, Parliament supersedes ever other meetings, and this includes yourself and myself too, Mr Speaker. The Prime Minister is not exceptional. If you prioritize other meetings than parliament meetings then you might as resign from being a Member of Parliament.

What happened last Friday when there was no quorum for this side of the House is deliberate, and must not be allowed to happen next time. Do not run away because every one of us was standing here when you introduced the Budget. That incident was quite unusual, Mr Speaker, but I thank a few Ministers who came in that time except that they came to give some very good excuses.

Mr Speaker, having said that about parliament business, I would like to delve into make some observations of the politics in Solomon Islands. Mr Speaker, if you look at the situation in Fiji and the situation in Solomon Islands, they are just the same situations, except

that one is by the use of guns and the other one is by the use of some different mentalities. For example, we are starting now to create another Police Force in the Prime Minister's Office. What is that for?

That is exactly the trend SIAC was taking last time which ruined this country. And if we are not careful we are going down the same path. That is an example, I call unconstitutional or un-procedural or undemocratic, application of law to rule. No, sir, this is a civil coup, and I will come on to this later because we are starting to do something that could create division, create disunity in Solomon Islands, and this is quite dangerous in my own personal view.

Mr Speaker, we must not under estimate people, as I have said earlier on. History will never be changed, never, you cannot amend history because history is history and is past but we can amend the future learning from our past and history. That is what I am trying to say here. So we must be very careful, and make sure we do not gamble away the lives and welfare of our people.

Politics is like a razor blade, which you know it yourself, Mr Speaker, that can cut from two sides. If it goes it will come back. I have warned quite a lot of my colleagues on the government bench. I told them that even though you did not support the motion, but you must know that this Prime Minister was also my Prime Minister before when I was his Deputy Prime Minister and he sacked me, and not a week later four leaders of his government parties were also sacked, and some of them you can see are here on this side. That is what I mean by politics like a razor blade, which can go and comes back cutting you.

Likewise the same application goes to our people. Do not play around with our people. In fact they are the ones holding the power, which if not given to us, we will not be sitting down inside here. No way, Mr Speaker.

This brings me to another point, which last time I said remote control, but this time I heard a song last night from the SIBC. Let me tell you the story, which is a kind of sad story or an educational story and sometimes the song, makes us want to cry. I think it is a good story for me to tell you, and it goes like this. This is somewhat like a custom story.

During the North African campaign, a group of soldier boys have been on the long run and they came to a town called Bazuite, and the next day being Sunday some of the boy went to church. The Sergeant commanded the boys to the church and asked the chaplain to read the prayers and texts'. This is a nice song. 'Most of the boys who had their prayer books took them out but there is one boy who had a deck of cards who spread the cards out on the floor of the church. The Sergeant saw the cards and told the Soldier to put the cards away. After the service was over the boy was taken to prison and disciplined, as they are from a disciplined force, and was brought before the proper martial

The Martial asked the Sergeant why he brought the man to him. The Sergeant said he was playing cards in the church, and so the Martial asked the soldier what has he deceived himself of. 'Much Sir', replied the soldier, and the Martial said 'I hope so, because if you do not explain to me I will punish you more than any one has ever been punished'. The soldier boy said, 'I have had a long march for six days and have neither a Bible nor a Prayer Book but I hope to satisfy you of the purity of my intention'. With that, the boy began his story.

The soldier boy said, 'When I look at the 'ace' in my deck of cards, it reminds me that there is only one God. When I look at 2 it tells me that the Bible is divided into two parts - the old and the new testaments. When I see 3, it reminds me of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. When I look at 4, I think of the four great Evangelists of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John who preached the Gospel. When I look at 5, it reminds me of the 5 wise virgins. In fact there were 10 but 5 are foolish. When I look at 6, I know that in 6 days God made the heavens and the earth, and 7 tells me that He rested from His work and called it holy. When I look at 8, I think of the 8 righteous persons God saved when He destroyed this earth, which Noah, his wife, his three sons and their three wives. When I look at 9, it reminds me of the 9 lepers who did not thank Jesus for healing them from the disease leprosy. When I look at 10, it reminds me of the 10 Commandments that was given to Moses in tablets of stone. When I see the Kings, it reminds me that there is only one King of Heaven, and that is Almighty God. When I see

the queen, I think of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the queen of Heaven. When I look at the Jack, it is the name of the devil. When I count the spots on the cards I found that there are 365 days in a year. There are 52 cards, the number of weeks in a year, and there are 13 tracks, the number of weeks in a quarter, and 4 suits, the number of weeks in a month and 12 picture cards, which is the number of months in a year. So you see, my deck of cards shows me not only the Bible but also a prayer book"

Mr Speaker, when I look at the Opposition bench here and the number of Opposition members and I heard this song, there is warning ahead. In our playing of politics in our country, it reminds me of what are all these going ahead.

When I look at the Western Block there are 8 of them. When I look at the Central Block there are also 8 of them and when I look at the Malaita Block there are only 4 of them. What do these represent? The number 8 are the 8 righteous people saved by God. The number 4 from Malaita are those who go out preaching the gospel.

Mind you, Mr Speaker, I have very wide connection throughout the whole country. My two first daughters are married to Malaitans, and I already have 3 grandchildren from my in-laws of Malaita. One is married to West Are Are and another one is married to a half South & half Lau/Mbaelelea. Those are my two daughters. Three men from Malaita and also me are married to the same family. Two of them are from Tobaita and one from Areka. Four of my first cousin sisters are also married to Malaitans - two from Kwara'ae, one from South and one from Lau, and the list goes on.

Even my people are also married to the home of the Prime Minister. One of his security officers is my uncle, married to my sister, and he is from Choiseul. People of Savo are even there in Temotu and people from Temotu are also in Savo. Even many of my people are married to people of Makira. You may think Savo is a small island but the people are all over the four corners, in all the 50 constituencies.

There are many of them in Guadalcanal, and this is because I am also part Guadalcanal. My father in-law is from Guadalcanal, and my mother in-law is from Savo. The Minister for

Education is my relative, and my younger brother is also there on the other side, he is a Minister. One thing is for certain, and that is they cannot contest in Savo/Russells because the chief is already there and so these two must contest in Guadalcanal and Ngella. Even if they come this time they are going to lose. Those are the connections I have in all of the 50 constituencies throughout the country.

With the behavior you have, how are you going to address people who have already interacted? How are you going to address this? That is why I told you that story and I talk about myself because how are you going to handle it.

We must maintain and sustain unity in Solomon Islands whether you like it or not. Do not try to show your actions that way. Do you think your action is not readable, Mr Speaker? It is readable. Mind you, Mr Speaker, that is the last thing to do in politics.

Mr Speaker, do you know why I survived for four years? It is because I get everybody together whether you like it or not. I called three leaders of opposition to come and work with me. That is the politics I am trying to tell you about here. Please, let us not destroy the good work we have put in place. If we are not careful then that is what is going to happen.

There are many of my people in Rennell and Bellona and as well as in Isabel too. This is just a warning. Please we must be very careful of what we are doing.

On political parties, Mr Speaker, I have seen the integrated law or old act. I fail to see it come because that should stabilize politics in Solomon Islands. As you know it yourself, Sir, that no matter how good one performs, the motion will come up. But when the motion is moved, the government side should have the number and so it should not be concerned because it is just checking on the government. Do not worry because in the history of this Parliament of Solomon Islands, prior to and after Independence, Mr Speaker, no motions of no confidence have ever gone through this House. Do your research in the Library and you will see it. I have already done my research because four motions were moved against my government, and that is why I have done my research. So do not jump up and down because you will be just right.

Having seen your actions and behavior, Mr Speaker, yesterday I heard from the Member for East Honiara and the Prime Minister that we must work together. Mr Speaker, the Member for East Are Are said yesterday how can we work together when our policies are not consistent? I will put it differently. Yes, policy-wise there are two different approaches. The Opposition side has its own views on some of the government's policies at this time. But for myself, I do not have any other views.

Mr Speaker, why is it that you threaten people and you start to put something against some of us? We are human beings too. It is your actions that we are watching. I have already told the government that during my time I have appointed the present Prime Minister to be head of a task force. I also appointed the Member for Aoke/Langa Langa and Ranogga/Simbo too to be heads of task forces that I set up. These are all former Prime Ministers doing work for people of Solomon Islands during my time. Likewise I now offer myself to the Prime Minister too, if at all I can be useful.

Mr Speaker, what I have been seeing is not the way we are supposed to handle the affairs of this country. If the Prime Minister had asked for my view on rearming of our security officers, I would have told him that it is not yet time Mr Prime Minister, leave it, it can be taken up later on because the timing is not right. It is a good policy, a good thing for the country but the timing is not right. That would have been my advice to the Prime Minister for his consideration because we must not go against the feelings of our people.

Let me give an example. The people of Guadalcanal are saying no to rearmament and RAMSI must not go back. Whose advice is it that 13 MPs from Malaita signed an agreement saying that they supported the Prime Minister? Mr Speaker, do you know that this is a slap on the face of the people of Guadalcanal?

Whilst you are saying I support you, you want rearmament and RAMSI is like this whilst the Guadalcanal leaders are saying, no, no, no. I think Temotu will come in and may be Guadalcanal, Central, Isabel, Rennell and Bellona too. We will come because what is wrong with that? Why did you start it? Is that

the trend we are taking, Mr Speaker? Is it? Is that what we are going to do? For me, no, it should not be like that. You are starting to divide up this country - this beautiful country called Solomon Islands, which we always called 'the happy isles', but now it is the 'suspicious isles'.

The Prime Minister knows this very well, and that is why we succeeded in Townsville, and that is because he listened to my advice. Now the Member for Mbaegu/Asifola must advise the Prime Minister. If you support him on everything he says everything will go haywire. He was the Secretary to Prime Minister during my time and so he knows it very well.

I now come to foreign relations. Foreign relations is not a new story, but I have one advice to the government because this has been repeated many times, the Opposition has given its position by saying that it is at its lowest in the history of this country since 1978. But my advice to the government Mr Speaker, is that we admit our mistakes, apologize and they will respect us more.

Let us apologize that it was from situations like this that we made the mistake, and ask them to come and let us work together. Can't we do that, Mr Speaker? Is that not an option? People will praise you more and give you 100% plus another 50% credit on top if we do that. We are only human beings Mr Speaker, and we are subject to make mistakes. Can't we say sorry for the mistakes we have done? That is my advice to you. You decide on that.

On education, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister for Education for the very good program. You used to be the former Permanent Secretary in the Minister and now you are the Minister, and so you have the political will to move things forward. I can read that you are the best Minister there. I thank the Prime Minister for putting this very able person to be the Minister for Education so that he can move things forward because it has become a bottleneck.

The Minister and the Prime Minister as well know it very well that education has become a bottleneck in this country because we have lost about four to five years, which is not in the best interest of our young people, our human

resources and leaders of tomorrow. I am happy that we must continue to pour in money into the education sector to catch up on the loss.

In Bougainville, a child who was in Class six when the crisis started would have been married and had children the time the crisis stopped. What a loss.

The Minister is catching up on education and I urge him to continue to do that. But he must fairly distribute scholarship awards and must not be one-sided. Is it only East Choiseul and not Russell/Savo? That is what I mean. The Minister must take note of this.

I am giving advices this time. On investment, Mr Speaker, do not kill the chicken because it is not going to lay eggs. Do not ever kill the chicken because if you eat it there will be no eggs for tomorrow. I am talking about business as it lays the eggs. Business is what we are talking about in here that pays taxes, and you are able to run services. If they do not pay taxes where are you going to get money? So do not kill the hen. You can eat the eggs but not the hen. You can kill the male chicken.

On security, Mr Speaker, as I have alluded to earlier on, do not create two police forces. I am talking as a former police officer. Give credit where it is due, Mr Speaker, and say thank you to our people.

Judiciary is one very important organ of the constitution and so do not interfere with it. There are three organs. You head the legislature, Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister heads the executive and the Chief Justice heads the judiciary. These are the three pillars of our constitution and the main organs of our constitution. And the Governor General is the custodian of this constitution. There are no laws in this country that supersedes the constitution.

Mr Speaker, you are the architect of our constitution. Respect and do not interfere with it. The Prime Minister should not interfere in Parliament but leave the Speaker to handle it. The Speaker should not behave as the Prime Minister too. The Chief Justice too should not behave like the Speaker of Parliament too. These are the three main organs.

Why did the government interfere with the judiciary? Is there any hidden agenda here? Let the law takes its course. Leave the Minister of Police alone, like what he did to me. He

thinks he is hiding but no. He was the one who did my case and I am waiting for my court now. But nobody is above the law, Mr Speaker, I am sorry Minister. Let them face the consequences because that is the price of leadership. Otherwise you think it is an easy thing. No. It will not always be paradise because one day it will turn back like a razor blade.

On forestry, Mr Speaker, the Minister must take a policy paper to Cabinet to encourage all our school students to plant trees. Everyone morning a child must plant a tree before he/she goes to school. They also must raise the flag, sing the national anthem, pray and then go to class. We need to plant more trees Mr Speaker, because we are harvesting more trees than trees we are planting now.

On fisheries, the Minister is not here, but fisheries needs to be revitalized. We talk about copra and cocoa but our brothers and sisters in other parts of our country who have no coconut and cocoa and no whatever, marine resource is important to them, because then it will meet the bottom up approach idea of the government. Do not just put more money into the rehabilitation of copra and cocoa. What about marine products? Is it there? I do not see it in the estimates. Only the Minister for Agriculture has \$3 million. Do you just want them to get fishing nets donated by Japan? No, Mr Speaker. It should be more than that

That is why I asked the Minister for Agriculture during my debate on the diversification bill we have planned in the past. It is inside the program so just bring it in so that we can diversify from other crops. The Department of Agriculture is the blood vein of this country. I am happy about that.

Mr Speaker, finally this is the lent season, and yesterday was the Ash Wednesday. Do you know it or is it because you haven't gone to church? Then why do you call this government a God fearing government when you seem not to know anything on this. We are in the lent season, and lent means to renew and change our ways of living and leadership. Why, because the Creator is suffering for our sins forty days in the wilderness. If we do not do that, Mr Speaker, we will not be forgiven at the foot of the cross. We must understand this whilst running our nation. This country is a

Christian country. Go and admit your mistakes to Him and ask Him to forgive you. If you change your attitudes and ideas, Mr Speaker, all the people of Solomon Islands will respect you more.

This is the lent season so admit your mistakes, build relationships, look after our people on what they are for and against; make the balance and put your foreign policy according to that, and nobody will talk about you for these four years that you want. We are okay here on this side. Just give me my \$1 million so that I can go home and run my constituency, and see who is going to come back in the next election. You stay here for four years and I go back home for four years. I go home and talk to the people that for four years you have been just driving around town without ever thinking of your people, and so you will lose.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the people of Savo/Russells and that of my family, respect the lent season and Easter Greetings from me to my people and my constituency. With these remarks and observations, Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

Mr NE'E: Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity for the first time for me to speak on the motion of sine die. I have not attended two sittings of Parliament in 2006 and so I did not have the opportunity.

First of all, I would like to thank my voters of Central Honiara for entrusting me to lead them in the next three years that are left.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the pastors, leaders and chiefs in our various settlements throughout Honiara for their prayers and support given to me and my family during my time of detention in Rove. I would like to thank them very much.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, I would like to convey my deepest condolence to the Chinese Community and the Chinese population throughout Solomon Islands for losses sustained during the three days of rioting in Chinatown. The causers of this riot must be revealed to the public and the nation to know. That is why there is need to set up the commission of inquiry to determine the causer who should then compensate our people.

I therefore see no reason why our good friend and neighbor is trying to oppose commencement of this commission of inquiry by stopping a federal judge who has been appointed by the Solomon Islands Government to head the Commission of Inquiry. Why? Is there anything to hide? Let the nation know who started the riot in Honiara.

I am surprised as well to hear us talking about other commissions in this Parliament like the Defense Force Board of PNG to come inside our country. Why are we talking about such a commission? We also moved a motion in here asking Parliament to appoint a tribunal to look into the sacking of the Commissioner of Police. Why? Why do we not talk about the riot that happened here in Honiara? Have we forgotten the riot? Other commissions that were set up after the riot here, like the one in East Timor has completed its inquiry and has submitted its findings for the public to know. Why are we so quiet about the April riot? Do we have something to hide?

Mr Speaker, another issue I wish to speak on is the National Peace Council. I have a lot of fear that a lot of prisoners in Rove who are now serving their sentences are those who have gone through the process of reconciliation but their cases were again reported to RAMSI and were then arrested. Is this the meaning of peace and reconciliation set up by the last government? What sort of peace are we looking for? That defeats the idea of peace and reconciliation in this country. What are we talking about here?

Mr Speaker, we have expressed on several occasions in this Parliament the independence of the judiciary in this country. What independence are we talking about here? There is no independence of the judiciary here. I think we have been invaded by a new judiciary system from another planet that changed the 14 days remand to 8 months in prison. Is this the independence of the judiciary we are talking about? Are we being influenced by other countries telling us what to do? Or are we following the federal law?

Let us not talk about the independence of the judiciary system in here. Some MPs here are immune under the laws of Solomon Islands. Do you know why? It is because they have friends in higher offices. I am a Solomon

Islander and I am not immuned from the law of Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, I wanted to continue talk about the National Peace Council that was being set up where there is a lot of fear that everything being discussed in the National Peace Council and after reconciliations are being done in the provinces some more people have been arrested. That is defeating the whole idea of peace and reconciliation. They came out clearly under the peace process but the next thing is that they are arrested. I slept with the 92 remandees in the Rove Prison and I do not know what is happening to them. I feel this is defeating the whole purpose of reconciliation.

Members of the Opposition side are asking what this government is doing about national reconciliation. Why don't you do it in the last four years so that we are just concerned about national reconciliation now? What has happened in the last four years? Can't you do any reconciliation? This is not the true reconciliation we are talking about.

The Opposition side was also asking about the independence of the judiciary system in the country this morning. What is the maximum number of days that someone can be on remand in the prison? Some people said it is 14 days whilst some did not even know the maximum days of remand at the Rove Prison. Some of them have been remanded for about four to five years and others two to three years. There is social implication to this on those people in prison. They have families, wives and children who were left alone at home with nobody taking care of them. Don't we know that these are Solomon Islanders? They have been remanded without any justice. Is there justice in this country? We talk about justice many times but what is justice?

Mr Speaker, I must say here that the Minister of Justice must do something about this. If those people have been remanded unjustly in Rove according to the international human rights that visited us then we must do something about it. I will see that our government brings in the remand bill to this House so that we get out our poor people at the Rove prison. They have no justice. Some of them do not have access to any legal counsel. Some of them have been remanded for two years

without being brought to the court to renew their remands.

I knew a guy who stole a tin of corned beef and was remanded for six months. If the price of the corned beef is weighed against the period he is remanded in Rove, the cost of staying there doubles two cartons of corned beef. Is this justice? This is worse than Afghanistan and Iraq.

Mr Speaker, I would like to say again and again that many social problems that our friends caused in the country must be looked into. A lot of families are depended on their father and they have relatives who depended on them. There are many men at Rove Prison whose wives have left them because they were thrown in there and their families have been cut off. Is this 'helpem fren' or 'spoilem fren'? We must understand this.

We do not want RAMSI to go back but we want RAMSI to stay here but they must understand our cultures. We talk about the Constitution, is 14 days in the constitution a human right or five years remand at Rove.

The recent escape of two inmates at Rove is a result of frustration and no justice. Medical facilities at Rove are not up to standard. Is it possible to employ an ambulance driver and a doctor for the Rove Prison? We can't we employ a qualified doctor for the Rove Prison. There is no proper doctor and that is why inmates have died at Rove. The response to their cries for medication is too slow. I want the people of Honiara and the people of this nation to know this. Many things have been hidden that we do not know about. I have to put them out for the public to know.

Mr Speaker, we have concentrated our efforts in the international scene by coming up with bilateral relations and international relations but we forgot all about our backyard. Eighty per cent of our people are living on squatters. They are people who build this town and work in this town. Who are these people? They are our people from the rural areas that we do not look after them.

I am looking after people from East Are constituency, Central Kwara'ae constituency in my constituency because there is nothing for them in their constituencies.

Mr Speaker, we come in here and shout and on Sundays we go and praise the Lord in the Church making nonsense of ourselves but we do nothing for our people. We are telling lies to our people by saying that 27 MPs are supporting us.

As a Caucus member I can tell you, Mr Speaker, there are almost 40 MPs now supporting the Grand Coalition. I have written letters here with me indicating that support, so do not tell lies. Let us be honest to ourselves. Give us time to work. Give time for the Grand Coalition to work. We have just passed the budget and so give them time to deliver it. You should come up with another motion of no confidence may be after two or three years. Why? It is because your budget has failed this country miserably.

What is it that you come up with motions of no confidence in every meeting? Do we come here to play? I was not voted in here to play. I was voted in here to come and do something for my people of Central Honiara who have been forgotten for the last 27 years since independence.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to thank the Ministry of Lands and Survey for accommodating the cries of my people of Central Honiara who have been crying about the areas they are living in now. They complain about overcrowding because the land they are living on is not demarcated by the government. Give them the land titles to the land they are living on. These are Solomon Islanders who are living on government land and so they should be given land titles. We have only been giving titles to foreigners but what about our own people?

The people who are living around the squatters of Honiara now are second or third generations of those people who built Honiara town. I know them because I live with them. I know them because I build their churches, which you might have heard on the news.

You talk about one-tenth – haven't you given your one-tenth yet. I have already given my one-tenth to the churches. It is not good talking about one-tenth in church without doing it. I have done it and I would do it again.

I want to thank the Minister for Lands and Survey for facilitating our request and the government's policy of converting all TOLs to

fixed term estates, which I will start to work on in the next two to three months.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for presenting a budget that will address issues of importance that have been talked so much about in this Parliament for several years but nothing has happened. This is my first time in Parliament and this is the first budget that I see will address the rural population where our resources come from.

I would like to thank you, Mr Speaker, for organizing and controlling this meeting and your staff for taking care of those us around here and your accounts department for paying our allowances.

With these few words, I resume my seat.

Mr SITAI: Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to briefly contribute to debate the Sine Die motion moved by the Honorable Prime Minister yesterday. I shall be brief and at the outset I just want to say that I would be contributing on just my observations and reflections of this meeting, in particular in relation briefly to what have been discussed, and which most of our colleagues have already raised. Lest I repeat what have been said and to bore everybody, I will only pick on a few areas that I would like to touch on.

Firstly, I would like to thank the government, in particular the Minister of Finance and Treasury for presenting the Budget which has been approved. Government policies that the budget stands on and the implementation of the budget is the area I would like to comment on in terms of my observations. And I would like to say this. Let us look at this budget with optimism. There is indeed hope despite whatever we are saying. There is hope for our people. Let us work together, as we have all been saying on this floor of Parliament.

Sir I would also like to say that some of our constituencies, in particular my constituency have already presented to the government our constituency plan in terms of developing that constituency, and also in terms of implementing the bottom up approach. I would like to take this opportunity to call on relevant ministers in government to take note of our submission, and take them seriously. If there are provisions in the development budget, which I believe there are, may be not to our satisfaction at this stage

then give us the opportunity. Listen to our people's cries. Let us work together and help us to implement our plans. We are serious of what we are trying to do.

Also in terms of implementation, as I have already alluded to and I would repeat it, this is a serious issue. The government staff or professional staff or whoever they may be working with us to implement the projects must give us their commitment and time. There is no more time to play around because we have lost a lot of time. In order to achieve economic growth that we want so much, which we have proved because of our endowment in terms of resources that can be achieved, let us do our best and let us work together to achieve those objectives. Whatever staff at the provincial level or at the national government level in the ministries must work with us to achieve our objectives and aims so that at the end of the day the beneficiary would be the economy hence the government of Solomon Islands.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, I move on to one or two other issues that have come to my mind, in listening to debates during this meeting. The first issue is the much talked about diplomatic rift between Solomon Islands and Australia. Generally, I just want to say that diplomatic wounds would take time to heal. They cannot be healed immediately. Diplomacy is about harmonizing the interest and respect of each others sovereignty.

In my observation, progress is being made in terms of putting our situation right with Australia. There is progress being made. When situations like this happen, a lot of understanding has to be emphasized, door for dialogue has to be opened and remained open, but I believe and I am confident we are getting there.

The diplomatic wound or rift between the United States, for example, and Cuba which started in the 1950s is still on. They are yet to come together. So let us not give up hope, let us not make that as a very negative issue because I believe the government is addressing the problem.

One another issue, national security is important. As far as I am concern, RAMSI needs to be here and we must thank RAMSI for the good work it is doing. It is up to the

government of Solomon Islands to know and to determine the right thing. But the onus is on the government and people of Solomon Islands to assist in making that important decision.

Sir, one of my observations during this meeting is that much has been said about unemployment. This is a real issue for us. I agree wholeheartedly with colleague MPs who have raised this in their debates. We have heard from the government as to the strategies it is going to apply to address unemployment because of the need to take care of our growing youth. The population is increasing rapidly, do not forget that.

Yes, strategies such as the enticement of further investment into the country to create job opportunities. The development of economic zones will also create opportunities. The rural focus through various assistances to create self-employment at the village rural levels, yes they will be there but when you look at it, sometimes these policies will take time to come into place. The question is, are there any other areas to look at? We must be mindful of our growing unemployment. Students had to leave after forms 5, 6, 7 or even the university levels at the end of the year is quite alarming if you look at the statistics. We have to accommodate them.

I am encouraged by developments in the agriculture sector particularly the Auluta Basin land for its oil palm that are taking place. That will also entice people to go back their lands. The Bina Harbor project must be encouraged to also take off so that it will also create opportunities. The other economic zone designated areas must also be dealt with to get those opportunities.

But in addition to that I would like to say this, and what I am going to say will be controversial. A lot of people will probably not want to hear this. I am not for arms but what I would like to say is, can the government look at the possibility of training our young people in the military field so that they can be deployed when needed by the United Nation who are ready to employ peacekeepers in various areas throughout the world today. There is manpower requirement in this. Can we not consider this?

I believe if this is done, it will be a disciplinary force that would perhaps, not use arms recklessly to create fear amongst ourselves

in relation to what has happened here five years ago. That is an area to look at. I am sure most of our young people will want them to be engaged in peacekeeping work outside Solomon Islands when needed by the United Nation.

I said that this may be controversial, but I would like the Government to consider this, even to the extent of carrying out preliminary assessment of this opportunity. In addition to that the economy will benefit because of remittances that will be sent back or earned by these young people deployed to do peacekeeping work outside Solomon Islands.

Secondly, there is also another opportunity, the opportunity perhaps to improve our marine training school here to international standard so that some of our young people who have gone through the school could be deployed in some of the overseas vessels. The small Island states near us have done this very successfully. Take the situation of Kiribati and Tuvalu.

There are employment opportunities out there also. I do not want to mention the fruit picking opportunities in New Zealand and Australia because they have restrictions. But I want the government to look at the other opportunities. The remittances that will be gained and sent back to this country will benefit this economy. That is on unemployment.

On other matters, as I have said, colleagues have already alluded to. The Prime Minister has alluded to a lot of these issues when he presented this motion, and so I will not repeat them. I only want the government to start working. We have now passed the budget and so let us simply implement the budget and government programs. Get our people in the rural areas to be involved since this budget is supposed to be for them.

We have come through a lot of difficulties. That we all know. We are just starting to pick up. Any developing nation in this world goes through that kind of experience. But for us I would like to say that we shall (and we, meaning Solomon Islands) overcome this problem. One day we shall overcome, as a famous hymn says.

In conclusion, having said all these, I would like to express my appreciation to the Chair, to the Deputy Speaker, your good self for

being very ably guiding the proceedings of our sittings. The meeting has not been an easy one. It is a budget meeting and we have gone through a lot of hard work to get the budget passed. In fact, thank you for your conduct of the meeting, your very able conduct of the meetings. I also thank the Clerk and staff for their support for this meeting and the parliamentary staff for their normal support to all MPs particularly their time around at the kitchen.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my government, the Ministers, backbenchers. I also would like to thank the Opposition, my Opposition, members of the Opposition, the Leader of Opposition, everyone for their support and understanding provided to all of us, in particular their comradeship, which is what I will not forget as one of our longest serving Members in this Parliament. What goes on in this House disappears as soon as we go out of the doors there. It shows maturity, and that is a good sign.

I also would like to thank the Permanent Secretaries for the hard work they have done in defending the budget. I thank also the media, especially SIBC that despite the issue about not giving them budgetary support, I am sure some arrangements have been made for them to cover these meetings to enable our people hear the daily proceedings of Parliament.

I also would like to thank the churches, the chiefs, the women organizations and leaders of this country for their help. The churches in particular for their continuous prayers and help in guiding the people they are responsible for. Like our colleague, the Member for Savo/Russells has said: unity is our common denominator. Unity is important for all of us, for each and everyone stakeholders who have done their part in the churches.

I would like to thank our good people throughout Solomon Islands for their understanding and their great resilience. We have gone through difficult times before and had it not been for their resilience and understanding, I am sure something very disastrous could have happened to this nation.

Mr Speaker, thank you again for giving me this opportunity and I support the motion.

Sitting suspended for lunch

Mr KWANAIRARA: Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on the motion of sine die moved in this honorable House.

Firstly, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank those who have contributed so far and hope that my contribution would be brief. Once again Mr Speaker, I make this contribution on behalf of the chiefs and people of North Malaita Constituency.

Mr Speaker, the nation is indeed passing through a very difficult time. It is interesting because the global community is becoming more and more aware of the need for humanity to be concerned about the most important matters facing leaders and each and every man, woman and child. Global warming up, mounting environmental problems, severe natural disasters, HIV/Aids, raising global terrorism are about few examples of the multitude of issues confronting and challenging all the humanity in the twenty first century.

Mr Speaker, the solution must come through continuous dialogue to create common understanding and genuine global corporation.

Mr Speaker, in Solomon Islands today, I wish to ask this honorable house what are the most important issues or challenges facing our nation and the people today? My honorable colleagues we cannot lead this nation to a desired future if we do not have these things clear in our minds. And most fundamentally is the vision we have in our minds and hearts for the nation and the people.

Mr Speaker, let me warn this honorable house not to be complacent and blindly assume that things are okay. The reality we face today is more uncertain and our people and the national community are wondering where we are heading. My hope and prayer is that the 50 leaders realize and appreciate that serious soul searching that is required.

Mr Speaker, to put this concern in another way, the nation is now being led by government responsibility and there is mounting evidence to prove that the economy has started to show negative signs especially in the businesses and in investment sectors.

Mr Speaker, we now know that hotel and resort occupancy rate is at its lowest

especially some resorts in the provinces. Time will tell when the owners of these resorts are going to sell these beautiful resorts.

Tourism is seriously affected and this is a clear manifestation of the situation alluded to earlier. These are the signs of impact of our present failures to look at itself and things are not right but counter productive, and not in the best interest of the nation.

Mr Speaker, no investors would risk coming here with their investment dollars given the current difficulties we have experienced and from the decisions that have deteriorated our public image, hence not conducive for investment.

Mr Speaker, we cannot allow this to continue or if we do, the consequences will not fall on anyone else but our ordinary people in the rural villages.

Mr Speaker, we have to consider the leadership style employed by our administration. I do not wish to list the issues again as we know them like we know the back of our hands.

Mr Speaker, this political problems and decisions are occurring frequently. It is a testimony to the serious lack of wide consultation, inability to listen to, and respect the views and concerns of other members of Parliament blatantly and disregard for the rule of law and the determination to carry out our once hidden agendas at all costs.

Mr Speaker, we are a democratic nation and leaders must heed to the principles of transparency, accountability and good governance and reflect the values and principles of our Christian faith.

Mr Speaker, before making my final remarks, the Premier of Malaita Province must be reminded of his support for the present government's policy that once the community knows the development program belongs to them they will appreciate meaningfully to achieve their goals. This promotes the value of ownership that belongs to their tribes and community that they must work to ensure it survives and grows.

Mr Speaker, this is a very important reason for comments during the debate of the budget speech and budget proper. I want to see the government increase funding to all

constituencies through their members of Parliament as there is a system already in place.

Mr Speaker, the Member of Parliament is best placed to understand the socio economic needs of the people rather than creating another expensive government support structure, define extension services for business and agriculture.

Mr Speaker, our people are very capable of looking after themselves. They have been doing this over the past hundred years. As national leaders our responsibility is to ensure that their socio and economic transformation is done well and within the context of the people.

Education and training Mr Speaker, is the underlying factor for our successful transition and transformation. I am still of the opinion that fifty public servants for the 50 constituencies should carefully go through and that further consultations need to be undertaken with the provincial government and respective Members of Parliament before a final decision is taken.

In conclusion let me conclude by first thanking you and your staff for managing well the affairs of the National Parliament. I wish to thank my colleagues in the Parliament for the participation and maturity during this Parliament sitting.

Finally Mr Speaker, I wish to thank my people of North Malaita for the understanding and support, especially the Tobaita House of Chiefs in the constituency. I am looking forward to working together with you all this year and pray that government's rural development program will be forthcoming to assist us in our development plans.

Mr Speaker, I just want to touch briefly on the motion of no confidence. Mr Speaker, many times when we hear about a motion of no confidence we think it is a war. Moving motions of no confidence in this House is not a new thing. It always happens to any parliament in our country that there must always be a motion of no confidence. This is very important for the checks and balances of the government.

Mr Speaker, it is like a family that always checks on each other or checks on its family members. The father must always check what his children are doing to see they are doing right things. The same thing happens here in Parliament.

Mr Speaker, I am surprised that sometimes we leaders take it as if it is a war. When a motion of no confidence is going to be raised we go and tell it out that a motion is coming up. We find all sorts of stories to back up the motion of no confidence. A motion of no confidence is a motion that is not new in Parliament, and so let us take it as gentlemen and as politicians.

Many times we have failed. Whenever there is a motion of no confidence we start to alert a lot of people for support. No, no, no. We are leaders, we are politicians. Anything that is raised within Parliament belongs to Parliament. We raised issues in here and solve it in here. Whether it is a motion to win a government or bring down a government or whatever, it is a motion within Parliament. A motion of no confidence is not supposed to mean that an island like this or a region like this will be against another island or region. No, no, no. That is not the purpose of a motion of no confidence.

Moving motions of no confidence is purely the role of the Opposition. That is what they are paid for, and that is they must raise concerns. It is not a motion to start a war nor is it to start any riot. No. Mr Speaker, it is something that Parliament must do. That is what this side of the House is here for, and that is to check on the government. We should not have the attitude that when a motion of no confidence is coming up we make people to be on standby to do something like this or that if we lose. My goodness! That is not on. That is not on, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, we must educate our people properly. We must not tell them wrong stories that would make them angry. We must inform our people that the opposition's role is to raise concerns. Whether the Opposition loses or wins, that is its role; our role is to raise concerns.

Mr Speaker, it is very important that we get this clear. We are mature leaders. Our people voted us during the Election Day to come here not to start arguments and riots. No. When I left my constituency, my people said that I must come to the government and find any good thing to take back to them. They did not tell me to come here and start riot or fight and bring nothing back to them. No.

Mr Speaker, I want to say that a motion of no confidence is a normal motion in Parliament. It is a normal practice to move a motion of no confidence. It is not something to start differences so that when I see the Minister of Finance I am scared of him otherwise he might punch me. No, no, no. That is not the case. We are all friends. We are all working together. We all talk together. That is what we want to establish. We have worked together last week and when we reach the time when a motion of no confidence was coming up everyone started to get frightened. He has been talking with the other Members of Parliament but he no longer talks with them this time. Why? We are merely here to do our jobs.

Mr Speaker, I want to make that clear so that we do not worry about what is happening inside Parliament. It is Parliament's business. This is not something for you to go around and gather battles there or an army waiting there or something like that.

We are giving wrong pictures to our people Mr Speaker. A motion is a motion, the same as any other motion and so we do not need to be frightened and we should talk about it. If there are any good reasons why any party loses then maybe they have good reasons, if not then nothing now. But it does not stop the work of the Opposition to go ahead with what they want to say.

Mr Speaker, finally I thank all the aid donors including the Asian Development Bank for their kind assistance to my people in North Malaita Constituency over the past years. Please be assured Mr Speaker, that we are prepared to work together with all the aid donors for the improvement of the social and economic well being of the three wards in North Malaita Constituency.

(hear, hear)

This is very important, Mr Speaker, regardless of whatever, we all must work together.

We should not go out and tell the Province that three Members of Parliament from Malaita are not working with us. What is the point? We are national leaders and we must think nationally. Not regionally but nationally. This is important. There is no point in saying

that the Member for North Malaita, Central Kwara'ae and East Are Are did not attend the ceremony denying developments in Malaita.

Mr Speaker, who is the person who really worked hard on this oil palm you are talking about? It is the Member for North Malaita. I brought it to that stage and you went and gave money to the people so that work can go on. That project is not a new thing. What you did is a very good thing by going ahead to complete the part that I left. That is good, very good; I really appreciate that. But it is not good saying that such and such Members did not attend the ceremony with us because they are against development in Malaita. No, no, no.

We are national leaders and we must think nationally. We must not only think regionally and say that because we are from Malaita we must all go on one side. No, Mr Speaker, if we start to do that this country will be divided. When the people of Western Province wanted a project they will all go one sided, and the same with Makira and we will end up arguing.

We are national leaders and we must look at the country as a whole. It is true that some things might not be available in our areas. But we do not have enough money to provide everything one time in every area in Solomon Islands. We want it but we just do not have the funds to do it.

Mr Speaker, I just want to remind everyone of us in this Parliament, including myself that we must work together for the benefit of this country. Mr Speaker, the Members for Mbaegu/Asifola, Lau/Mbaelelea and myself are working together at trying to construct a new mini hospital in Malu'u, which will be serving about 44,000 people. Our three wards have a population of about 44,000 people.

The hospital at Malu'u is just an area health centre and yet it is putting three people on one bed a day. Three people have to use one bed in one day. This is too much. It is a big population. That is why we must think more nationally and wider. The three Members, I have just mentioned from the northern region of Malaita Province, will be looking seriously this year or the following year in trying to put up one mini hospital in Malu'u to serve the people from North Malaita, starting from Asifola to this side

in Mbaelelea. That is our objective. That is working together we want. Do not divide us.

Mr Speaker, I know that a lot of us want to do something for our constituencies to safeguard us in the next election, but it is important to put priority in something that the majority of our people will benefit from.

Mr Speaker, with these few remarks, I fully support the motion moved by the Honorable Prime Minister yesterday. Thank you.

Hon SOFU: Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to be able to join other Members of Parliament to contribute to the motion of sine die moved by the Honorable Prime Minister yesterday.

Mr Speaker, I will begin by thanking your good self for the way in which you have conducted and controlled the debates of the 2007 Appropriation Bill 2007, which has been passed a few days ago.

Mr Speaker, I wish to also sincerely record my vote of thanks to the Clerk and staff of the National Parliament for their continuous support in making arrangements for our coming to attend this very important meeting of Parliament. Mr Speaker, I wish to also thank the Honorable Prime Minister for his boldness and confidence in leading this nation in this very difficult time.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to thank my colleague Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and Chief Accountants of the various ministries for the good work in preparing the 2007 national budget. In particular, I wish to record my sincere thanks to the Honorable Minister of Finance for presentation of the 2007 Appropriation Bill 2007.

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank senior politicians from both sides of the House for their valuable contributions to the 2007 national budget. I wish to assure this honorable House that I learned a lot from them, and I would like to thank them.

Mr Speaker, I wish to also register my sincere vote of thanks to the Special Coordinator of RAMSI and RAMSI personnel for the good work done in Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition and members of the

Opposition for their valuable contributions. They are instruments guiding the government in its decision making, and I wish to thank them.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to thank Christians from the various churches in Solomon Islands for their continuous support in praying for the government of Solomon Islands. In this regard, Mr Speaker, I am talking about the 50 national leaders sitting here on this floor of Parliament.

I must not forget Mr Speaker, to thank the chiefs, church leaders and people of my beloved constituency, East Kwaio

(hear, hear)

for their support rendered to me to represent them in this National Parliament.

Mr Speaker, I have a few observations to make on this floor of Parliament. Many times Members of Parliament on this side try to blame the other side and likewise that side is doing to this side.

Mr Speaker, we must be reminded that the rural people, the rural populace of this country who have given us their mandate do not expect to hear the kind of argument we are doing. They had enough hearing arguments on this floor of Parliament. They are listening to us and they know who is contributing and what we are talking about. They are expecting service delivery. They want to see ships go to the rural areas. They want to see social services reaching them. They want to feel small economical activities reaching them. They have had enough of pointing fingers at each other on this floor of Parliament as that is not in their interest. Not at all, they are not interested.

Mr Speaker, whatever issues we are concerned about in this House is not in the best interest of the rural dwellers. Not at all, Mr Speaker. They want to see something taking place. I would like to thank past governments for their efforts put through policies and strategies in trying to address situations in this nation.

Mr Speaker, this government too, the Grand Coalition for Change Government (GCCG) is also trying its effort to come up with a policy and strategy and program to address the situations of this country. So give us time. We

need you and we need each other. We need to support each other so that we can go forward.

Mr Speaker, I support the comments made by the Member for Rennell and Bellona.

(hear, hear)

That is right, and even comments from my honorable colleague for Shortlands.

(hear, hear)

I want comments like that because they are building me up and building us up prompting our hearts to go forward.

Mr Speaker, I was a bit disappointed of some comments made by the other side saying that they cannot work together with the government because the government's policy is different. Yes, it is different because our views are different from yours. But that is how we look at things. Whatever plans and policies that we come up with are from our hearts. Like the Leader of the Opposition always says that it is from his heart. Whatever policies this present government comes up with is from the heart. It is from the heart and so it is real.

Mr Speaker, the issues we have been talking about and which we see in the Solomon Star are not in the best interest of our people too. Not at all.

Mr Speaker, I will briefly touch on the rearmament issue. What time do we want to see this country armed? We have different views and understanding on this subject matter. I wish to inform this Parliament and the people of Solomon Islands the government's view on rearmament.

I support rearmament just because I believe it is appropriate for the Special Branch unit of the Police to be rearmed now while RAMSI is still here. What do you think, Mr Speaker? Do you want RAMSI to leave before we rearm the Police Force? What if anything goes wrong? Who would be there to assist? Who? I think it is very important that the Special Branch is started off with so that if anything goes wrong our friends are still here with us to help us. They will help train our police officers.

When I contributed to the motion of rearmament Mr Speaker, I touched on RAMSI. How long would RAMSI be in Solomon Islands? How long? RAMSI will one day leave us but is there any training program done by RAMSI to train our men? It is very important that they train our officers now. Train them now to be on standby so that when they leave our boys know what to do. This is very important, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the call made by the Prime Minister for us to work together, which my colleagues on the other side did not support, I think is the desire of our people. Our people want us to work together. They want to see services reach the four corners of Solomon Islands. Who will provide the services? It is supposed to be us who talk too much in this House. It is our duty to provide services to reach our people. But if we come here and point fingers at each other, then I am sorry our voices will continue to be always like that.

Mr Speaker, I think this present government has only been in office for about 10 months and so it is very important that we work together. It is only four years and so let us work together. If we fail then others can take over and come up with new policies and new programs.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion I would like to thank every public officer because they are the ones who are going to implement government programs. The message the Minister for Public Service echoed during his contribution to the budget is very clear, that this present government want to see officers who bend down and do their work in carrying out the policies of the government. I want to thank them for the good work they have done.

Mr Speaker, with these few remarks, I support the motion.

Mr KENGAVA: Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to also take this opportunity to contribute to the motion of sine die.

Mr Speaker, I would like to also appreciate the Prime Minister's motion because it gives me the opportunity to express my opinion and feelings on behalf of my people on issues of concern and also that for the nation.

Mr Speaker, first of all I had intended not to contribute to this motion because I was of

the opinion that things were not going according to how I would like it to be. But then I said to myself if I did so I would deny the rights of my people to be heard in this Parliament. So I stand here as a man from Choiseul, coming from the island of the Prime Minister.

(hear, hear)

I am very proud of him because that makes Choiseul come into focus in Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, I said to myself that no matter what I wear I am still from Choiseul. No matter what I say in this Chamber I am still from Choiseul. No matter what I believe in or what policies I have and what responsibilities I have, I am still from Choiseul, from a humble province faraway from Honiara, and coming from a simple background of people almost unknown in this country.

Mr Speaker, I had the courage to stand here because of one thing, and that is I am elected to this Chamber to represent my people as a national Member of Parliament. Therefore, this afternoon I will speak as a national Member of Parliament and not as a man from Choiseul.

First I wish to congratulate the Government for passing its first working budget, the Appropriation Bill 2007. Mr Speaker, public expectation is very high right out there, and now that the budget is passed public feeling is also even high waiting to see the fulfillment of many plans and promises on rural development policy, which the government must deliver and deliver it very quickly.

Mr Speaker, many believe on this government, which I do as well. Many saw the motion of no confidence by the Opposition as untimely. This is a view shared by many but it is very much a call to remind the government to focus on its plans and policies, and it should not lead the country astray.

Mr Speaker, people are now caught up with the bottom up approach, a slogan for the rural development policy. However, I would fail my duty as a national leader by giving a blind eye to issues of concern by my people and this nation. What I see that the government must seriously take note of in order to exercise good governance. In doing so, Mr Speaker, I am going to make observations and comments, not

as the Leader of the People's Alliance Party, not as a member of the Opposition, but a national leader representing the people of North West Choiseul.

First, Mr Speaker, the political scenario that we are in, in my opinion, is affecting a lot of people at large. The first group is the politicians, both national and provincial. I see the political situation facing this country since the coming into power of this government is causing a political tug of war because of different views between the government and the opposition due to the government's domestic and foreign policies and consequential actions affecting every one of us.

The second group of people affected by the political scenario, Mr Speaker, is people in the rural areas. People have become so engrossed in this political tug of war that they have mixed feelings. What they want is normalcy in their livelihoods. Therefore, the government is now in a better position with the passing of the 2007 budget, and with the motion of no confidence not going to be tabled as aired in the radio, the government now has the opportunity to carry out its obligations and duty for this country. The wisdom of bringing back normalcy is to listen to the voice of your people, the people of Solomon Islands. The people of Solomon Islands have spoken on many issues and it is time to listen to them because a wise man listens.

These issues are, just to list them as a reminder to the government now that you have the opportunity to implement your budget and your policies, are as follows:

1. Rearmament of the Police Force.
2. Exit plan for RAMSI.
3. Diplomatic standoff between Solomon Islands and Australia.
4. The suspended Attorney General issue
5. The Guadalcanal people's bona fide demands, and
6. The Bougainville Crisis spillover effects compensation claim by my people of North West Choiseul, especially the Batava ward

These are some of the major issues I would like to raise to the government. The people have spoken, so listen to them.

Mr Speaker, do not strictly follow your policies. Do not stick too much to regulations and rules. If the Constitution is not in favor of your people then change that part of the constitution so that it can accommodate the wishes of the people of this nation.

Mr Speaker, in my opinion, a sensible, prudent and true government of the people would find ways to resolve the above issues, taking into account also the balanced views of the Parliamentary Opposition who represent half of the population in the country and the masses, the people including organizations like the churches, the non governmental organizations and the civil society. Let us not brush aside their views.

It is true, Mr Speaker, that they may not represent people in a constituency or an electorate, but they represent people within their groups, and therefore they have a mandate as citizens of this country to tell us what they feel. And a wise government would listen to its people.

The second issue of national interest to me, Mr Speaker, is what I term as nationalism versus regionalism. I think at this time, all of us 50 Members of Parliament should scale ourselves to check which side of the balance scale we are in. Are we in the centre or right at the nationalism side or the regionalism side?

Mr Speaker, I think the political party allegiance in Solomon Islands politics is very much in fluidity. In our case, we cannot rely very much on political parties as it is unreliable. This is so because there is no legislation that recognizes and regulates political party system in this country in order to maintain stability and stamp out regionalism but encourages party politics that can transcend ethnicity, religion and whatever backgrounds we have. This is something I urge the government to think about very seriously in order to maintain unity in this country.

The other extreme is those of us who believe in regionalism should not seek re-election in 2010, but just stay in the provinces because that is where regionalism should be practiced.

As national leaders, Mr Speaker, we have a big concern to serve the national interest. However, when testing time comes like when a motion of no confidence is moved or a time to elect the Prime Minister or a time to choose the Speaker of this Parliament, I begin to notice during my time in this Parliament that we suddenly put aside national interest and we go into our regional grouping or our own interest groups and put aside party politics.

Sir, this is not good for this country. We must find ways and means to control and minimize that trend of politics in Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, Solomon Islands is a nation of diversity. I always like what the Member for Aoke/Langa Langa used to say, 'unity in diversity' and 'diversity in unity'. Probably 'unity in diversity' is what we should take note of.

This country is made up of many cultures, ethnic groups, island groups and so on. Such diversity, as we all are aware of, could be an advantage to Solomon Islands to nurture nationalism, to encourage nationalism, to help nationalism grow. However, it can be a dangerous weapon to divide and destroy this nation if we nurture regionalism and encourage regionalism to grow because this country is already a diverse nation. It is very easy at the tip of your finger to break up this country.

Let us grow nationalism, and we 50 Members of Parliament having the title of national members of Parliament, let it be so, are national members of Parliament and so let us perform that way.

Mr Speaker, I speak here not as the Leader of the People's Alliance Party and not as a member of the Opposition. The bench there is full and so I stand on this side. If there are some spaces there I can go and sit down.

(hear, hear)

But I speak here as a Member of Parliament for North West Choiseul, a national leader.

Mr Speaker, if I may use an illustrative manner, I believe there is no place for national politics in Solomon Islands. Let me use Choiseul Province as an example. Choiseul Province has only three Members of Parliament,

which includes the Prime Minister himself, the Minister of Lands, and myself who is standing and speaking right now.

Mr Speaker, if the three of us decided to go on regional basis and come together, there are only three of us and so we cannot match the other 47 Members of this House.

Mr Speaker, I do not have the number if I go into my regionalism point of view. But what I did is raise concern, raise suspiciousness, raise fears and raise questions as to why a group of people is going into that trend. What is the point of this?

As national leaders let us not create fear, suspicion and questions amongst our people of Solomon Islands, but rather we should make them see that we are moving this country together. In spite of our very diverse backgrounds and situations, we are keeping Solomon Islands as a united country. It is therefore important to enhance national type of politics in this Chamber, Mr Speaker. We should find ways to stomp out regionalism.

I suggest and urge strongly that the Integrity Bill be tabled in this Chamber in the next meeting of Parliament. It is a bill that will support party politics in order to transcend ethnic groups' regionalism amongst politicians and thus enhance party politics and bring nationalism in this country. The integrity bill must come. It must be like the bottom up approach.

The bottom up approach of the rural development policy addresses the economic needs of our people in the rural areas, and the Integrity Bill addresses the political needs of this country. The longer the integrity bill is put aside, the more we are open to all kinds of challenges, corruption, and people in power influencing individual members of this Parliament, regional groups of Parliament, sections of this Parliament and thus not moving this country in any direction except going around in circles. Like a dog, if I might use as an example, Mr Speaker, the head is the government, turning around biting its tail - the Opposition. Let us not be like that.

Bring in the Integrity Bill in the next meeting of Parliament so that we address the political needs of this country. We are now bringing to this Parliament the bottom up

approach of the rural development policy. Let us address these two side by side. Let us address the political side as the next move.

Mr Speaker, I would now like to turn to the bottom up policy versus the 2007 budget. I am not going to debate the budget but I want to study the budget and see whether it really accommodates the bottom up approach.

The 2007 budget is the work plan of the government and the bottom up approach is the idea or the intention to implement the budget. I therefore would like to say that the recurrent budget is the most important part of the budget the government is going to use to help itself in helping the people. That was what the recurrent budget really emphasizes.

I fully agree that the recurrent budget really emphasizes the rural development policy because a lot of allocations to the various ministries are to do with the rural people. I congratulate the government for that. But the question is whether it is really the bottom up approach.

I did not contribute to the budget, Mr Speaker, because I would like to point out my view on the bottom up approach versus the 2007 budget during the motion of sine die.

Mr Speaker, the question is whether the bottom up approach is really reflected in the 2007 budget. For me, Mr Speaker, the recurrent budget has these very special outstanding features. The first one is that most of the funds in the recurrent budget are controlled by ministries. Government officers will decide on what to be done with the funds in the various ministries. They tell the provinces what to be done, etc.

This reminds me a bit of colonial days, Mr Speaker, when officers go down to the districts telling people to plant cocoa, plant coconut, telling them to build clinics, and telling them this is what is good for you, etc. That is what happened during colonial days. And a great amount of money allocated to the ministries to carry out the programs, also reminds me of colonial days.

Sir, in my view the provincial governments that should really take the leading role or probably the principle role in carrying out the bottom up approach, will only receive a total of more than \$35million in this budget.

This is a small budget that will only meet the salaries of direct employees, grants to provincial members, paying of bills of provincial secondary schools probably, some payments to clinics, repairing of one or two broken bridges, etc.

In other words, the provinces which are expected to play a major role in this bottom up approach are not given the opportunity in their budgets. With a total budget of \$781,379,283, only \$35million is the actual money that will go to the hands of the provinces that the premiers and their executives will have the full authority to expend. But the rest belongs to the ministries. Sir, once again, is this the bottom up approach?

Sir, let us look at the development budget. I really praise the government for the development budget because it is inline with what I also believe in. As I have said I stand here not as a Member of the Opposition but as the MP for North West Choiseul. I too believe in a development budget that must be controlled by the national government. Every year we must take control of the development budget.

Mr Speaker, I congratulate the current government for becoming more realistic by reducing dependency on foreign donors. Whilst it is good to receive donor assistance in the development budget, sometimes donors influence the direction that we would like to carry out our development programs.

When the national government is in control of the development budget it is in the position to direct how it wants to develop its country. The only concern is that we must make sure we have the revenue or money to fund our part of the contribution.

With that comment, Mr Speaker, once again the development budget is one hundred percent controlled by the national government. Mr Speaker, in view of that, I come back to the question, does the 2007 budget really match up with the bottom up approach. I start to feel that the provinces have a lesser role to play in the 2007 budget. The provinces will only wait for government officers to go down and tell them what to do and they have to negotiate. The promises must have plans and policies that must be in line with the government of the day's policy. In that context, I feel provinces are helpless in that situation.

Currently provinces have chronic problems, chronic problems ever since Independence. Problems of housing, land for development, economic infrastructures, encouragement for investors to go down there; very few investors in the provinces despite of the new Foreign Investment Bill coming into effect. Public officers are almost forgotten in provinces especially in Temotu and Choiseul. The direct employees are at the political will of provincial governments. I think the national government must fully address these difficulties.

Sir, in reality, I would therefore say that whilst I appreciate the national budget as emphasizing rural development policy and slowly getting away from the grips of foreign donors on the development part of the budget, I have this to say. In my assessment, it is the implementation of the 2007 Budget that would really tell whether it is bottom up approach or otherwise.

In that context, Mr Speaker, my opinion is that the implementation of the 2007 Budget is in reality a top down approach because all the funds are controlled by the ministries and provinces have very weak financial position on this rural development policy. Therefore, it registers the question whether the government is recentralizing. Are we recentralizing again?

Sir, I would therefore like to encourage the government to look carefully at this particular issue. I do not blame the government for this because it is trying to find a new direction to paying more attention to the provinces. And the time you have been asking for, Mr Speaker, is being given to you now. Starting from next week on you have the time to implement that policy.

Sir, in my opinion the real bottom up approach, the real one will not be fully realized until the state government system is in place. It is my fear that I do not want the bottom up approach, the rural development policy, as it appears now, to be a recentralization of power by the government. The desire and wish of my people in Choiseul for statehood must carry on this process.

This is a constitutional process, as I have said, and therefore I would like to encourage the government that in the next meeting of parliament either in July or

December, it must make sure the draft federal constitution is ready to be tabled in this House so that it addresses another important issue outstanding in this country through the constitutional process to bring about changes that needs to bring Solomon Islands to a level that can match other nations of the region and this world as well.

The rural development policy is addressing the economic needs of this country, as I have said. I want to see two more bills come before this Chamber. The Government for Change, I challenge you to bring in the Integrity Bill to this Chamber in order to improve the political needs of this country and bring the draft federal constitution to address the constitutional process. Only when these bills are in place then Solomon Islands is ready to match countries like New Zealand and Australia in years to come.

Sir, with this, I just quickly want to comment on two other issues of national interests that are of concern to me before I sit down. First, Mr Speaker, I am encouraged by the Minister of Education's hard work in seeing that the USP fourth campus is going to be built here in Honiara. Sir, university level education right here in Solomon Islands is an overdue issue and so I congratulate the government for the move it is taking right now. However, let us not be carried away with the USP fourth campus as it is a regional university. The fourth campus belongs to the USP and it is built in Solomon Islands at the expense of the Solomon Islands Teachers College, and I do not support it

Sir, whilst we support the USP fourth campus, I would like to encourage the government to put more money into the College of Higher Education, the only premier education institution in this country to develop it become a university college or probably an institute of technology or whatever you might want to call it, it is up to the good learned doctor, the Minister of Education to look into it. In other words, we must develop a policy that is in line with the USP fourth campus. For the final goal of Solomon Islands is that it must have a national university of its own in year 2015. That should be a good year date to mark.

Our national university should be our symbol of national unity. It should be a pride of education. It should cut down the cost of

sending students overseas. It should be a means of employing our graduates, doctorates and many of our scholars. I congratulate the government for that matter.

Choiseul's standing in the current budget, as a leader representing the people of my province and North West Choiseul Constituency, I am also interested to see what the government can do for my people so that it encourages me to speak more on the needs of this nation.

I congratulate the government ensuring Choiseul Province has a share of the development budget, especially towards the Choiseul Bay township development, housing for the health sector and funds that will be readily available through their three Members of Parliament of the Province.

The only point of concern here, Mr Speaker, is that I do not see specific funds allocated to address the Bougainville Crisis spillover effect compensation claim for my people. I do hope the next budget caters for this long overdue claim.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, the government will now have a chance to implement its work plan in the 2007 budget. Let us remember that you need a peaceful environment to carry out your rural development policy, and no one else can create that peaceful environment but the government itself.

A peaceful environment must be achieved not by force, not by intimidation but peaceful freedom of choice, peaceful coexistence between all of us that make up this beautiful country, the nation of Solomon Islands.

At this juncture, Mr Speaker, I wish to thank your good self, the Clerk and the parliamentary staff for your hard work in facilitating this meeting. There are times when we might not agree with decisions you made but in the end, Mr Speaker, we thank you very much for making sure this meeting runs according to the standing orders of the Parliament.

Finally, I would like to thank my people of North West Choiseul for bearing with me during the trying times of 2006. With your willingness we can help each other through the government's program of rural development policy and the bottom up approach. I am sure that we can facilitate and foster further

development in the constituency for better livelihood.

Thank you, and I support the motion, Mr Speaker.

Hon MANETOALI: Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me the floor to contribute to the sine die motion moved by the Honorable Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, I shall be very brief in my contribution. First of all, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you and your Clerk and Parliament Officers for your time and tireless efforts during this Parliament Meeting. Thank you too for your patience.

Secondly, Mr Speaker I would like to thank my people of Gao/Bugotu constituency for their continuous prayers and support for the leaders of this nation, especially during this Eight Parliamentary Meeting. I thank my Gao/Bugotu chiefs and elders for your continuous leaders of our people in our villages in Gao/Bugotu.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank also the very hard working Minister of Finance for bringing to Parliament the 2007 Appropriation Bill. I would also like to thank officials of the Ministry of Finance for putting together the Budget and assisting their Minister. I also would like to thank Minister of Planning and Aid Coordination and his officers for the efforts they have put in putting together the development estimates of the 2007 budget.

I would like to thank officials in the various ministries for the work and efforts put into assisting in compiling the recurrent and development estimates of the various ministries which assisted the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning in putting together the 2007 Budget.

I also thank officials of my Ministry for the time and effort and work they have put into assisting and putting together the recurrent and development estimate of my Ministry and the National Judiciary.

Mr Speaker, the 2007 budget is a historical one to my Ministry. History means history here Mr Speaker. It is historically in that it is the first time that any executive government has recognized and has done something practical about the intentions of our constitution that the

judiciary is one of the three arms of government in a democratic system of government, namely the legislature, executive and judiciary. I thank the government and the Minister of Finance for understanding the independence of the judiciary.

The 2007 Budget is the first budget where there is a separate head for the judiciary. This is very significant. In the past the activities of the judiciary were restricted by the budgetary process which requires processing of payments to go through the Ministry of Justice before it goes to the Ministry of Finance for payments to be made. This is a very long process and has always leads to delay in payment. As a result, court activities like court tours and sittings had to be abandoned or rescheduled, resulting in loss of time for the courts, costs incurred by clients and users of the courts and work loads piling up. If this is not arrested quickly, it can lead to loss of confidence in our judicial and justice system.

I must thank this government for recognizing the needs of the judiciary and doing something about it by giving the judiciary a separate head in its recurrent budget. I am sure further improvements will be made in years to come.

Mr Speaker, a separate head recurrent budget for the judiciary is intended to allow the judiciary have more say and control over the use of its budget. The flow-on effect of this is that the courts will be in a position to plan and carry out their work programs without much interference. A separate head for the judiciary is a first step in implementing this government's policy statement.

The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs and the Judiciary intend to work closely with the Ministry of Finance, the Attorney General's Chambers and the Office of the Prime Minister to work towards the next step of fulfilling this government's policy of ensuring the constitutional intentions in regard to the autonomy of the legislature and the judiciary is carried out.

Mr Speaker, I am glad to say, as I stated in my contribution to the debate on the second reading of the 2007 Appropriation Bill, that the 2007 Budget will allow my Ministry and the National Judiciary to carry out their normal activities and additional activities in 2007, some of which I had mentioned in my contribution to

the second reading of the 2007 Appropriation Bill. The expansion of judicial services throughout the country will be complemented by other departments of my Ministry.

Since the Budget has just been passed at the beginning of this year, work must start immediately to implement the programs intended to be implemented under this budget. We have no time to spare and so I therefore call on every one of us Minister, Members of Parliament, Public Officers and other stakeholders to get down to work and implement the programs we intend to implement under this Budget.

Mr Speaker, Law and Order is a prerequisite to other developments taking place in a country. We must try to support the institutions in our country that will ensure Law and Order is not only maintained but enhanced. We must not undermine them as this can be detrimental to our development endeavors.

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank all the officers of my Ministry for the work they are doing to help maintain law and order in this country. I must especially thank all lawyers and judicial officers of my Ministry for working tirelessly and fearlessly to uphold the rule of law in this country and ensure that justice is administered without fear or favor or ill will throughout this country.

While there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to have a well functioning justice system, I am pleased to say that with the commitment of everyone in my Ministry, the government and our partners and other stakeholders, the wheels of justice is continuing to roll and roll out to everywhere throughout the country.

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the Australian Government who through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, RAMSI has assisted my Ministry a lot through the RAMSI Law and Justice Program. I thank them for recognizing the importance of maintaining the rule of law in this country. I thank them for the many infrastructures development they have assisted us with.

Mr Speaker, as to the question of reasonableness of detention raised by some of my colleagues in this honorable House, the question of whether or not a period of detention

is reasonable cannot be assessed in the abstract. Whether it is reasonable for an accused to remain in detention must be assessed in its case according to its specific features. Continued detention can be justified in a given case only if there are specific indications of genuine requirement of public interest, which notwithstanding the presumption of innocence outweighs the rule of respect for individual liberty.

The persistence of reasonable suspicion that a person arrested has committed an offense is a condition seen or known for the lawfulness of the continued detention. But after lapse of time it no longer suffices. The court must then establish whether the other grounds given by the judicial authorities continue to justify the deprivation of liberty. Where such grounds were relevant and sufficient, the court must also be satisfied that the national authorities displayed special diligence in the conduct of the proceedings.

Mr , in relation to the 14 days mentioned by some speakers, that 14 days is a requirement under the Criminal Procedure Code where a detainee has to be brought to the court for further remand. That is where the prosecution has to apply for further remand and the defense has to apply for bail, and if bail is not granted there would be further remand after those 14 days. So that 14 days requirement is contained in the Criminal Procedure Code.

Mr Speaker, with this short contribution to the sine die motion moved by the Honorable Prime Minister, I support the motion and I beg to take my seat.

Mr SOPAGHE: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to contribute very briefly to the sine die motion moved by the Honorable Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, I would like to briefly touch on a few points. Firstly, I would like to thank the present government for taking a very constructive step in creating the post of Constituency Development Officers for all 50 constituencies. In this way, the government of the day through the Public Service Department has found the way to fully implement the bottom up approach amongst our rural dwellers throughout the country.

Mr Speaker, on national projects, I am happy to say that the mainroad that runs through my constituency on North Guadalcanal is now fully tar sealed. This makes the transportation of people and goods to and from Honiara very efficient and effective. I understand that work on the new Ngalibiu Bridge is also part of the post conflict road rehabilitation loan, and would urge those responsible to start work on this as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, although it is very satisfying to observe that work on the main road is progressing very well, I am still very concerned that feeder roads within my constituency are still in a very bad state. Some of these feeder roads also have bridges that need to be repaired.

Mr Speaker, I hope the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development can attend to the feeder roads and bridges in North Guadalcanal Constituency for funds allocated for this purpose in the Ministry's 2007 allocation. If not, I kindly request the Ministry of Infrastructure and development to utilize the sum of \$1million in the 2007 development budget for survey under the National Transport Strategy in my constituency in the first instant.

Mr Speaker, I have noted with much appreciation the allocation of \$1million for rural water supply and sanitation project for rural areas under the Ministry of Health and Medical Services 2007 estimates. I hope the Ministry of Health would release the guidelines to access this fund as soon as possible, so that some of it can be use for my people in North Guadalcanal Constituency who badly need proper water and sanitation.

Mr Speaker, on Agriculture and Livestock, it is no secret that my constituency of North Guadalcanal has been the backbone of the agriculture economy in Solomon Islands for so many years. Furthermore, I am pleased to hear from the speech by the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock during the debate of the 2007 Budget that our people will be active participants rather than being idle and bystanders in the development of our agriculture resources. This is the only way that is acceptable to my people because in the past they have been pushed to the margin by major

national development projects such as the SIPL and SOLRICE.

Mr Speaker, in this regard the model adopted by the GPPOL at the moment is now the right way to proceed as it encourages local participation and partnership in decision making. As a result some landowners in my constituency have already embarked on the palm oil out grower's scheme whilst some landowners are now considering giving more land for oil palm development.

Mr Speaker, I am also encouraged by the Agriculture Minister's statement about his Ministry's desire to invest in the former Solrice Field at Metapona and the surrounding areas for rice planting. I would urge the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to quickly sort out the land issues concerning this parcel of land so that rice planting can commence without further delay.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's \$3million allocation on support for the rehabilitation of copra and cocoa industry in the 2007 development estimates is very good news for local farmers in North Guadalcanal. Therefore, I urge the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to release the guidelines for accessing this fund as soon as possible so that the local copra and cocoa farmers in North Guadalcanal constituency can benefit from this fund and not miss out again as was the case in the past.

Mr Speaker, as an exporter of cocoa and other products, I would like the Solomon Islands Government to recognize and give all Solomon Islanders cocoa exporters special recognition by way of tax exemption, funds and other incentives because we bring foreign reserves into the country.

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, I am very disappointed that the small grant funding for cocoa and copra producers has been discontinued in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock 2007 development estimates. Therefore, Mr Speaker, as the Chairman of CEMA, I would like to call on the government of the need to support CEMA with more funds so that it will assist rural farmers with technical advice on improving production, quality of crops such as cocoa and copra. Also I would like to ask my good Minister of Finance to reinstate the suspension of the CEMA budget with the SIG

because CEMA is playing an important role in the development of our country.

In addition, Mr Speaker, the Sasape Marina slipway needs to be improved and upgraded. I have already visited this facility in Tulagi. It is very important for the government to improve the capacity of the slipway from 300 metric tones to 1,000 metric tones so that it can cater for the maintenance requirement of all ship that operate within our waters.

Mr Speaker, I am also happy to see the national cattle development project worth more than \$1.7million in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock 2007 development estimates. I hope that the former cattle holding grounds at Black Post can be utilized again to revitalize the cattle industry in Solomon Islands. Furthermore, many farmers in my constituency would be interested to be involved once again in the cattle industry as this was previously a profitable undertaking by our local cattle farmers prior to the ethnic tension.

Mr Speaker, I am aware that the reopening of the Gold Ridge Mine is a priority of the government as well. The potential for any negative environment impact from the operations of the mining operation will be experienced within my constituency, which is downstream and thus I wish to impress on the government to ensure that the concerns of my population must be taken on board seriously.

The Gold Ridge development is a major development that has provided an economic opportunity for my people as well. In that sense, I wish to see the project developed in an economic and social environment conscious of its highest standard.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of my people of North Guadalcanal Constituency, I would like to express their views on the issue of rearming the Solomon Islands Police Force. Mr Speaker, I wish to highlight that out of all the 50 constituencies in the country, my constituency is probably the worst affected during and after the ethnic tension. Indeed, my people have lived in fear of the gun on a daily basis for over four years. They live in fear because it is the Police Field Force that came around our village with guns to shoot and kill our sons who are simply trying to protect themselves and the rest of our people and communities.

Mr Speaker, the memories of the PFF running around with high powered guns in our villages is still very fresh in the minds of my people. In fact, the parents and relatives of the young men who have been killed or wounded by the PFF are still asking me the question, 'When is the government going to compensate our sons' lives or injury?' I cannot provide a good answer for them.

Mr Speaker, it is the PFF that carried out the killings and not the MEF, and therefore my people of North Guadalcanal do not support the rearming of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force at this time. They do not support it for the following reasons:

- (1) rearming is too early or premature as the memories and atrocities committed by the PFF during the ethnic tension are still very fresh in my people's memory.
- (2) reconciliation has not yet been made between the government and my people today.
- (3) We have worked very hard after the tension to have our village and communities weapon free after the tension. Rearming the Police will send a wrong signal to our youths.
- (4) Most of our people and communities do not yet trust the Police. If the issue here is for the safety of our Governor General and the Prime Minister then perhaps we can ask Taiwan or any of our Melanesian neighbors such as PNG, Fiji or Vanuatu to provide such security.

Mr Speaker, with these few remarks, I support the motion.

Mr TOZAKA: Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the floor to contribute to this traditional adjourning motion of sine die moved by the honorable Prime Minister. Accordingly, I would like to join other honorable colleagues to thank the honorable Prime Minister for moving this motion.

Sir, I also would like to join honorable colleagues to acknowledge great thanks for the assistance and courtesies accorded to all honorable Members by the various officers who take part in this Meeting of Parliament.

Firstly, Sir, I would like to sincerely thank you for the excellent manner uphold, which you preside over this meeting. I would also like to thank the Deputy Speaker, the MP for Savo/Russells for his assistance as well. The same goes to the Clerk and her administrative team for facilitating this meeting. Thanks goes as well to other special offices in Parliament, the Hansard Office as well and officers that deal with the reform program in Parliament.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the media, the SIBC, the Solomon Star, for their efficient work in keeping our public well informed of the events and proceedings of the meeting. Also, I would like to take this opportunity in thanking the Public Service, all Permanent Secretaries and their respective staff members for their help in facilitating this meeting. I would also like to thank the Commissioner of Police supervising or deputizing and the Special Coordinator of RAMSI for security coverage of this meeting.

Having said this, I would be very brief as most of the points I would like to make have already been well covered by other speakers who have spoken before me.

Before I do so, I would also like once again to acknowledge the honorable Minister of Finance, the MP for Gizo/Kolombangara for successfully presenting the 2007 Appropriation Bill 2007 which we have passed unanimously in this House.

Having said this I would now make one or two points before I resume my seat.

As I used to do, my comments will be on both sides as a national leader as well as the Member of Parliament for my constituency of North Vella representing them in all matters that I would be contributing.

Sir, the Budget that has been passed is now in the hands of the public servants. It is my hope after listening to the various Ministries' commitment to the budget that they would be working very closely with their Permanent Secretaries and their officials in making sure the Budget is fully and timely implemented.

What I am referring to here are three points. The first point that is very important is 'work'. The word 'work' is very small but it means a lot. Work means to work very hard to implement the policies of the government. Our

culture is a culture of people wanting to enjoy time, plenty of leisure and very little time for work. If we do not change this culture in the Public Service so that public policies are implemented then it would be very difficult for us to implement the policies of government. I am speaking on experience because this is not a new ambitious policy of the government. This is a government policy that has been around since we became independent, and the story is always the same.

The other thing I would like to raise here is 'commitment'. Sir, our attitude once again is that once we pass something we sign ourselves off and pass the buck to others. We pass the work to others saying our work is finished, the budget has been passed and now it is the work of the Permanent Secretaries and staff to implement it. That is the kind of attitude we seem to have. I would like to emphasize that this is not true. The Prime Minister emphasized yesterday the importance of the government's policy to be implemented from day one right to the end as directed by the government.

Another point I would like to raise here is the lack of working together. The relationship between Ministers and Permanent Secretaries is very important. There is a weakness in the system in that frequently Ministers unnecessarily override Permanent Secretaries when it comes to implementing of policies, interfering with professional people in the Public Service who are implementing the policies of the government. This is one area that kills the working relationship between ministries and the implementing authority, resulting in the total failure of implementing government policies.

I therefore call on all Ministers and Government Backbenchers assigned to statutory organizations and responsibilities to get out of the Permanent Secretary's back, get out of the General Manager's back and allow them to operate freely. They should be allowed to operate using their professional skills and knowledge to implement government policies because they are trained to do these things. They are ones who know the nuts and bolts, the skills of moving policies forward. They should be allowed to implement policies without unnecessarily interfering into them.

I am not emphasizing here that we should not work with them or Ministers should not work with them. What I am emphasizing here is a partnership working relationship between these two key people in the ministries to see that policies are working.

Sir, the Prime Minister stated categorically yesterday that we must not forget the provinces in our policy undertakings. We must keep them informed of what we are doing. This is very important because they are our collective authorities at the rural level.

Our connection as politicians at the rural level is not very strong as yet – the connection between us and the provincial governments through Parliament. The authority at the rural level is still the provincial government. So if we bypass them without keeping them informed, we know what is going to happen. Human as they are, they sometimes feel let down and so their support and cooperation with us or with the government to implement policies may not be there.

I am referring to a matter I have already raised in my contribution to the budget, and that is the appointment of 50 constituency officers for the constituencies. If the provinces have not yet been properly consulted on this area, there is no harm in delaying the recruitment of these officers until proper consultations with relevant authorities including honorable Members is done before implementation of this policy.

Another matter, Mr Speaker, I would like to briefly touch on is foreigners. There are some racist implied remarks or connotations I would say that have been made about foreigners in the country by certain Ministers on the government side. Probably when making such remarks they may say it is a slip of the tongue when defending the localization reform program of the government on the bottom up approach. These remarks are being heard very clearly by the people concerned including our people and our students in schools as well.

I mention this because we are supposed to be national leaders. We are supposed to be mentors for our people to encourage foreign investors, tourists and our own people to live in peace and harmony. We must create a feeling harmony living together with other races in our country called the happy isles.

I would like to emphasize here that the last thing we would want them to say is to call Solomon Islands a racist country. Sir, it is enough already. They have called us enough names already. They called this country a failed state, a vulnerable state and so on. We adopted these names because of our carelessness.

We must always be mindful of the fact that Solomon Islands is no longer an island of its own. We are part and parcel of the global village of countries in this world. Solomon Islands is a member of the Commonwealth, a member of the United Nations, and a member of various other international organizations. And not only is this country a member, but it is also a signatory to various protocols and conventions that makes this country not an island anymore but a nation inside a big nation for the people. Therefore, whether we like it or not we are obliged by these various requirements to live as one family in this great nation.

If this is further reduced to our own family situation as the first unit of institution, we will find that our family is no longer a pure Solomon Islands family. Through intermarriage we have become a multi-cultural family.

Honiara, of course, if you go down town you will find that it is no longer Honiara, as we know it before. Honiara is no longer only represented by all the provinces but it is represented by everybody from other countries as well, which is very good indicating we are playing our part as a member of this very big global village in this world. Therefore, professing the theory of avoiding foreign influence, especially in our system of government including 'foreign aid', to use the common phrase of the Prime Minister, is a fallacy.

Mr Speaker, our problem is not foreign aid influence. Our problem is not managing our economy and not governing ourselves properly. Our problem is that we do not know how to live within our means. For example, if we only have \$10 in the bank account, instead of disciplining our spending within that budget, we go ahead and spend more than that making ourselves to live in a debt situation or a borrowed life. Even if we cut all foreign aid and live by our cocoa, coconut, and other local products as envisaged by the government, if our spending spree culture

continues to be entertained in our system then we do not have any hope for improvement.

My point here is that we ought to really go back to the basic principle, going back to the basics again on how to do things in life. Let us not try to be hypocrites by blaming our problems on others, but let us accept those problems with humility. We must identify our weaknesses and try to integrate into other cultures for transformation so that we change.

Sir, do not forget that every people who are here, foreigners who are in our country, are guests in our country. We are the bosses of our country and we are the hosts in our country. We invite them to come into our country to help us, be it RAMSI, be it those who come to work for the government, the donors, the Churches or whoever that comes into our country that we accept to come through our immigration legislation, they come into our country as our guest and we are supposed to be responsible hosts and not someone in a kicking competition.

Sir, on foreign affairs, I would like to urge the Minister responsible, who is not here at the moment, to once again speed up whatever process the Ministry is currently undertaking at this time to normalize this relationship with our friend Australia.

John Howard is very right in saying that he cannot meet our Prime Minister at this point in time until their respective Foreign Minister done their homework and pave the way for them to talk. I totally agree with him. The Prime Minister of Australia is actually telling the Foreign Affairs Minister to stop passing the buck and get on with the job of opening up communication with each other. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no further options but to use the Prime Minister's word yesterday to grow up. We must grow up.

Some of us have gone past our growing age, we cannot grow anymore. But grow up. Yes I agree with the Hon Prime Minister that we grow up and give the situation, our relationship with Australia a leadership face. Give him a leadership face by proceeding immediately to allow the Head of Mission of Australia to Solomon Islands to present his credentials.

Sir, if the Prime Minister of Australia who is a very busy person just like the Prime Minister himself, hence letters of credential

usually takes two or three months to be presented, has given time over other Ambassadors and High Commissioners who are on the queue, to our High Commissioner in Canberra. I am sure our Hon Prime Minister should reciprocate on the same manner and the same spirit of reconciliation with his counterpart.

Sir, very briefly on foreign investment. You would remember very well that we lost most of our foreign investors during the time of the ethnic tension. We lost the SIPL, the Solomon Taiyo fishing industry, the coconut industry, cocoa industry, and certain tourism industry were shut down during that time.

There were travel restrictions imposed by certain countries to safeguard their people coming to Solomon Islands. When law and order was subsequently reintroduced and security provided by the Regional Mission of Solomon Islands and security was assured, investors flopped back into our country. Visitors came back, tourists came back, everybody was happy to come back into our country. They took us by our words that Solomon Islands is no longer a threat to them mainly because our declaration of Solomon Islands as a weapons free country according to the Facilitation Act passed in this House in 2003. Our country is free meaning no threat, no intimidation and fear and our country is free from the threat of weapons.

Sir, this enjoyment of life and this sigh of relief can still be felt at this time when we stand up in this Chamber and when we also go outside. We are all enjoying it. Even if we go to the provinces, our people are enjoying this and are saying, "Thank goodness that we do not have anymore threats". What they mean is that even the .22 guns that people at home have in their possession were also removed. That is public knowledge to everybody. In other words, in the village it is also guns or weapons free.

I have already covered this in my contribution to the disarmament motion. But I would just like to say here that we seem to be coming back to the crossroads again on this matter. I would like to ask the government to say, can we continue enjoy this freedom? Can we continue enjoy this present situation which is presented by the situation where there are no weapons around?

Mr Speaker, I can understand the government's point on this. There is no dispute about that. Even what you are saying under the Constitution or under the legislation of the Police Act, I totally agree with you. But the point is when you mention gun our population are nervous and are really scared of it. Just the mention of the word 'gun' is enough to scare people. They reflect back to the situation we went through during those days.

Sir, what I mean here is that before we reintroduce weapons into our country, perhaps education has to come into play. There must be awareness made for these people. We have to educate our people. For us there is no problem. We understand each other. But our people, listening to them on the media as well as through other avenues, have expressed their feelings of fear. They were affected by what had happened during the ethnic tension. I know that probably the government is exaggerating it. I understand what you mean, but the people have given us their perception and feelings on this gun issue. I invite the government and urge the government that as national leaders let us listen to our people and our women as well who represent the women in our society as well as other stakeholders who are totally not happy or are rejecting the idea totally of any mention of weapons in our society.

Having said that, coming back now to my constituency I have already mentioned in the budget that there is nothing specific in the budget like others and not only North Vella on projects development in my particular constituency, except of course the Rural Constituency Development Fund from the ROC which has been adopted into the consolidated fund as that of SIG. This is the only fund that reaches our people in the rural areas, and for that I would like to thank the ROC for its kind assistance to our people.

On behalf of my people too, I would also like to thank other donor countries for their help to my constituency in the various fields of development, small and big, I would like to thank them, and not only to my constituency but the country as a whole.

Before I resume my seat I would like to just mention here to the Minister of Forests who is not here today to continue to scrutinize in his

bottom up approach or the government's bottom up approach spirit to control illegal logging in our country. We are experiencing this quite badly in North Vella, and I would like to remind the Minister of Forests if he could take note of this.

To the Minister of Lands, I also would like to remind him if he could speed up the process of reclaiming alienated lands. This is very important for the redevelopment for the bottom up approach of the government. We also would like to take part in some of our very important coconut plantations in North Vella, plantations that contribute to the economy of the Western Province at this point in time. We would like to take part in this area. These are the areas we would like to administer.

On the Ministry of Education, I always admire the Minister of Education on his reform program policies. I questioned him on an area that is very important, not only for North Vella but the people of this nation, and this is on school fees. My question to him was that the amount of money given to the Ministry is substantial enough for him to standardize school fees. His answer was that the school fees of some schools have been skyrocketing and so are very, very, expensive for our parents to meet. I think it should be standardized now. The answer from the Ministry of Education, which I appreciate, is that it is going to happen next year. But I am sure as a hard working Minister he will be able to introduce it this year. I am sure he will be able to do that and if he does that he will be very well remembered by parents. May be he would like to champion that, but this is a challenge to the Minister of Education.

Finally, on behalf of my chiefs, elders and people of North Vella who perhaps are listening, I convey my best wishes to all colleagues on both sides of the House. The Ministers, I thank them very much for answering our questions and for your cooperation. I pledge my support to work together as other colleagues have also shared in a collective effort and interest in serving our people and country.

Sir, with those few comments, I support the motion.

Hon SOALAOI: Mr Speaker, I will be brief. Sir, to contribute briefly to this motion of sine

die, I would like to briefly touch on some of the things concerning the Ministry of Health and after that I will briefly mention a few of my observations during this Parliament Meeting.

Before doing so, I think all our colleagues have expressed their acknowledgement and words of appreciation for the work done by you, Mr Speaker, and I share the same sentiments. I also would like to thank the Ministry of Finance especially the Minister and officials of other ministries. As Minister responsible for Health I would like to thank my officials for the effort and hard work in putting together our submission through to the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Speaker, the responsibility of the Ministry of Health is no secret. I would like to mention here that our responsibility is to ensure the provision and sustainability and continue to maintain the provision of primary and secondary care for the citizens of this country. Because of that our budget submissions were done after some detailed planning by the Ministry and by the Provincial Health Divisions according to our Corporate Plan.

The operation plans include the quantified and verified foremost outputs and outcome indicators that the Ministry is looking at this year. There is in place in the Ministry a procedure we use for biannual operation review of these performance indicators along with the review of associated budgetary and support staff input.

Our budget submission for this year by our divisions and provinces are in line with our operational plans after taking into account funds from all sources that could reasonably be expected to be available to the Ministry, and also taking into account the number of qualified and experienced staff available, and in some cases to be recruited and the physical resources that are in place.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Health's Strategic Plan 2006 and Corporate Plan 2006 - 2010 was approved by the Cabinet towards the end of last year. These plans contain our programs for this year derived from our policies.

Mr Speaker, what the Ministry of Health is working towards is not only to continue with the preventive strategy that the Ministry has been embarking on, but we also want to upgrade

the level of care in this country to a curative level.

Sir, we are well aware of the saying that says, *'prevention is better than cure'*. Also it is important to note that we do not only want to be on the preventative front, but we also want to upgrade our medical infrastructure to a stage where we can also cure some of the diseases that are not curable in this country.

Mr Speaker, having said that, I would like to acknowledge the assistance given to us by the Republic of China/Taiwan towards the upgrade of the National Referral Hospital and also by AusAID towards the continued funding of our operations in the Ministry of Health.

With that Mr Speaker, I would like to report to this honorable Chamber that we are ready to open the third phase of the National Referral Hospital and thereafter start work on the fourth phase of the National Referral Hospital here in Honiara.

Mr Speaker, as contained in the Budget Speech by the Minister of Finance, population is one of the main pressures on our economy, and having said that, that is one of the things we are trying to control in the Ministry of Health. We know that the population is putting a lot of pressure on the limited resources that is available to us especially in terms of finance. I would like to report to this House that our average population growth rate is of 2.8% and it is anticipated to grow as the number of babies born in the Maternity Ward is increasing every day.

Having said that, we would like to continue to advise people, especially the educated population of this country to be responsible and to exercise some control in trying to control our population. We cannot blame anybody for making population a pressure on our resources.

Mr Speaker, the average life expectancy of Solomon Islanders based on the 2005 reports stands at 61.6 for female and 64.6 for male. That is the average life expectancy. Having said that, I think we do not seem to have enough time on this ground. It is something that we have to think seriously about and do something good while we are still alive.

Mr Speaker, still on that, whilst we have a very high population growth rate with a very

young population, the rate of sexually transmitted disease is also rising. One of the threats to our population and our economy at the moment is HIV/AIDS. I think I would like to call on all of us leaders and also citizens of this country to be careful and to at least digest some of the advice the Ministry is giving out in its health programs every 6.45 pm in the evening. I would like to urge all of us to take some time and listen to that program.

We agree with some of the concerns raised in this Parliament that it is dangerous, as it is not like malaria that comes looking for you - the anopheles mosquito. In this case, it is us who goes looking for this dangerous disease. I would like to caution all of us to be careful and be mindful of our lifestyles.

With that, I would like to call on us leaders to come forward and take a leading role in our fight against AIDS and avail yourselves to be tested for HIV. As Minister responsible I have taken the lead. I am ready to release my results and I am urging all of us to be leaders in all fronts.

The other area I would like to touch on is the area of upgrading of medical centres. As I have said earlier on in one of my answers to a question raised, there are area health centres that are ready to be upgraded to mini hospitals. This is done based on some of the criteria that we refer to as *'utilization benchmarks'*. These benchmarks determine which clinic is qualified to be upgraded to the next level. I would like to assure the MP for North Malaita that Malu'u has been earmarked to be upgraded to a mini hospital.

We cannot build hospitals just because people want hospitals. We have our own criteria on where to put hospitals. We do not want to put in resources and then find out after they are being under utilized. We do not want to throw our resources all over the place and find they are not being utilized.

Mr Speaker, in terms of projects for provinces, the Ministry is in the process of informing our provincial Health Divisions of projects that will be coming to them in terms of medical infrastructures.

I also would like to announce here as stipulated in the recently passed budget that service grants to our provinces will continue and

this year there is a slight increase in all provincial health service grants by three per cent.

Mr Speaker, the other area I would like to touch on is that this budget gives us the go ahead to start spend money and carry out activities that have been planned for in our operation plans that I mentioned earlier. The Ministry is ready and we are also ready for submissions from provinces and we are expecting our Provincial Directors to cooperate with us in our effort to improve medical services in this country.

Mr Speaker, those are the areas I want to briefly mention with regards to the Ministry of Health. I was hoping to contribute during the Budget Speech, but I mentioned this basically because our population simply wants to know what is going on in the Ministry of Health, and not only them but us leaders as well.

Mr Speaker, I would like to move on to some of my observations in regards to this current sitting of Parliament. My general view on the recently passed Budget is that it is a 'common ground'. I say this because we cannot afford to disagree on every issue. We can disagree on some issues but when it comes to the Budget, as responsible leaders (and I am glad the budget has passed) this is where we all have to come together. This is the only common ground we have.

Coming from different parts of the country, we face different challenges hence we express different views in this chamber. This budget, regardless of what we might say that we do not support the budget, I describe this budget as our common ground. If we cannot agree on anything this country will never forward. I think as responsible leaders we need to realize that there is somewhere along the line where we all have to come together. Mr Speaker, having said that, I would like to urge all MPs, with due respect to our senior colleagues, all we demand from each other as leaders is to work together for the good of this country.

In terms of RAMSI, Mr Speaker, the Grand Coalition for Change Government has never said at any time that it does not want RAMSI. I think what we have made crystal clear every now and then is that we only demand respect towards an elected government. It

saddens me to continue to hear accusation that this government is anti RAMSI. That is mere deception and totally irresponsible on our part as leaders.

Sir, as a Member representing Vattu Constituency, I would like to assure my constituency that this government is not anti RAMSI as speculated. We have never said that. We are not looking at RAMSI as an enemy. What we demanded is respect for an elected government. That is very clear. That is our position and that will continue to be our position.

Mr Speaker, to continue preach information that do not have any inch of truth in it, as leaders is totally irresponsible. We are wasting our time on issues that are not development in nature and we will end up doing nothing if we continue on this track.

On the motion of no confidence, Mr Speaker, I agree that the Opposition's role is to check on the government, but let me say that a motion of no confidence diverts the government's attention from delivering to consolidating its numbers, and that is natural.

Who is to blame here? Like I said I totally agree with the role the Opposition plays in checking on the government, but let us not waste our time in causing the government to take its attention away from delivering services to this country causing it to concentrate in consolidating its numbers.

I think it is just normal, Mr Speaker, that if you are a Prime Minister and a motion of no confidence is moved against you, you will forget to implement your policies and will concentrate on consolidating your number. That is natural, and nobody can deny this.

Mr Speaker, one of the things I observed missing in this country is the feeling of patriotism. We are Solomon Islanders and we need to realize that we are Solomon Islanders. You can tell me that you are a Solomon Islander but if you action do not show that you are a Solomon Islander then I do not agree with you.

Mr Speaker, being Solomon Islanders we should show our love for this country by standing up and defending this country from external influences. It is obvious in other countries that the opposite side of the government disagrees on certain issues but they

are always patriotic about their country. That is missing in this country as I see it. We need to know and we need to tell ourselves that we are Solomon Islanders and show other people that we are Solomon Islanders. I think it is time to stop saying things and it is time to start showing what we are saying.

Mr Speaker, the make up of our country should make us a better country. Our diversity gives us enough reasons to be a strong and prosperous and better country. I say this because we complement each others weaknesses taking into account the different races we come from, different back grounds, different provinces, and different constituencies. I do not believe that staying alone can help oneself. I believe our diversity will help us to complement each other in the development of this country.

Mr Speaker, I have a strong feeling that we as leaders really need to realize that we are like crew members of a ship, if you like we might call it MV Solomon Islands, with a captain. And our duty or responsibility as crew members or as leaders is to ensure that the captain is able to navigate the ship into the harbor where our passengers are looking forward to. If we disturb the captain every time, the ship will not go into the harbor, instead it will run aground.

Mr Speaker, I am urging all leaders of this country to ensure that we do not put mud on the windows of the wheeler room but we must allow the captain to navigate the ship to the harbors of prosperity and peace that our people are looking forward to.

As Solomon Islanders we must be responsible in whatever we do. Let us not blame others for where we are or wherever we reach we must not blame another person. We only have to blame ourselves for the state of this country.

Mr Speaker, I would like to say that as Solomon Islanders we appreciate the work that RAMSI is doing in this country and we continue to look to them and work together with them for the maintenance of law and order in this country. But let me say that anything and everything in this country will only be sustainable if it is designed and formulated by Solomon Islanders. Then and only can we know how to carry out what we have designed. We cannot efficiently

carry out somebody's plan that we had no part in it. We can only efficiently implement what we have planned and formulated.

Mr Speaker, to conclude I would like to make this call again as a leader that please let us all be responsible and let us not blame other people for the state of this country. It is in our hands and let me repeat, as it is what I believe that if we want anything in this country to be sustainable for our children to see it, let us have a part in it. Let us design and let us formulate it so that it is sustainable in the long run.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to briefly contribute to this motion. I thank all Members of Parliament for you attention. Also I would like to thank my ministerial staff and lastly my constituency for their understanding especially having come through some tough times and some controversial issues but I thank them for their understanding.

With that, Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, with the concurrence of the House Committee, I beg to move that the debate on the sine die motion will adjourn under Standing Order 35 to continue tomorrow.

Debate on the Sine Die motion adjourned for the next day

The House adjourned at 5.45 pm