

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

DAILY HANSARD

FIRST MEETING – EIGHTH SESSION

FRIDAY 12TH MAY 2006

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 the Department of Fisheries, Police & National Security, Tourism, Culture and Tourism, Finance and Treasury, Communication, Aviation and Meteorology and the Members for West New Georgia/Vona Vona, West Guadalcanal Rennell/Bellona, Small Malaita, Maringe/Kokota, Marovo, and East Makira.

Motion of Sine die

Debate on the motion of sine die as amended continues and concludes

Mr TOM: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me these few minutes to contribute to this motion of sine die.

Mr Speaker, I would like to return all glory, honor and thanks to God for his divine call for me and every one of us in this Chamber who are here today. The 50 of us here in this Chamber have been called by God to represent his people in the respective constituencies. In any particular society, the government is God's institution.

Mr Speaker, it is God who initiated, designed, planned, established, authorized and ordained this country's highest institution to be formed, thus allowing God's servants and God's ministers to serve his people and to show characters that reflects his institution.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank my good people of West Kwaio Constituency for their trust, honor and respect for voting and giving me the mandate to represent them here in this Chamber. For without their votes I would not be here.

Mr Speaker, I would like to especially thank all respected chiefs, women, youth leaders, other community leaders and church leaders in West Kwaio for their prayers and spiritual support that has brought us this far. I hope this support will continue for the next four years, which you have mandated me to represent you here in this Chamber.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of my people of West Kwaio, I would like to congratulate the new elect Prime Minister of Solomon Islands. We would like to acknowledge your leadership role taken during and after the recent crisis.

Mr Speaker, my humble and sincere thanks also goes to the Queen's representative, His Excellency the Governor General of Solomon Islands. Sir, I thank you for the decisions made from your office for the good of this nation during the past few weeks challenges which will be remembered in the country's history.

Mr Speaker, I would like to forward my sincere thanks to the Speaker of this House for the God given wisdom bestowed upon Him. Your re-election to this House gives me the insight that you have gained the heart of Solomon Islands as both sides of this House have no doubt in re-electing you. Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you for the decisions you made during these challenging times our country is facing.

Mr Speaker, I also acknowledge the election of the former Prime Minister, the honourable Member for Marovo and for his humble resignation. This shows he has concern for the demands of the people and for the good of the country. The incident that happened

during the election, which some called 'Black Tuesday' was a surprise to some of us in this House.

Mr Speaker, I sympathise with the Chinese Community here in Honiara and also most Solomon Islanders who have lost their families' livelihoods and earnings from their employment with the Chinese Community.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank all former Members of Parliament and the former Prime Minister, the Member for Savo/Russell for their hard work during the past four years.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of the people of West Kwaio, I would like to thank RAMSI for the restoration of law and order in our nation.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the 450 plus candidates who have contested the recent election, and out of this only 50 have been chosen to be here in this House. This means we are the best chosen to be here for this divine call for God's institution.

Sir, I see no reason at all why we should throw mud at each other for we are the best, and we should be shouldering each other for the advancement of this House and Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, all our constituencies have their hope and trust in us. Why should we continue in this type of behaviour that does not reflect God's character inherent in this institution - the government?

Mr Speaker, I would like to urge all new and old Members of Parliament who are currently seated in this Chamber not to dwell on former things but to look for new things which our God will help us realise for this nation.

Sir, I would like to comment on Apostle Paul's message about forgetting what is behind us and look forward to the future for better things to come. This is the means for our country's success and advancement.

Sir, before I resume my seat, I would like to quote Psalms 133:1. "*How wonderful, how pleasant it is for God's people and brethren to dwell in unity!*" The way forward for us in this highest Chamber is to dwell in unity, for this will bring peace amongst us resulting in better decision making for the good people of Solomon Islands. I humbly urge the Opposition and the government side to hold hands together to lift our nation that desperately needs change.

(hear, hear)

Let us accept all criticisms as an element of cleaning one another. As a leader we cannot escape from it.

Sir, may I call on all law abiding citizens and Christians of this country to continue support this House in prayer and the future of the country.

Sir, it is not by might not by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord.

God bless Solomon Islands.

Hon IDURI: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me this time to very briefly contribute to this very important motion.

First of all, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank God for his love and care for each and every one of us, sitting here in this honourable House. It is in God that we live, move and exist. Without Him we cannot do anything.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my thanks and sincere gratitude to my people of West Kwara'ae, the chiefs, church leaders, teachers and everyone. Thank you for having trust and confidence in me for electing me to Parliament as your leader for the next four years. I am looking forward to working together with you.

May I also Mr Speaker, congratulate all Members of Parliament for winning their electoral seats in the last election on 5th of April.

Furthermore Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate the honourable Member for North East Choiseul for winning the election as Prime Minister of the ruling government.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, for your election unopposed to the Office of the Speaker, not forgetting also the Deputy Speaker, my friend the Member for Russells and Savo in his unopposed election as well.

Lastly Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the staff of the National Parliament for their assistance to us Members of Parliament in one way or another and hope that mutual cooperation and understanding will continue to be rendered to us.

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

Hon SOGAVARE: Mr Speaker, I rise to wind up the debate on the motion of Sine Die. I would like to begin by thanking all the Members who have contributed to the debate, and of course the kind words that have been expressed.

Sir, I was thinking of how to respond over the last three days when this motion was debated. I had a choice of several options, and one is to directly confront the issues that were raised in Parliament by Members of Parliament and address it through a confrontational way or the other option is to adopt a more reconciliatory approach.

I decide not to follow the first option after hearing what a lot of Members have expressed, and I think there is a need for Members of Parliament to work together. There are only 50 of us and the Constitution does not allow us to look outside during the four years so there is a need for all of us to work together.

I noticed as well, Mr Speaker, over the years that if you want to pick the brains of Members of Parliament, they are the best during debates on motions of sine die, in response to Speech from the throne and during budget debates. I think for the simple reason that these debates allow Members of Parliament to talk on a wide range of issues.

Sir, I believe we need to do justice to the efforts and thinking devoted to the preparation of these speeches by Members of Parliament, and as the custodian of government policy Mr Speaker, I do not think Members of the Grand Coalition will disagree with me that the Government must take the concerns of Members of Parliament that are being expressed seriously. I see it as an opportunity may be to improve on government policy, and the Policy Evaluation Unit in my Department will be tasked with that responsibility that we use the brains of Members of Parliament.

In this regard, I agree with the views expressed by some Members of Parliament and I would like to assure my honourable colleagues, especially those from the other side of the House that their concerns and sound advice will be taken seriously.

I am obliged however, Mr Speaker, as the leader of the Grand Coalition may be to correct many false allegations and misleading statements and deliberate misunderstandings of

the Government's official position, and I am going to do it in a very reconciliatory approach.

In addition to the many issues raised in the House, Mr Speaker, during the debates, which I have indicated I am obliged to clarify, I will take the concerns raised on the following more seriously because they questioned the credibility of the government and the pillars upon which the Coalition Joint Development Strategies is premised.

These are, and if I have time, Mr Speaker, I will play it by time. First is the Government's official position regarding the case of the two colleagues in custody. Mr Speaker, I appreciate that this is a matter before the court of law and therefore my clarification will be purely on matters of principles and the conduct of individuals in important key positions, which I feel I need to make it very clear as far as the Government's position is concern. I would also like to appeal to the people of Solomon Islands to remain calm and allow the process to settle itself, Mr Speaker.

There are questions raised as well, Mr Speaker, on how the Coalition will address the underlying issues of the ethnic crisis. It would appear to me, Mr Speaker, that many Solomon Islanders, may be including Members of this honourable House as well, may get to appreciate this concern. This is demonstrated clearly by the fact that development strategies and policies so far have been formulated minus the concerns for the reason why the country collapsed in year 2000.

I feel, Mr Speaker, this is a very important point of reference i we need to take this country forward more constructively, and we need to take account of the reason why this country collapsed in year 2000.

I am saying this, Mr Speaker, because we are pretending as if everything was normal, and the country did not go through a period of crisis. Any wonder, Mr Speaker, that our development strategies have yet to be focused and meaningful.

If I have time as well, Mr Speaker, I may need to also make some clarifications on the proposed reform of the monetary system advanced by a political party in the Grand Coalition.

Let me first of all just run through some of the issues I feel needs to be clarified before I address the main concerns that I have regarding the issues that I am inclined to address today.

Mr Speaker, concerns were raised, and I do appreciate as well that what I read out on Tuesday when I introduced the broad direction of government policy is that it is not a full detail of government policy as such. I made it very clear when I introduced the statement that a more detailed joint position of the Grand Coalition will be put out to the public when we finally come up with the joint position of the Grand coalition.

We are intending to do that as soon as we settle down and get the ministries to work and clear in where we are going, and we would like to immediately call Parliament and allow His Excellency to address the nation through a speech from the throne where Members of Parliament will be given the opportunity to comment more fully on the decision the government is taking as to how we would like to see the development of the country moving forward.

Sir, I think there is lack of appreciation, and this position taken by people referring to what happened on Tuesday as only involving the minority in this country Mr Speaker. I think we really need to think a bit broader. Statements like this disregard what happened in year 2000.

We really need to appreciate that it was actually the action of the minority as well that brought this country to its knees in year. That is why it is very important for decision making leaders like us to always appreciate the concerns of the minority. I think history has spoken very loud and clear in that regard. It is not the majority that brought this country down in year 2000, and a minority again did what happened on 'Black Tuesday' as alluded to by Members of Parliament. It is very important that we appreciate that and may be that should drive policy makers like us to think more on how to address that. What does that tells us in terms of formulating the approach to avoid things like that. The clear message is decentralise. Get developments out to rural areas so that we disburse people out to the other development centres so that we do not put unnecessary pressures in Honiara.

There is always this concern raised about the Party's foreign policy, and as I have said the joint position of the Coalition would be made clearer. We still maintain that the Republic of China is a reliable donor for this country, it has made a lot of good works in this country, it came when we needed them most, at the time when nobody came it came. I feel as the leader of this present Government to make it very clear to the nation that the ROC is a reliable donor and we will continue to treat them as such.

Sir, the expectation by militants that is raised, I am surprised that we continue to refer to people as militants. I think we have gone past that and we should start to see Solomon Islanders as what they are. I cannot remember making any promises to militants. I want to make that very clear, I am dealing with Solomon Islanders. Militants have limitations and we would treat them as Solomon Islanders and discuss their concerns. I will discuss certain matters with them, which I feel are sensitive to national security, and that will happen as soon as Parliament goes into recess, I will begin to have a series of consultations with them.

The 100 Days Program is nothing more than a big political 'maus wara'. We are not going to waste our time on political point scoring. We are here for the long haul and committed to our development program. If the Group wants to put up the 100 days program we will do that but we are here to deliver.

Sir, there is so much said about corruption and may be I am amused or may be disgusted at the claims of self righteousness in this House. It is so clear that we have testimonies and people speaking in Parliament saying that they were approached by certain people in the House offering them monies and whatever. Let us stop talking about corruption because only God knows about the past, it is no secret to Him. When we stand to talk in this honorable House trying to defend ourselves we are like hypocrites. Hypocrisy is saying one thing and not doing it.

Sir, I can go on and talk about these things but I do not want to waste Parliament's time on this. As I have said we take note of a lot of things that were said in Parliament for example, the concern about the influx of

sectarian religion and new ideas into the country. We need to be careful how we tread and deal with that. This is a very sensitive area that we must tread with absolute care and sensitivity that we do not open up areas that would undermine the very principles that we have been seeking to advance.

Sir, on RCDF we will be working on a strategy that will see greater transparency and accountability in the administration and utilization of the RCDF money. The Government's position will be made clearer when the Grand Coalition's joint policy is finalized and approved.

Sir, I will outline to proceed rapidly with the establishment of a commission of inquiry to delve into the truth about the events of the tragic day we realized that law and order could not be guaranteed by anybody. The two Ministers of the Government are yet to be sworn in, they are being in prison by the system to bear the consequences of their alleged involvement in the engineering of the problem that followed.

It is no secret that all the protests, violence and destruction was aimed at the government with which I had initially decided to join and support against my better judgment. History will, no doubt, judge both me and the honorable MP for Marovo kindly for the decisive action we took to diffuse a volatile situation at a risk of a long and personal implication. We were attacked almost daily in the local and international media by critics including the Australian and the New Zealand Governments, not for any lack of integrity, but simply the wisdom of my Grand Coalition's choice of Honorable Charles Dausabea, the MP for East Honiara and the Member for Central Honiara for appointment as Ministers of the Crown.

Until now, Mr Speaker, all Solomon Islanders had grown up to believe in the majesty of the system of law we had inherited from our British Colonial Masters. We were taught to admire the English system of justice, which preached as its cardinal principles the entitlement of every subject of justice according to law.

The golden thread, Mr Speaker, running through the Common Law we believe is presumption of innocence. Although our

experience of colonial rule ruled otherwise, we accepted the theoretical premise of equal treatment of all under the law. That was the legacy of the colonial rule that we decided to adopt and cherish as values that were worthy of retention and protection under the Constitution we adopted at independence.

Mr Speaker, we appear now to be paying lip service to our constitutional creed when it is more fashionable to quote international favor for invoking the mantra of democratic governance according to law.

The people's government that I now have the honour of leading has done a lot of soul searching, Mr Speaker, and realise that we need to be careful before getting on the bandwagon of those who chant praises about the virtues of democratic governance - the rule of law, transparency, accountability and all the other phrases which simple and sophisticated Solomon Islanders clearly do not understand.

Mr Speaker, we decided to take a stance on the legal treatment of my two Ministers who are being remanded in custody, not because we disrespect anybody nor do we wish to trespass on the separation of powers and principles for engaging in a contest between the executive and the judiciary. We have to live with the consequences of judicial decisions in our constitutional democracy. Fortunately our system of justice does not convict and punish before the trial of those who are charged with offences.

Sir, the Director of Public Prosecution has publicly cautioned me not to pollute the streams of justice by making remarks that undermine the integrity of the prosecutorial process in Solomon Islands.

Sir, I am going to substantiate my remarks by tabling documents which are now filed in court and form part of the public records of the Magistrate's Court accessible to everyone.

Sir, they do not affect the subject matter and substance of the proceedings now before the courts but the legal process we now have and praise without any criticism for fear that we might be stepping on powerful toes.

Sir, with your indulgence let me read the contents of four affidavits which have been sworn and filed by witnesses on the recent conversation between the Director of Public

Prosecution and the presiding Magistrates in the corridors of the Central Magistrates Court before the hearings of the Member for East Honiara's first bail application.

I seek your indulgence, Mr Speaker, to read the four affidavits.

Mr Speaker: Affidavits by whom honourable Prime Minister?

Hon Sogavare: By four people. I have them right here Mr Speaker?

Mr Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister, I think the Standing Orders gave me the privilege of making the decision on this particular issue on issues that are before the courts. Since the case is still alive I must rule that I do not allow you to read relevant affidavits to a case that is still alive. But you can explain the principles of why.

Mr Fono: Point of order, Mr Speaker, can I draw your attention to Standing Order 36(2) where matters that are before the courts should not be made reference to in Parliament?

Mr Speaker: Yes, that is the section I was referring to, where it gives the Speaker, 'in the opinion of the Speaker might prejudice the case'. That is what I was referring to where it gives authority to the Speaker to make the decision, and so I made the decision not to allow matters that are still relating to cases that are alive before the court to be read in Parliament. You may continue to clarify certain principles of your actions.

Hon Sogavare: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It would be much clearer if I am allowed to read the four affidavits, but I do respect your ruling and take it as that.

But the revelations of these four affidavits Mr Speaker, are very serious. This points to a serious act of misconduct by the Director of Public Prosecutions colluding with the sitting Magistrate who is supposed to be hearing the case that morning. As I have said they are now public documents, anyone can go and read these documents if they kept in files, any Member of the public can have access to it

and read it. I might be publishing it in the Solomon Star.

May be with that little explanation, I am going to leave honorable Members to draw their own conclusions from what I have said concerning what actually happened, which I can prove here on the floor of Parliament.

What I would like to say, Mr Speaker, is that no honourable Member who believes firmly in the elementary principles of the rule of law on the presumption of innocence justice according to law, equal treatment under law, liberty, good governance, transparency, accountability and fair play will dissect on my call here today openly on this floor of people's cathedral of democracy, for the Director of Public Prosecution to step down, be investigated and suffer the fate which his constitutional powers and office empower him to inflict on all of us Mr Speaker.

What is good for the goose, Mr Speaker, must also be good for the gander.

Sir, I want to explain further. This is not about the government or the Prime Minister, not even the two Members of Parliament who are locked behind bars but rather it is about the claim of the Judiciary to be independent which is now called into question. This is a matter of serious concern to the executive government, as I said based on the fresh evidence available to us.

We are aware, Mr Speaker, of the implications that have arisen in the aftermath of the riot that occurred on April 18th Mr Speaker, and we will use our power to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate the circumstances surrounding this unfortunate and tragic event. As soon as the terms of reference of this commission is finalised, I will appoint three commissioners to conduct the inquiry. I will be taking this matter up with the Foreign Affairs Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, and of course the participating countries before they come to see me later this month.

At this stage, Mr Speaker, this side of the House cannot as representatives of our people accept the easy solution of using scapegoats to justify the events of April 18th. There are much more serious issues at stake, which cannot be attributed to only a handful of individuals.

Issues relating to the basic rights of our citizens Mr Speaker, and the constitutional rights of the Solomon Islands Government which have been established for the purpose of ensuring long term peace and stability within an unbiased environment.

My request only to the people of Solomon Islands is for their understanding and trust in the Government's ability to resolve this issue in a manner that will reassert our integrity and restore public confidence towards our national leaders. I plea to the people of Solomon Islands for that understanding, which is to allow the government to address this.

We are a responsible government, we hear, we listen to the many groups that have raised their concerns, the women group and civil society, we are listening, our ears are open.

Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to them to be patient and as soon as we see our way through we should be able to resolve these issues in the best interest of everybody - Solomon Islands, our development partners and, of course, both sides of this House.

Sir, I think the other thing raised in Parliament, which I see as still needing understanding of certain happenings in the country is the underlying issues of the tension. I raised that in media conferences on what are these issues. Mr Speaker, allow me now to take some time to explain issues that cause this country to collapse and probably will continue to haunt the country if we fail to address them now.

These issues are summarized in the log of claims lodged on behalf of the people of Guadalcanal by high level selected leaders of Guadalcanal. Let me make one important thing clear here, Mr Speaker, that although the demands are attributed to the people of Guadalcanal, they have national application. And any government cannot go wrong in terms of its development strategies to take decisions into consideration, because these are issues that should be addressed anyway in any development strategies.

Sir, the twelve point demands are logically grouped under three main categories of concern against the incompatibility of the system adopted at independence, and are as follows. Mr Speaker, firstly the resistance against a very heavily centralized foreign control

topped down development. Secondly, the incompatibility of the inherited land policy, colonial land. And thirdly, the disrespectful for custom and culture of indigenous people either directly by the government both colonial and our own or by other indigenous groups competing for what is seen as scarce opportunity. These issues have serious policy implications, and I feel that we need to appreciate them.

The original demands were complicated in fact by developments of the ethnic crisis, and the disregard for long standing issues which were clearly taken up in the strategies to consolidate the peace process. And these are as follows Mr Speaker:

- (i) the resistance against foreign ownership of decision making process and economic system.
- (ii) the disregard for the requirements of the joint peace strategy agreed under the Townsville Peace Agreement, which complicates things further.
- (iii) the compensation claims by the people of Choiseul and Western Province on the spillover effects of the Guadalcanal crisis.
- (iv) the continual marginalization of Solomon Islands,

All these issues, Mr Speaker, were further complicate by the effects of the ethnic conflict and post conflict development.

Let me comment on this briefly Mr Speaker. First is the struggle against the centralized top-down donor driven and foreign control development strategy. You can almost categorize some demands under that thinking. The first one is state government. The demand for state government system is really a revolt against the heavily top-down process of planning, budgeting and governance that marked successive Solomon Islands Government's political and socio economic development strategies throughout the years. Mr Speaker, indigenous Solomon Islanders felt that they are deliberately left out by a system that was structured to be bias.

As well as that is the exercise of political power. Political and economic power remains the prerogative of a very few. Their

success and improved economic status is taken to mean that the country and its people are better off. Sir, this is a glaring fallacy of the conventional economic system which had proven to be a total failure.

There is also the concern, Mr Speaker, for the undesirable process of alienation, which is a catchword that is used very, very often here. The overwhelming call for the state government system demanded the introduction of a new federal constitution which calls for recognition of the rights of people.

The other group, Mr Speaker, is fair distribution of economic benefits from development of customary land and other resources. This is another protest against the centralized development strategy considered a contributing factor to the unfair distribution of benefits derived from utilization of indigenous wealth.

Under such a system, Mr Speaker, the control of the use of revenue and other benefits is subject to a national debate on their allocation, and as a result, the needs of indigenous people who contribute the revenue, the perception is that the utilization of their resources are not seriously addressed.

This unfairness is perceived to be embracing a wide spectrum of issues, which I need not to go through it.

The other group, Mr Speaker, is distribution of major economic development activities to other provinces. We noted with serious concern that the country paid dearly for this gross neglect during the ethnic crisis, and in fact we made a serious mistake of putting all major economic activities on Guadalcanal despite calls by the indigenous people of Guadalcanal to distribute them to other provinces as early as 1978.

Sir, we believe that we cannot possibly afford to repeat this mistake again this time round and still consider ourselves normal. Mr Speaker, loss of lives and destruction to important development infrastructures must stand as important reminders for the present and future governments to adopt strategies that will open up other centres in the country.

And of course people of Guadalcanal also demand for relocation of the Capital and control of internal migration. Mr Speaker, the

people of Guadalcanal may believe that the flood of internal migration to Honiara and thus Guadalcanal is because of the opportunities offered here that cannot be found elsewhere in Solomon Islands and therefore may be a relocation of the Capital would ease the pressure on Guadalcanal.

Sir, whilst such a demand may appear impractical, we believe that its stands to stamp the seriousness of the resistance against the centralized development strategy. The point is that the government has a duty to see that other provinces are also developed - a call that is repeatedly emphasized by many well-to-do people throughout the country.

Mr Speaker, I would now like to comment briefly on the systematic marginalization of Solomon Islands. The marginalization of Solomon Islands is a product of a whole lot of issues, ranging from inappropriate development strategies of successive Solomon Islands government which failed to recognize the potentials of Solomon Islanders to meaningfully participate in economic development to the restrictions posed on the availability of financial resources by foreign banks established in Solomon Islands, which are clearly bias towards non indigenous.

Sir, there have been many, many cases where request of additional financial assistance by Solomon Islanders were refused for no good reason other than the fact that they indigenous. If one analyzes the attitude so far that is precisely what has just happened.

The banks' excuse is the absence of bankable projects, which is confusing because Solomon Islanders who applied for assistance have proven themselves in business.

Solomon Islands were unfairly accused, for example, for selling lands originally awarded to them to foreigners because they could not develop them. But the truth is that they were victims of the credit policy of banks established in the country. This is nothing short of a deliberate tactic that suppresses Solomon Islanders.

The other area is the reserve list for areas of investment by Solomon Islanders. This is a total joke because the policy is not supported by strategies to make financial resources readily available to Solomon Islands. This has resulted

in the recent relaxing of restrictions to allow the participation of non indigenous in the reserve area.

Sir, this is an insult to all Solomon Islanders, and if not quickly and sensibly addressed would be potentially dangerous for peace and harmony. The government is seriously looking into that.

Sir, there is a perception that the country's development strategies are systematically also alienating Solomon Islanders from the formal system making the formal sector the primary jurisdictions of non indigenous. In addition to lack of capital because of the perceived discriminating attitude against aspiring entrepreneurs is unreliable transportation, domestic market constraints, lack of confidence engendered by lack of appropriate business training and fear of failure have also contributed to the marginalization of Solomon Islanders. The Government will be seriously looking into those areas.

We also recognize, Sir, the culture clash resulting from the influence of individualism under the capitalist mode of economic development, which emphasizes the development of individuals as opposed to facilitating individuals to pursue community interests.

We are also concern about the attitudes of unscrupulous community leaders who are usually lured into accepting the superiority of the capitalist ideologies of a communal philosophy by the material advantage observed. The process systematically breeds a leadership and community that is oriented toward self-satisfaction and is an area, which the Minister of Culture will seriously address.

We are concern as well, Mr Speaker, that the government as the supreme institution and custodian of the various institutions may be is structurally and technically deficient and therefore ineffective as a facilitating institution, and because of these the system becomes vulnerable to the dictates of people who have no real interest in the welfare of Solomon Islands.

In fact there is no real incentive in the investment strategies of the country to encourage indigenous Solomon Islanders to participate in economic activities. The

Government will be seriously looking into these areas.

We also noted that there is a total absence of appropriate institutional arrangements within the government structure to provide the needed supervision and technical assistance to assist indigenous Solomon Islanders to be successful in business. This is clearly demonstrated in the ineffectiveness of the various essential services, which the government will also seriously address and may be restructure, to a concept of active management rather than merely a supervisory or advisory role.

When the detail joint policy statement of the government is finalized, we should be able to see clearly the direction this country will be moving forward under the leadership of this government.

I would like to end here, Mr Speaker, and this is inline with the inaugural speech that I made some days ago to Parliament about good governance and the role that Members of Parliament play in ensuring good governance in their work, in the House and also on Committees. I want to inform this Honorable House of the forthcoming Induction Program for Members. The program has been designed specifically to assist support Members of Parliament in their work and will encourage Members to consider and discuss important issues as public leadership, constituency relations, the role of Parliament and its relationship with other institutions of governance including the executive and the judiciary, and the role and functioning of parliamentary committee.

The program has been designed by the National Parliament under the United Nation Development Program Parliamentary Strengthening Project in partnership with other important institutions and will include participation of regional leaders and colleagues.

The program will be treated as a parliamentary sitting week, and will run from Monday 29th May to Friday 2nd June 2006. This should allow Members of Parliament a break for two weeks and then come back fresh for that Induction Course.

Sir, I would now strongly encourage every Member of Parliament to attend and

participate in this very important. The program is the first of its kind to be held in any South Pacific Country, and it aims at supporting us to be effective legislators and leaders. Of course, I will be delivering the opening address at 9am on Tuesday 30th May, and I understand that my colleague the Leader of the Opposition will also be addressing Members immediately afterwards. I look forward to seeing all of you at that time.

Sir, in bringing my remarks to a close, I would like to join the other colleagues in thanking a number of people. First is your good self, Mr Speaker, for may be putting up with us for the last four weeks and for your guidance and leadership in the business of Parliament. I also would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for another term in the chair. I wish you all God's blessing and guidance as He continues to lead you in your work to provide the needed leadership and guidance in this Honorable House and the Legislature.

I would also like to thank Christians throughout this country for continuing to pray and petitioning God for his guidance in all spheres of leadership, not only in Parliament but leadership in all spheres of life, from smallest units in the House to this National Parliament. Sir, I strongly believe that God is still alive and He rules and leads our country. I thank Christians throughout this country for continuing to place the government in their prayers every day.

Sir, as leader of this government, I would also to assure the donor communities of the continual cooperation of this government with them, and I would like to thank them for what they have contributed to the development of this country. When the joint policy of the Grand Coalition is finalized we should be able to sit together and look at ways of making partnership approach in taking this country forward. I thank them for their continual support.

Sir, we continue to support the work of RAMSI in this country as well. We will work together with them. We need to consolidate the good work that has been done. As I have assured RAMSI their work is always in the best interest of Solomon Islands, the interest of regional solidarity and recognition of

sovereignty. And so I take this opportunity to thank them.

Sir, the last but not the least, Mr Speaker, to my own people in East Choiseul Constituency for their trust and confidence in me to return me as their Member of Parliament. I promise to serve them in the best way that I can, of course within the confines of available resources. So I would like to thank them for that.

Sir, I think I have exhausted everything that I would like to say at this point and so I would like to move that at the adjournment of Parliament on Friday 12th May 2006 the present meeting shall be concluded and Parliament shall then stand adjourned sine die.

(applause)

Mr Speaker: Thank you honorable Prime Minister. Although the honorable Prime Minister has made his round up speech in terms of Standing Order 33, paragraph 5, the question is yet to be put. Is there anyone who wants to make any remarks before I put the question?

(No one responds)

The motion of Sine Die agreed to

Mr SPEAKER: Before the honorable Prime Minister moves the motion of adjournment of Parliament today, I too would like to say a few words.

Amidst the high level of political discussion that is currently taking place within our homes, offices, the market place and on the street corners of Honiara, I would like to make a contribution by placing into perspective the core functions of Parliament and how they are essential to good governance and peace in Solomon Islands.

The first point I would like to make is the difference between the Parliament and the Government. It is often misunderstood, even at the most senior levels and has led to a perception by many that Parliament is an arm of the executive Government which is called together occasionally at the whim of Government of the day simply to pass their legislative agenda. On the contrary, while the Executive is formed from within Parliament and is accountable to it, the Constitution provides Parliament with powers

and functions that are distinct to those of the Executive. These are briefly outlined as follows.

Perhaps the most visible and the best understood functions of the National Parliament is to pass legislations or laws by which a country is governed. The legal power to initiate legislation is vested only in the Legislature or the Parliament. Section 59 of the Constitution of Solomon Islands states that: "Parliament may make laws for the peace, order and good government of Solomon Islands". In practice, the responsibility falls on the government of the day to propose a legislative program.

One of the most important responsibilities of the new Government will be to articulate its new policies, some of which we have already heard for change and to commence the process of preparing a legislation to bring to Parliament to implement those policies.

There are, however, other very important functions of Parliament. Parliament is the arena in which people are represented in the decision-making process. One way that Members of Parliament formally carry out their representative function is through the parliamentary debate, which we have enjoyed a lot of it this week. Another is to present petitions to the House from members of the public as the final form or redress of grievances. However, it must be noted that representation is a two-way process. While Members of Parliament have the role of representing the people's views to the National Parliament, they also represent the actions of the House and the Government to the people in their various constituencies. This is the connection between each individual voter and the actions of Parliament that can affect the way the country is governed. If an individual voter disagrees with what they hear from their elected Members, they can exercise their votes at the next election to change their representation to better reflect their interest and expectations.

In any democracy, there is a principle that there should not be any expenditure of public funds without representation. And, of course, our Constitution says, 'no expenditure public funds without appropriation'. Therefore, another major function of Parliament is to consider and debate the budget the government proposes. The government regularly requires

Parliament's approval for supply of public funds to run the country. The annual budget of the government is subject to Parliament approval. In addition, the government obtains interim finance by occasional passage of a 'Supplementary Appropriation Bill'. Supply Bills must be scrutinized by the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee and debated in the House and its debate on the supply of public funds represents an opportunity for the Parliament to review or to renew its confidence or otherwise in the government.

Another major function of the Parliament is to scrutinize the actions of the government. There are several processes by which Parliament can hold the executive or government to account. Perhaps the most visible of these is the daily question time, where Members question Ministers of the Government on the management of this country's affairs. This can be a very powerful means of extracting information that might bring into question the performance of individual Ministers or the government as a whole.

Another way of scrutinizing the government is the ability of Parliamentary Select Committees to undertake inquiries and report their findings to Parliament. Usually committees hear evidence from witnesses who attend and answer questions. Also, committees can request the government to produce documents such as reports for the committee to use as material for their enquiry. Committees provide an opportunity to take Parliament to the people and hear directly from citizens about their concerns. Unfortunately, until recently Parliament has not had the staff or resources to undertake this work effectively.

Lastly, the Parliament provides from amongst its members a government. Part of the misconception that Parliament is part of the executive arises from the fact that the Prime Minister and his government are constituted from among Members of Parliament. The shift of power to the executive has been a feature of most systems of government in recent times, however, the Parliament remains responsible for holding the government of the day to account and must have 'confidence' in the government for it to continue in office. This is known as the 'responsible government', which is the principle

that Ministers are collectively responsible to Parliament for the action or actions of the government. The government is responsible for the day to day administration of the country. The Opposition on the other hand is responsible for holding the government to account, and it is for this reason that a strong Opposition is good for good governance.

In Solomon Islands, for a range of reasons, successive governments have been formed from what may be weak alliances or coalitions. This has often led to unstable and frequently changing of governments as a result of no-confidence motions or Prime Ministers' resignations.

The previous government of, if I may use the name, Sir Allan Kemakeza (2001 – 2005) was the only government since independence that has maintained the confidence of the House for a full parliamentary term. However, the newly elected Prime Minister, the Hon Snyder Rini (leader of the same Coalition) was forced to resign when he could not guarantee his government to maintain the confidence of the House.

As the events of that week are so topical, perhaps it is important to emphasize that the defeat of the government on a vote in the House does not mean the House has lost confidence in the government. It simply means that there is insufficient support in the House for that proposal. When however a particular vote is identified as a confidence issue, a lost vote could lead to another party or coalition forming a government or the need for an election. Matters relating to 'supply' of public funds are always matters of confidence because without funds for public expenditure the government cannot function.

All that have been mentioned so far pertains to how Parliaments function in Westminster democracies. The social unrest in 2000 and the recent rioting in Honiara point amongst other things, to the need for the continuous strengthening of the institution of Parliament and the existing governance structure in the country.

At my request, the United Nations Development Program conducted a Legislative Needs Assessment for Solomon Islands in 2001. Some of the underlying problems of Parliament

that were identified are well-known. They include lack of independence of Parliament from strong executive government, lack of access to information for Members to perform their role effectively, lack of general understanding of the role of Parliament, limited budget and human resources available to the Parliament, limited technical and physical resources such as an adequate space for members to undertake their work and meet with constituents both in their electorate as well as at Parliament House.

However, these issues are being addressed and there has been marked improvement particularly in areas where the role of parliament has been supported by the work of the Machinery of Government Program under RAMSI. This program has lent assistance to the vitally important Constitutional bodies such as Auditor-General, Ombudsman and Leadership Code Commission that oversee the conduct of the executive and the public service and report to parliament on their findings.

The United Nations Development Program has also been given the mandate to manage a 'Parliamentary Strengthening Project' with the Parliament of Solomon Islands. As Speaker I am the National Project Manager. UNDP is an ideal organization to administer the project since it is not appropriate for foreign governments to be involved in the operations of a Parliament of another country.

However, the project has been the beneficiary of substantial AusAID funding which is gratefully acknowledged. Recently the project has made considerable headway with the establishment of a research and committee secretariat unit to assist Members undertake their important duties; the Parliamentary Library is focuses on providing current information and background material to Members, and there has been a heavy investment in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). Perhaps the most important initiative has been the strengthening of the Parliaments Secretariat support with 8 recent graduates now supporting the Clerk of the Parliament in her important role of providing procedural and other advice to the Speaker, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and all other members.

Moreover, as part of this initiative, an Induction Program to which the Honorable

Prime Minister has referred to in his closing remark was also drawn up for Members of Parliament. The aim of this induction program is to assist Members in their important responsibilities as public leaders, as the representatives of their constituencies and in their work in parliament. The program has gained the interest and support of regional leaders and experts from Papua and New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, New Zealand and Australia who are keen to share their experiences and knowledge with their colleagues in the Solomon Islands Parliament. Unfortunately, the events resulting from the election of the Prime Minister on Tuesday 18th April have resulted in the postponement of the program. It is now hoped that program as we have heard today will be conducted at the end of this month to early next month.

It must be noted that civic education programs are also an important part of the project. Our people, particularly our children must know and understand, what the Parliament is, what it does, how it works, what happens there and what is said there. For the system of parliamentary democracy to work effectively, the people of Solomon Islands are required to exercise sound judgment in, firstly, electing their representatives, and, secondly, in consulting and communicating with them in relation to their responsibilities once their representatives are elected. The people's elected representatives must in turn, be aware of the beliefs, needs, aspirations and circumstances of those they represent, and represent them effectively and honestly. This communication between Members and their constituents must move beyond personal matters such as family finances to matters affecting the electorate and the nation if there is to be real change in the way Members interact with their constituents and how they represent them in Parliament.

Parliament is ultimately the link between the people and in a way in which they are governed. The road to recovery for Solomon Islands lies very much on ensuring this vehicle operates effectively and that Government does not avoid the scrutiny of Parliament by sitting regularly.

I wish to emphasize that the recent crisis will be best addressed through the proper

functioning of Parliament, not through unlawful actions on the street. In this regard, I was heartened by the commitment of the former Minister of Finance to improve the budget and resources of Parliament so that it can do its job better. I will be seeking a meeting with the honorable Prime Minister as soon as possible to discuss a similar commitment from your government and sincerely request that you place policies and projects that ensure the effective operation of Parliament is high on your government's agenda.

In the coming weeks and months, Parliament will face new challenges. However, so long as leaders work together towards strengthening Parliament and the way it operates to ensure open and accountable government, these challenges will be met.

In regards to the forthcoming induction which I referred to earlier on for new Members, I would simply like to remind you and all Solomon Islanders of the words of the former President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, who reminded his Congress and his nation, and I quote "there is no cause half so sacred as the cause of a people. There is no idea so uplifting as the idea of service to humanity".

Thank you once again, on behalf of my Deputy and myself and the Staff of Parliament for all the kind words you have lavished upon us all honorable Members during your concluding remarks this morning and during the week. Thank you very much indeed.

Motion of Adjournment

Hon Sogavare: I beg to move that the House do now adjourn

The House adjourned Sine Die at 11.30 am