

TUESDAY 5TH AUGUST 2008

The Speaker, the Rt. Hon. Sir P. Kenilorea took the Chair at 1.10 pm.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers, all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Energy, Mines & Rural Electrification, National Unity, Reconciliation & Peace, Forestry, and the Members for West Guadalcanal, East Malaita, Central Honiara, West Are Are and Aoke/Langa Langa.

MESSAGES

Reading of message from His Excellency the Governor General concerning the visit to Parliament of their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, before we proceed, I wish to announce the following message from His Excellency, the Governor-General:

'My dear Hon. Speaker,

I have the honour to advise that as part of Their Royal Highnesses visit to the Solomon Islands, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester has been requested to address the National Parliament of Solomon Islands on Tuesday 5th August 2008 at 2:40 p.m.

Accept please Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours very sincerely,

*Sir Nathaniel R Waena GCMG, KStJ, CSI
Governor-General''.*

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, I seek your leave under *Standing Order 26 (1)* to move a motion without notice to invite Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess

of Gloucester, onto the Dais of this Chamber in order that His Royal Highness may deliver an Address to Parliament” .

Mr Speaker: Leave is granted Honorable Prime Minister.

Hon Sikua: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Sir, I move that at 2:40 p.m. on this day, their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, be invited onto the Dais of this Chamber in order that His Royal Highness may deliver an Address to Parliament.

Mr Sogavare: Mr Speaker, this side of the House does not have any problem with the motion. We fully support it. Thank you.

A question was put on the motion and agreed on

Mr Speaker: “As Members will have noted, they have a program outlining the arrangements for the visit by Their Royal Highnesses this afternoon. To ensure that the proceeding run smoothly, I ask all Members to familiarize themselves with the program and if possible, to remain in the Chamber when I suspend the House so that the Prime Minister and I may greet Their Royal Highnesses on their arrival.

We will now proceed with our business as it appears on the Order Paper. As I had just indicated, I will suspend the sitting at 2:30 pm, and we should resume at 2:45 pm for the Address by His Royal Highness. Once we have concluded the program for Their Royal Highnesses’ visit, we will then continue with our normal business from whatever point we might have left off at 2:30 pm.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

Report by the Chairman of the Bills & Legislation Committee – National Parliament Paper No. 11 of 2008

Report by the Minister for Finance and Treasury – National Parliament Paper No. 12 of 2008

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Commission of Inquiry into the April 2006 riot

2. **Mr SOGAVARE** to the Prime Minister: Can the Prime Minister inform the House why the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the April 2006 riot has not been released to the public?

Hon SIKUA: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the honorable Leader of Opposition and Member for East Choiseul for his question.

Mr Speaker, given the sensitivity with which the Commission attaches to the report and the nature of the work carried out by the Commission, and more importantly in the interest of public safety, security and peace, the report on the fact findings and recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the April 2006 riots may be released to the public once the process put in place for these analysis to be done is completed.

In this regard, Mr Speaker, the government has tasked a small committee within my office to study the report in detail and give advice on options that may be available for the way forward. The committee will give advice and options on:

- (a) risks that maybe associated with the release of the report as it is, and a way forward to allow public access to the report,
- (b) options on what parts of the report can be released to the public and all stakeholders and what part to remain confidential in the interest of public safety and security, and
- (c) an analysis of the recommendations on whether or not these have been adequately covered in this government's policies and options on the way forward.

Mr Speaker, the Committee's work is now completed and I have just received a copy of their report this morning. Their advice and findings will be tabled before the Cabinet who will make the final decisions on:

- (a) the release on the entire report or fact findings conclusions and recommendations of the report, and
- (b) on the way forward with regard to the implementation of the recommendations therein.

Mr Speaker, my government's priority is the overall safety of the people of Solomon Islands, our city of Honiara and the human rights of individuals who might be implicated in the report. Mr Speaker, I am sure you will accept that

they deserve a fair and just process and not public persecution. Thank you very much.

Mr Sogavare: Mr Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for answering the question. I appreciate the way the government handles the report. Thank you very much.

Inquiry on land dealings on Guadalcanal

3. Mr SOGAVARE to the Prime Minister: Can the Prime Minister inform the House what the Terms of Reference of the Commission of inquiry on land dealings on Guadalcanal as required under the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) are?

Hon SIKUA: Mr Speaker, I once again would like to thank the Hon. Leader of Opposition and MP for East Choiseul for his question.

Mr Speaker, the Terms of Reference for the Commission of Inquiry on land dealings on Guadalcanal, as required under the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) are:-

- (a) ascertain and identify areas of customary lands (the affected lands on Guadalcanal) which have been acquired, or occupied and settled by persons from other provinces prior to January 1998;
- (b) ascertain the length and period of occupation and settlement on the affected land;
- (c) Inquire into and make findings on whether or not the acquisition, occupation and settlement were done in accordance with prevailing customary practice on Guadalcanal, applicable to the affected land and land dealings thereof;
- (d) Ascertain whether any subsequent registration of any of the affected land under the provisions of the Lands and Titles Act were done lawfully and in a transparent manner;
- (e) Identify the persons or bodies who were parties to the customary land acquisition, occupation and settlement on the affected land;
- (f) Ascertain the level of support for the acquisition, occupation and settlement shown and demonstrated by those tribes clans or sub-clans on Guadalcanal whose land were affected both during the acquisition, occupation and settlement or during the period following; and

- (g) Inquire into land dealings and abandonment/lost properties on Guadalcanal which were left behind by settlers from Malaita and other provinces.

Mr Speaker, the word acquire and its derivatives means the purchasing of customary land for value and/or the obtaining of customary rights or interests in the affected land to occupy and settle thereon. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr OTI: Mr Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for the response in relation to the Terms of Reference of the Commission of Inquiry on land dealings on Guadalcanal. Perhaps it would also help the public as to the composition of the Commission; appointments of the Members of the Commission, and also the scope of the inquiry. I think the Terms of Reference has covered that, but in terms of the publicity of the Terms of Reference for the public and also the kind of people that would be invited to make representation on the Commission. Perhaps for additional information of Parliament the Prime Minister can also go to that extent, although it is not specifically asked for in the main question.

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, I thank the MP for Temotu Nende for his supplementary question.

Mr Speaker, in terms of the composition of the Commission, a sub-committee looking into this Commission that was previously set up has recommended that the Members of the Commission must be outside of Solomon Islands. Therefore, the government has approach the governments of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Vanuatu to provide the three Commissioners to sit in the Commission.

Right now we already have in place the nomination from the Government of Papua New Guinea, who is the former chairman of the April 2006 Riots Commission. He is already here to scope and set up the work of the Commission whilst we are awaiting the appointments of the two Commissioners, one from Fiji and one from the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr Speaker, my office is looking at availing the Commission with its secretariat and other administration staff. The office of the Attorney General is working on giving them a lawyer, someone from the Legal profession, to assist the Commission and the office of the Commissioner of Police is assisting also in the provision of qualified investigators to assist the Commission.

Mr Speaker, we are at the stage where the chairperson of the Commission is already in place and is setting up office and the other administrative and investigations staff will be in place, and as soon as the governments of Fiji and

Vanuatu give us their nominations for the other two members of the Commission, the commission proper will begin to do its work.

I would imagine that once the administrative staff and seeing that the chairperson is already in place, all the publicity about how they are going to go about their work and who they are going to be inviting will be made known to the public in the next month or so. Thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr Sogavare: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for answering the question. Sir, a supplementary question, and before I put the question, I would have thought that this is a wonderful opportunity to look at all issues relating to land dealings in Solomon Islands, and I was wondering why the issue of alienated land is not part of the Terms of Reference.

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, the Terms of Reference for the Commission of Inquiry will be broadened to look at other land dealings in other provinces but we just have to be careful that it is not all mixed up with land cases that are before the courts and things like that.

There is scope and I already have agreement, Mr Speaker, from the chairman that we can broaden the scope of this inquiry to look at land dealings in other provinces once there are specific parameters being identified so as not to bring in other land cases that have nothing to do with alienated lands or things that happen within the time frame that we are talking about.

Mr Waipora: I forgot some of the things that were put down in the terms of reference, which may have been mentioned, but I want to raise a question about how long is the Commission of Inquiry expected to carry out its work. I am interested in the period of time whether one year, six months or something? Thank you.

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member for West Makira for his supplementary question. The Commission of Inquiry into Land Dealings and Lost Property on Guadalcanal will go on for one year.

Mr Agovaka: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is based on the fact that at the moment currently there are people going into these lands that have been left. Also currently there are people who are going into new lands in Guadalcanal. What is the government's position on this? What are you going to do about this whilst waiting for this commission of inquiry?

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, I thank my Member for Central Guadalcanal for his question. That issue has been brought up to our attention as early as today and a paper is coming to Caucus and eventually to Cabinet to address that particular issue that we are confronted with at the moment, especially also in relation to people taking each other to court to claim back some of the lost properties that were taken away from them. We will come up something on those in due course.

Hon. Usa: The question I would like raise probably is already taken care of under the Terms of Reference, but if it is possible, I would like to mention one specific clause in the TOR for the Commission of Inquiry to look into lands that have been acquired whether they have been acquired through normal and proper landowners of Guadalcanal or not? Although this is make mention of in the TOR but I want a specific clause if possible to be inserted.

I make mention of this because most of the lands acquired here on Guadalcanal were obtained not through rightful owners. I want this to be taken of within the TOR. Thank you.

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, I think the concern by the Member for North West Guadalcanal has been taken care of in Terms of Reference (c) where it reads: "inquire into and making findings on whether or not the acquisition, occupation and settlement were done in accordance with prevailing customary practices on Guadalcanal applicable to the affected land and land dealings thereof". I believe that has already been adequately catered for under TOR (c) of the Commission's Terms of Reference. Thank you.

Mr Sogavare: On the composition of the committee, the Prime Minister has informed the House that Cabinet wants to give it to people outside of the country and not people of Solomon Islands. I take it the position is that the composition of committee members will be people outside of Solomon Islands and not Solomon Islanders. It is important that we are familiar with the land tenure system of Guadalcanal and I just want reassurance as to how the government will ensure the committee members will be familiar with the land tenure system of Guadalcanal in order to deal with the issue inline with the land tenure system of Guadalcanal.

Hon Sikua: I think the sub committee that was set up to recommend the composition of the commission of inquiry into land dealings on Guadalcanal was set up during the time of the previous government, and so we were just sort of following their recommendations. But I think the overriding factor that we have

to consider here is the conflict of interest of members who may be in commission.

Sir, there is already strong correlation between what has been uncovered by the April 2006 riots as well as the terms of reference of this particular commission of inquiry. But I guess the work of the commission will enable members of the commission, although they may be outside of Solomon Islands to be able to make a way forward as to how we could address some of the issues that we are grappling with.

Mr Speaker, I have a very strong feeling that there will be some strengths that the commission can offer in terms of the similarities that we have with the PNG situation as well as that of Vanuatu and indeed learning from the experiences of Fiji.

I have every confidence that although membership of the commission is derived from outside of Solomon Islands, we need to be also mindful of the fact that people who are closely involved with this kind of dealings may have conflict of interest in the workings of the commission.

Hon Kemakeza: Just to add on to what the Prime Minister has said, I would like to endorse the wisdom of the previous administration for appointing three people from outside and a lawyer by profession to also assist on the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition. As well as that, Sir, the people who will be coming to see the commission are people who are well versed with land tenure system. The lawyers will give guidance to the commission if required.

I am only endorsing the wisdom of the previous administration for taking people outside to be in the commission. I do not question that decision because lawyers are Solomon Islanders and from the Attorney General's Office to assist the land tenure issue in Solomon Islands.

Mr Sogavare: I thank the Prime Minister and the Minister for Forest for answering the questions.

Number of Doctors – NRH & Provincial Hospitals

65. Mr WAIPORA to the Minister for Health & Medical Services:

- (a) How many doctors are there in the nine provincial hospitals and how many are in the National Referral Hospital?
- (b) How many doctors there be in each province and how many should be in the National Referral Hospital?

Hon KOLI: Mr Speaker, there are 23 doctors working in the nine provincial hospitals and 32 doctors in the National Referral Hospital.

We have a total of 23 doctors in the provincial hospitals including two seconded doctors at Atoifi Adventist Hospital, Malaita and the Helena Goldie Hospital in the Western Province as well as the Honiara City Council. The establishment required for the 2008 doctors in the provincial hospital is 34. This means that we fall short of 11 doctors in the provinces.

In the National Referral Hospital, we have a total of 32 doctors working in the various departments in the National Referral Hospital. The total medical staff requirement for 2008 is 60 altogether. Again this means that we fall short of 28 doctors in the National Referral Hospital alone.

The conclusion therefore is that we are still in acute shortage of doctors in the country, both in the provincial as well as in the National Referral Hospital. It was based on this information that the CNURA Government went ahead to facilitate 25 Solomon Islands Medical Students to study medicine in Cuba, sponsored by the Cuban Government. In fact the Cuban Government has given Solomon Islands a scholarship of 50 trained students and we are very optimistic to send another 25 by the end of September 2008.

Also the Cuban Government has given us 10 Cuban doctors to come and help us as volunteers. Two have already arrived and eight more are still to arrive, most probably within one or two months from now.

This was an agreement made by the GCC Government and we facilitate that for the benefit of our country as we see this as a very good decision. If these 50 doctors return, we would expect to fill all the positions in the provincial hospitals as well as the National Referral Hospital.

One thing we must understand is that we are not producing enough doctors to meet the demand of our population growth. The two Medical Regional Institutions: Fiji School of Medicine and UPNG are only giving us four to five spaces respectively for Medical Studies each year and that is not enough. We need to produce 20 doctors each year in order to meet the demand.

Currently, we have produced about 110 doctors in the country so far. However, one third of our doctors are working in Australia, New Zealand and other regional countries within the South Pacific whilst only 55 are serving the country and about twenty are still doing their post-graduate studies overseas. Thank you.

Mr AGOVAKA: Mr. Speaker, supplementary question on doctors. How many doctors are there in Guadalcanal Province? In which hospitals are they in or

which clinics are they based in? The second question is, do you supply doctors to the Gorou Clinic or do you staff that clinic with doctors? Thank you.

Hon Koli: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for Central Guadalcanal. According to the 2008 established posts, there should be three doctors for Guadalcanal but in the meantime there are only two doctors at post. Thank you.

Mr Oti: I thank the Minister for Health for his response. Perhaps for the information of Parliament, you just mentioned the Establishment that there are three doctors for Guadalcanal where two are at post and one post yet to be filled.

Can you also specify that of the respective Provincial Hospitals how many posts for each Provincial hospital and how many have been filled like you have mentioned of Guadalcanal? Can you also provide that information to Parliament now on the staff complement of doctors in the respective Provincial Hospitals?

Hon Koli: Mr Speaker, for Malaita Province, Kilufi hospital - now at post, six doctors. Under the 2008 established posts, there should be nine doctors. For Western Province - Gizo hospital, three now are at post whereas 2008 Establishment, there should be six. For Makira/Ulawa Province, there are two doctors, and two doctors are at post in the 2008 Establishment. For Isabel Province, one doctor is at post whereas there should be two according to the 2008 Establishment posting. For the Central Province, there is only one at post, whereas under the 2008 Establishment posting, there should be two. For the Temotu Province, there is one at post, whereas under the 2008 establishment there should be two doctors. For Renbel, there is one at post, and under the 2008 establishment post - one doctor. For Choiseul Province, two doctors are at post at the meantime, under the establishment post - two doctors. For Guadalcanal Province, two are at post, under the 2008 establishment there should have been three. For the Honiara City Council, two are at post, under the 2008 establishment posting, there should be three doctors. For the Atoifi SDA hospital, there is one seconded staff, and under the 2008 establishment - only one. For the Helena Goldie Methodist Hospital, one seconded staff, and under the 2008 establishment there is only one. Altogether the total should be 34- doctors in all provinces, but we are short of 11 doctors because only 23 are at post at the moment. Thank you.

Mr Oti: As I follow through on that, the Minister mentioned that the scheme of doctors from Cuba will be arriving shortly, some have arrived, and some have not yet; can the Minister confirm that the basis for posting of doctors from Cuba

will be based on the shortfall as currently experienced by the government, particularly in the provincial hospitals?

Hon Koli: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Oti: Yes, what?

Mr Waipora: I must thank the Honorable Minister for answering the questions that we have raised here. Thank you very much Honorable Minister.

Our Telekom Industrial Dispute

67. **Mr WAIPORA** to the Minister for Communication and Aviation: What is the latest on the status of the industrial dispute in Our Telekom?

Hon LONAMEI: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the MP for West Makira for his question on the latest status of the industrial dispute in Our Telekom?

The industrial dispute is a dispute between the Management of Our Telekom and its employees. Therefore, the Board of Our Telekom is dealing with the matter at the moment. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr ZAMA: Mr Speaker, supplementary question to the Minister. If we all look at the corporate colors of Our Telekom it has now changed from almost the orange color to red. What we do understand is that the color red is commonly known for Digicel. Can the Minister confirm or deny whether Our Telekom has open dialogue with Digicel to get shares?

Hon Lonamei: Mr Speaker, that is a business deal between the Telekom and Digicel and therefore my Ministry is not aware of any discussions between the two. That is a business deal between the companies that have interest in telecommunications.

Mr Boyers: Mr Speaker, supplementary question to the Minister, and this is a general question, which I am sure the private sector and the general public will be interested in.

In the light of Our Telekom produces a significant demand of revenue per year for our government, which I think is \$40 million plus, we also enjoy the most expensive telecommunication system in the region.

I am just wondering whether the Minister can inform the House that the telecommunication reform program is still on track on liberalizing the telecommunication industry in the country, which the World Bank has recommended in creating great opportunity for business which can reflect up to 0.6 per cent growth for our economy.

Can the Minister inform House whether the government is still on track with liberalizing the telecommunication industry? Thank you.

Mr Speaker: I will allow that question to be repeated after we resume after the suspension. I now suspend Parliament until 2:45pm.

Sitting suspended until 2:45

The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester enter the Chamber

Mr Speaker: Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers of the Crown, Leader of Opposition, Leader of Independent, His Excellency the British High Commissioner, and Mrs. Lyne, Deputy Speaker, Members of Parliament; as the Speaker of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all members, to welcome your Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester to the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. It is indeed an honour and privilege for this House to be grace with your presence today. Your Royal Highnesses first visit our country in 1978. Solomon Islands had just attained Independence from Britain and its Parliament comprised enthusiastic and energetic local leaders who are eager to become part of their nation's development.

Our Parliament then was a young institution excited with the responsibility of self-governance, challenged with a duty of National Development and ready to participate on a regional and international platform. Since that time, Solomon Islands, like all nations, has faced many challenges. Today, your Royal Highnesses' second visit to Solomon Islands. I hope that Parliament is able to provide you with evidence of change and growth and maturity at least in its stature as the highest institution of the land and also in terms of the principles of democracy and governance that it promotes and defends.

Today, our Parliament is the Eighth Parliament since Independence but it continues to bear witness to the pre-Independence relationship with Britain. We continue to recognize Her Majesty, the Queen of England as the Head of State and have operated under an adapted Westminster System since 1978.

Many of the present Honorable Members of Parliament themselves have received some form of education under colonial system and can attest to how this has defined them today. But in the last 30 years, the National Parliament has also developed itself into an institution that is not only symbolic of the past, but is also representative of the future; the future in which it must adopt the needs of its citizens and the demands and challenges facing the world in the 21st century.

I hope that on this visit to our shores and islands your Royal Highnesses will not only have an opportunity to refresh your memories of Solomon Islands, gained three decades ago but will also have the opportunity to obtain new memories for what Solomon Islands has become, share our dreams and visions for a better future and build new friendship with the people of this country.

As a token of our appreciation and on behalf of the Parliament I would like to present your Royal Highnesses with gifts to remind you of your visit to the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. These gifts are ceremonial jewelry made from traditional shell money and commonly worn by persons of high rank on special occasions. Please, accept it as a token of the lasting relationship between our countries, but more so between your Royal Highnesses and people of Solomon Islands. Thank you very much indeed.

Mr Speaker: His Royal Highness, the Duke of Gloucester will now address Parliament.

His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester: May I thank you Mr Speaker, for so kindly inviting me to address Parliament. I am well aware of the great honour you do me in coming here as a non-elected person to have the pleasure of addressing you.

I'm also aware that the reason you have asked me is in recognition of the small task I had thirty years ago when I came to represent Her Majesty and to handover to this country your Independence. That indeed was a very exciting adventure for my wife. We were fairly newly married at that time and it was one of our first exercises of royal duty. We enjoyed it immensely and came home feeling that there was a very special friendship between this country, as newly independent country and my own who had guided you for some decades before that.

It is very interesting for me to come to this splendid building and to feel its own sense of history. I think it is perhaps inevitable that I would have a feeling for history, coming from a historic background as it were. I do not know if you are familiar with the title of the Duke of Gloucester that it is being born usually by the younger brothers of the Monarch. I could not but help notice that the first three Dukes of Gloucester, because there were younger brothers of the

Monarch, I had a strange role to play which you might think was felicitous in as much that when the Monarch died prematurely and the Heir was not yet of age then the Duke of Gloucester was very often asked to be regent that sounds as if it might be quite good fun but actually if you are only regent for three or four years that was time enough to get a lot of enemies and not time enough to get a lot of friends. So inevitably when the nephew came elder enough to be King, the first three Dukes of Gloucester were in a very unfortunate stage and I have to say that in those violent times they all came to a very sticky act.

I am quite pleased that over the centuries politics has evolved in a different way. Whereas the first Parliament was just an opportunity for representatives to say whether they agreed or disagreed with what the King did, they gradually acquired more powers and more influence. As the centuries progressed we have the great reformers and we had the full electorate for everybody. So our Constitutional Monarchy arose and Dukes of Gloucester can sleep in their beds quite happily these days without feeling that something terrible might happen to them. It is for that reason that I have a very deep respect for democracy. But we took hundreds of years to develop it and as I recalled you really early had thirty years to develop yours. The best important lesson that I think any person, any individual, any village, any province, any island, any nation or even internationally, the most important lesson is that whatever you do you can always achieve more if you do it together with other people. That is a lesson that is in a way difficult to learn because our instincts cursors in other directions. We have tempers, we have moods, we have disagreements and it's only through experience that we realize how much more we can achieve by joining with other people. The democratic institution like this brings people together, not as individuals but as representatives of those who have elected them. I think it must be that heavy sense of responsibility that should pervade this room.

Your nation is not a large one by the standards of the world, but it is a very diverse one and it takes a long time to go from one end to the other end. And although you may seem to have many differences of need and so on. I am sure the things that join you together are much greater than the things that keep you apart, and I am very happy to come to your splendid Parliament here today and to wish the very best of luck to all of you.

You are fortunate not only to live in these areas of beautiful islands but also very fertile islands. As the 21st century progresses, I think we can clearly see as the price of food goes up that the need to feed the world is going to become more important and that the price of food is almost bound to increase even as the developing world, in the case of China, India and Brazil, as they become more productive they will want more food and I am sure that these fertile islands,

given the right infrastructure, given the right agricultural advice, given the right leadership, will be able to provide an increasing amount that you can export to exchange with the other goods that you need to advance in the 21st century.

And so too without optimistic thought that I wish you every luck in the future because how you spend your limited resources is clearly going to affect whether you can take advantage of the situation and advance the course of improving the life of Solomon Islands and every island whether those in the centre or those on the peripheral, and I feel very fortunate to have been playing a very small part in your history. But it has reminded me coming back here that we do have a close relationship that even the other side of the world we have here some good friends, and you must remember that you have good friends in London as well. We are, of course, not your anti-friends but there are those of us who wish you well and hope that your next 30 years will see greater advances and give you greater control over your destiny in the future. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Parliament is now suspended so that we might be able to have the opportunity to meet with their Royal Highnesses outside the corridors and to allow His Royal Highness, the Duke of Gloucester to unveil a plaque and a clock that is right at the corner.

Sitting suspended and resumed at 3:45 pm.

Mr Speaker: May be the Honourable Member for New Georgia/Roviana/Vona Vona might like to repeat his question.

Mr Boyers: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The supplementary question to the Minister is whether the liberalization of the telecommunication industry is still a policy focus of the government.

Hon Lonamei: Mr Speaker, although that is a new question I will answer it this was. Yes, the government's policy on liberalization of the telecommunication industry is still on. The Bill to that effect will come in the next sitting of parliament where I hope everyone will support it so that the telecommunication industry is liberalized. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Oti: Mr Speaker, perhaps the original intention of the question is to do with the recent and perhaps the still ongoing impasse between the Management and the Our Telecom workers. The Minister in response to the principal question earlier on today said that the matter is still before the board.

Mr Speaker, I want the Minister to explain this a bit more because it is a serious matter affecting the telephone system in the country in the early good part of last month. The fact that it is before the board is to resolve that issue, but I think the Minister needs to give a bit more substantive explanation to Parliament as to exactly whether it is before the board or not.

What is the government's position in so far as intervening to ensure that the process of reconciliation or arbitration between the conflicting parties is not left to the board on its own but the government must intervene? What kind of intervention has the government taken in so far as assisting to resolve the standoff between the conflicting parties in our Telekom? Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Hon Lonamei: Mr Speaker, yes, the impasse between Our Telekom Management and the employees is an internal matter between them. Because the Telekom Board did not quickly meet last time it resulted in the impasse we experienced last time. We were affected as well because there is only one telecommunications industry in the country.

Mr Speaker, the Government stepped into this problem by asking the shareholders to intervene quickly because Our Telekom Board did not quickly meet. The meeting has been convened and the problem solved and that is why I said in here that the Telekom Board has already dealt with this issue. Thank you.

Mr Waipora: According to information in the media, there is a specific person that workers of Our Telekom demanded to be removed. What is the present position of that particular person? If he is removed is everything going to be sorted or if he remains will the workers still go on strike?

Hon Lonamei: That problem has already been resolved. The Board's decision is that the person they want to be removed will leave. The problem has already been taken care of by the board.

Mr Waipora: Mr Speaker, I do not have any more supplementary questions. But I would like to thank the Minister for answering our questions.

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, I move that Parliament do now adjourn.

The House adjourned at 3.40 pm.

