

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

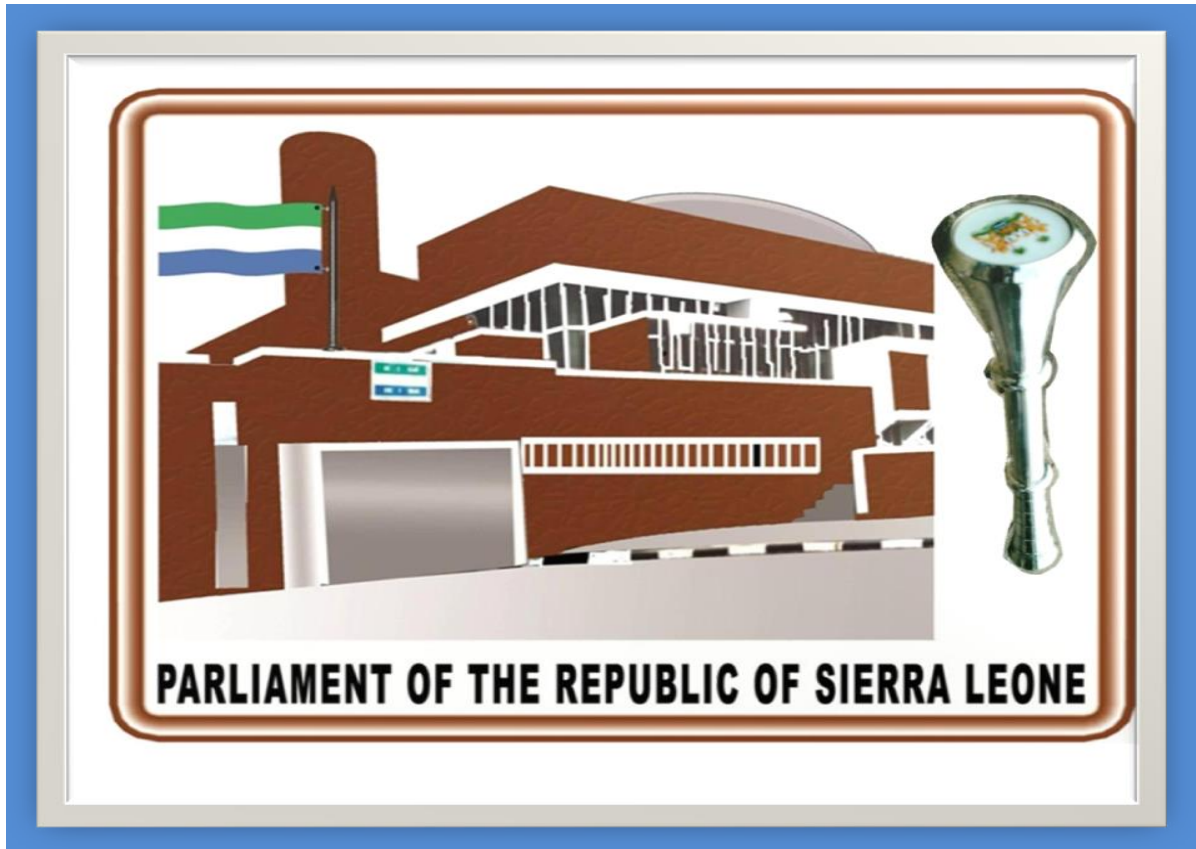
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION - FIRST MEETING

THURSDAY, 13TH APRIL, 2017

SESSION – 2016/2017



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

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First Meeting of the Fifth Session of the Fourth Parliament
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Thursday, 13th April, 2017.

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SECONDER: HON. AJIBOLA E. MANLY-SPAIN



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

**FIFTH SESSION – FIRST MEETING
OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Thursday, 13th April, 2017.

I. PRAYERS

[The Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Ibrahim Sulaiman Sesay, Read the Prayers]

[The House met at 10:20 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

[The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Chernor R. M. Bah, in the Chair]

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S. O. 5[2]

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH [Majority Leader of the House and Leader of

Government Business]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave your indulgence and this Honourable House to amend the Order Paper as follows:

Item III, which is Private Member's Motions, the seconder of that will now be Honourable Ajibola Manly-Spain. The second amendment will be 'the period of registration of voters that was approved by a resolution of this Honourable House on Tuesday, 4th April, 2017 be extended until such time that the registration is completed by the National Electoral Commission [NEC].

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I am sure the amendments are accepted as proposed.

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON TUESDAY, 11TH APRIL, 2017

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Tuesday, 11th April, 2017. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? Page 9? There being no amendment or correction, would someone move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 11th April, 2017?

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: Mr Speaker, I so move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. MICHEL SHO-SAWYER: Mr Speaker I so second.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 11th April, 2017 has been adopted as presented]

III. PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION:

PROPOSER: HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH

SECONDER: HON. AJIBOLA E. MANLY-SPAIN

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that the period of registration of voters that was approved by a resolution of this Honourable House on Tuesday, 4th April, 2017 be further extended until such time that the registration is completed by NEC.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. AJIBOLA MANLY-SPAIN: Mr Speaker, I second the motion

[Question Proposed]

THE SPAEKER: Honourable Members, I would encourage you to be direct and to the point because today is a very busy day. We are very sorry to have brought you back considering the fact that we are on vacation.

HON. AJIBOLA E. MANLY-SPAIN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would do my best to go straight to the point. I am sure the need for this motion is not surprising. Couple of weeks ago in this House, it was suggested that this House takes a decision that NEC should extend the period of voter registration.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to commend the mover of the motion on the Statutory Instruments that were laid on the Table of this House, which has resulted in taking a decision to extend the voter registration on the 4th April, 2017. Mr Speaker, I want to refer this House to the record of Votes and proceedings for the 5th April, 2017. My colleague on the other side, Honourable Momoh Moiwai said: **"I want to commend Mr Speaker and Members of Parliament for the manner in which the constitutional and procedural issues were carefully handled by this House given Parliament a very good image for performing its constitutional function."** I believe that was the correct summary of what had happened in the proceedings regarding the motion to strike out the Statutory Instrument. But we should ask ourselves the functions of Parliament. Is it just to legislate? I believe it goes further than that and I want to submit here that if you refer to Section 73[3] of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, it says: **"Parliament may make laws for the peace, security, order and good governance of Sierra Leone."** Parliament took that decision on that day in consonance with this provision in the Constitution. Again, what we intend to do today falls squarely under

this provision I have just read from the Constitution. We have to do something that will ensure peace, security and good governance of the state. This is what we are here to do today and not to make a decision to hoodwink the public or to do something that will be advantageous to the other side. I believe this is one Parliament and we should come to decision that will be consistent with the provisions of the Constitution.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like Honourable Members to tell me whether all or almost all the potential voters in his/her Constituency have registered. That is a very important question. If that is the case, and I have information which I believe all of us have, that the NEC has a shortfall of over one million anticipated registrants. In other words, we have over one million people who have not yet registered. Should we sit down and do nothing about it? I am not as good as the Rt Honourable Speaker, Honourable S. B. B. Dumbuya, on his historical fiddle, but there is one which says, should Nero sit and allow Rome to burn? Should we sit here as the representatives of the people and allow our people to be disenfranchised? This is the point, Mr Speaker and it is not a matter of whether I want to gain ten or fifty more votes, but to ensure that those who have not yet registered are giving this last opportunity to register. I believe that the justifiable thing to do is for us to agree and approve this motion.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, without much ado, I have made myself clear and I believe anybody who says otherwise I will describe him/her as the pretender of the year. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

HON. EDWARD S. JENGO: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am going to be very brief. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to toe line with the mover and seconder of this motion that has to do with the extension of registration process.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me use my legislative latitude and fortitude to state here that the NEC, as an institution, has exposed its recklessness. As far as registration in this country is concerned, this is the worst in terms of process, availability of logistics, etc. Recklessness cannot be over emphasised, Mr Speaker. I

agree with the motion to extend the registration exercise, but on the same token, it is a burden on Members of Parliament and we need to reflect on it.

THE SPEAKER: Do you want to blame the NEC for that?

HON. EDWARD S. JENGO: Mr Speaker, I said so because when some of us went to our Constituencies, we learnt that those who were recruited to carry out the registration exercise were given **Le50, 000** each. And what is happening now is that the burden is on our people in terms of providing food for those officials. This has never happened in the history of Sierra Leone. I am of the opinion that the NEC should not get away with this administrative lapses. However, let me state here that as the seconder of this motion said, I will be seen as a hypocrite if I do not allow the process to continue. I have a host of people in my Constituency who have not yet registered. My votes will be reduced if I do not allow them to register. Therefore, I want to support the extension of the voter registration to continue.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, what I will not agree with is leaving the registration exercise open without an end date. To me, it does not make sense because we have already seen the kind of recklessness displayed by the NEC. The ineptness on the part of the NEC has already been manifested; and if we give them the leverage to continue the exercise without an end date, they will continue the recklessness. This is the implication, Mr Speaker. This House should give them a time line during which the extension should take. In as much as I agree with the extension of the voter registration exercise, we should also give them a time line within which the exercise should last.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rest my case for now. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I hope we are going to hear something new. I am saying this because I do not want a situation where Honourable Members will repeat what others have said or bring statements that are irrelevant. I will rule you out of order and ask that you resume your sit. I hope you will not allow me to go to that point.

HON. NAVO KAIKAI: Thank you, Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to say few words. In the first place, I want to blame Government solely because a

responsible Government should have ensured the person in charge of the NEC did what is right in a proper manner and within the stipulated timeframe. This is the only country where the three weeks voter registration exercise is going to be extended. We have to start setting good examples and living by what we say.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Navo Kaikai, you are from the United Kingdom [UK].

HON. NAVO KAIKAI: I have heard Ministers who come here and compare the UK and the United States of America to this country.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have also attempted to do that once.

HON. NAVO KAIKAI: Mr Speaker, I am from the UK, but at the same time the Government has stated that the voter registration exercise would last for three weeks. What I am trying to say is that if we keep adjusting the goal post just to satisfy everybody, this country will never develop. Even as a parent, if today you say 'a' and tomorrow you say 'b', your children will never respect you and that is what is happening in this country. The reality is that not everybody is going to register in this country. We can continue with the registration exercise in the next one year, but not everybody is going to register. Again, even if everybody has registered, not everybody is going to vote. So, it is about time we stand by what we say. If we have decided for an exercise to last for one month, it should be one month. I am not oblivious of the fact that we do not have constraints, but we should learn to stand by what we say. The constraints the NEC is facing now were made very clear from day one. The difficulties were made very clear and I want to agree with Honourable Edward S. Jengo for a timeframe within which the registration exercise should last. It cannot be indefinite because if this is made indefinite, then the elections might be indefinite as well and we do not want the elections to be indefinite. Therefore, I will suggest here that we have a timeframe within which the voter registration exercise should last. As Honourable Edward S. Jengo was saying, the burden will be too much for us Members of Parliament in terms of travelling to Kailahun and other places. The cost of fuel is too much because I usually spend **Le 2, 000, 000** on petrol, let alone feeding the NEC officials and party agents. That is my position, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I hope we are following the debates. The last two speakers are insisting on timeframe within which the registration exercise should last. According to them, we should not leave it open ended. We must guide the debate.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are all very much aware of the challenges we are facing with the voter registration exercise in our respective Constituencies. I agree with my colleague from Moyamba who said that we must put a timeframe. However, the Honourable Member from Kailahun said that the Government is irresponsible and that in itself is an irresponsible statement to make. We all agreed in this Well that there were... - *[Interruptions]*.

HON. THOMAS S. SENGEPOH: Point of Order, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would crave the indulgence of my colleague on the other side to guide his statement when referring to a fellow Member of Parliament.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: With due respect to my colleague, I am not going to say what you wanted me to say. I am saying what is relevant in this House. The Speaker conducts this sitting and not you. We all know that the NEC is an independent body and we are aware of the challenges they are facing. This is why we are having problems at this stage. For an Honourable Member to say that Government is irresponsible is still not tenable. That is what I am trying to establish here, Mr Speaker. I think I stand by that and nobody will force this Government to do otherwise. If Government is trying to do the right thing and then mistakes are made along the line by other institutions, should you describe the Government as irresponsible? I want to inform this Honourable House that the extension of the voter registration is not just for our party, but for the nation as a whole. So, if the need arises for an extension, all of us stand to benefit, because we want to capture as many voters as possible.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to agree with my colleague that we can put a time line within which the extension of voter registration exercise should last. However, I do not want her to blame Government as 'irresponsible' for not doing 'a' or 'b.' We are trying to do the right thing, but if mistakes are made along the line,

the best thing to do is to right those wrongs. The blame should not be placed on the Government for trying to do the right thing. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. BRAIMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am going to be very brief in my submission. In the first place, I want to encourage all of us, as Members of Parliament, not to begin to think of ourselves but the nation. This is because anything we are doing today, posterity will judge us. Therefore, with all what the lobbyists are saying and with all the attacks from Honourable Hassan A. Sesay, I want to take a different direction. My direction is Mr Speaker... - *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please withdraw that statement. Do you want to continue or you want to sit down?

HON. MUSTAPHA M. BRAIMA: Mr Speaker, I cannot withdraw. I can sit down, Mr Speaker. He has to withdraw first because he referred to his colleague Honourable Member otherwise. I will not withdraw, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, resume your sit and handover the microphone.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. BRAIMA: You are shouting and that is recklessness. If they continue the recklessness, I will not walk out.

THE SPEAKER: You will not?

HON. MUSTAPHA M. BRAIMA: I will not, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if you continue I will send you out of the Well.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. BRAIMA: If you continue the recklessness, I will not walk out.

HON. THOMAS S. SENGEPOH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this nation is going to judge us by our very conduct and body language. It will be foolhardy for somebody who believes in democratic principles to disenfranchise people who actually want to vote. I have no such intentions, but it becomes worrisome when individuals would spend the whole night putting strategies in place to beat the system. That is the area that is worrisome. We will not say the extension of the

voter registration exercise should not be approved, but the problem will be where some people would want to beat the system to justify certain figures in this nation. That is where the problem lies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if we spend twenty-eight days to register voters and we have a certain figure within twenty-eight days, this nation would be looking at the figures within this short period to see if we cannot get a particular figure in one or two days. The NEC would have the capacity to have a huge number within the few days. That is what this nation should be looking at. I have been informed and I do verily believe that there are moves to justify the census figures when it comes to the registration of voters. That is the reason why I started by saying that this nation is going to judge us by our conduct, our body language, what we say and what we support in this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you go to certain registration centres, you will come to the realisation that some of these registration centres are empty. I am not addressing you, Honourable Members. I am addressing the Speaker [*undertone*]. Mr Speaker, if what I am saying is the truth, it does not lie with you to judge me, but this nation will judge me. If you go to certain registration centres, even as I am addressing you now, you will realise that most of these registration centres are empty. This is also happening in the Northern part of this country. I went to the North a couple of days ago and most of those centres were empty. These centres are empty not because people do not want to register, but because those who are required to be registered in those areas have already registered. Some of these centres are empty because those who are qualified to register have decided not to register for the 2018 elections. You cannot force them to register. There is no nation all over the world where people are forced to register. People only vote when they want to vote. You cannot force people to vote or you cannot force people to register.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is sad for me to learn that some areas in the North, specifically the Makeni City, people were locked down because they did not register. I repeat, this nation will judge us by our conducts and by what we do here.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in a democracy, the people have to decide the kind of Government they want. It is not for any system or any political party to manipulate the system. The extension is ordinarily linked to the electioneering process and that is why I am saying here that in a democratic society, it is for the people to decide the kind of Government they want to govern them. It does not lie in the capacity of any political party or any system to manipulate the system to get themselves in power.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to draw your attention to the extension of the voter registration exercise. How can this Parliament, the most important institution in the Republic of Sierra Leone, move a motion of this nature without time limit? We are all aware that we have our elections on the 7th March, 2017, which is the specified date for our elections and at the nip of time, you move a motion to tell the people of this nation that the registration exercise should be extended? In fact, the motion came at a time when the NEC wanted to conclude proceedings of the voter registration exercise. Is that responsible Mr Speaker, Honourable Members?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would not want you to be recorded as the one sitting at the time when this motion was passed in this House. I do not want you to be recorded in that regard. If we have to extend the time for registration to continue, we should have a definite period because we know the elections are on the 7th of March, 2018.

THE SPEAKER: In that case, Honourable Member, what do you suggest? You must suggest something.

HON. SENGEPOH S. THOMAS: Mr Speaker, if you ask me, I would suggest the extension to be two days. Two days is enough and anybody that does not register within this period, that person does not want to vote. We cannot force that person to register, at all.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have often said in this House that everything that is happening along the line is deliberate, but the people of this nation will judge us appropriately. Like I said, we have the 7th of March, 2018 as our election date and you tell this House that in fact... - *[Interruptions]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are repeating yourself. We have heard you loud and clear.

HON. SENGEPOH S. THOMAS: Mr Speaker, I am repeating myself to create the necessary effects.

THE SPEAKER: Well, before we started this proceeding, I advised Honourable Members not to be repeating themselves because we want to make use of the time judiciously.

HON. P.C. BAI KURR KANAGBARO SANKA III: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have heard the previous speakers. As Chairman of the Committee on Internal Affairs, I want to tell this Parliament and the people of this country that it was neither the Government nor any political party or this Parliament that made that suggestion. It was the NEC officials who came and said that they would not complete the registration because of the difficulties they were encountering in the registration process. Sincerely, Mr Speaker, I want to agree with nearly all what have been said by Honourable Members from this side. If we are honest, we have to be decent. We should always talk with integrity because fifty or hundred years from now, students of this country will come here and read the Hansard and some of you would recall that in 2017, Honourable PC Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III said this in Parliament. It might be a help to you and others would remind you of what you have said on this day. Maybe you would want to deny that you did not say 'a' or 'b.' What we are doing here today is based on resolutions that came from this side. These are good resolutions because everybody is in agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, please allow me to restate here that when these Statutory Instruments were laid on the 16th March, 2017, as a Paramount Chief who had been here from 1996 and knowing what has happened and what should happen, I made it known to all of us. If you check in the Hansard, you will find out that I raised the issue of illegality here. I said that what the NEC did was illegal because you cannot lay a Statutory Instrument on the 16th and start implementing it on 20th of the same month. The Statutory Instrument should take at least twenty-one days if there is no motion to debate it. Luckily enough, some young and clever people on my right hand side moved a motion and everybody accepted that they

were correct. Therefore, I want to agree with the fact that there are some registration centres where enough registration machines were provided and that is why those registration centres are now empty. However, there are other registration centres where those equipment were not enough and those registration centres are still having large number of people. According to the NEC, they came up with three thousand three hundred registration centres. How they managed to get this figure, only God knows. If you look at that figure and link it to the number of the proposed 132 seats in Parliament and 3300 registration centres by 132 seats, you will find out that every Constituency should have twenty-five [25] registration centres. If you multiply 25 by 28 in the Western Area, they should have 700 machines instead of 385. In my Chieftdom, for instance, the NEC created registration centres in one of the villages that has less than two hundred eligible voters, leaving other places where we have about one million voters. Patful Bombom Tholi is the name of the village. Right now people are not going there because they have to walk seven to eight miles to register. I agree that there are centres that are now empty, but there are also centres that are still overcrowded. For instance, my children in the university had to leave home around 10:00 p.m. yesterday to join the queue at the Aberdeen Community Centre. As we speak, they are there this morning to be registered. If you go to Fourah Bay College, you will see the number of people queuing to be registered. Therefore, what the Honourable Member was saying was quite correct. Registration centres where enough machines were deployed, those registration centres are now empty.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if these elections are to be conducted in a very conducive atmosphere, the NEC should not create problems that will discredit the good image of this country. The President has told the people of this country that he would not add an hour to his tenure. There is a Committee in this House you can rely on. You might have Constitutional experts to advise you; but believe you me with all the time I have spent in this House, I know certain procedures that have to be followed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, according to the NEC, they have set a target of 3.5 million eligible voters; plus or minus **25%**, we may end up having between 3.2

to 3.8 or to 4 million voters. How many people have you registered? We have to look and analyse where we need more machines, so that you will go there and make the necessary adjustments as quickly as possible.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have had interesting submissions this morning and I want to restate here that we cannot have an open ended resolution. If the extension is going to last within two weeks or month, let us spell it out here and now. I agree because if we do it, then we are going to tell NEC to relax. The mover of this motion would have as well stated a timeframe within which the extension should last.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if we are going to approve or accept this resolution, the NEC has to be guided to see that no underage registration takes place, particularly school going children. If you go and register a pupil who is only thirteen or twelve years old, hoping that he/she will be eighteen years old in 2018, it is going to affect that child. Let us think about the future of this country. People should not be so mean just for him or her to get votes and destroy the future of the children of Sierra Leone. We have to protect these children. If you are a good politician, it does not only mean to govern, but to provide, develop and educate those children.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would ask that we amend this resolution to give the NEC an extra one month for them to finish the registration exercise. That is my proposal, Mr Speaker. I thank you.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am going to be very brief. Mr Speaker, what we intend to achieve this morning as a result of this resolution is to promote the democratic process in this country. There is no way by which we can promote the democratic process if we do not give latitude to our citizens to be registered voters. The question is how do you vote at elections and choose the party of our own choice if we are not registered? At the moment, we do not even know those registered people who are going to vote for party 'A' and party 'B.' Therefore, to even make insinuation that we are making arrangement to cook figures to undermine the system is most unacceptable. Whether we like it or not if the APC wins elections it is because they have worked very hard. But that does not

mean that we should stop those who intend to vote for the SLPP not to be registered. And even if their party loses, they still have to register voters.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to remind this House that the difficulties confronting us at the moment is that we in this House have come up with legislations that have now ended up to a dual registration system. Therefore, it is not as it was in 2011, when we registered our voters. This one is more complicated and we all know that, Mr Speaker. Again, we all know the challenges confronting many of our people in the rural areas, in particular reference to logistics, equipment etc. However, what we do not want to do is to take away the right of our people from participating in the democratic process. This is a matter of right, the right of the citizens to exercise their franchise. If we are here this morning to ask for the extension of the registration process, it is because we want to encourage and to give right to our people to be registered voters in this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the fact of the matter is that we have never considered the possibility or come here with a motion, asking for an extension. We are not going to hide under the carpet. The APC is a strong party and if we want 'A' we get 'A' and nobody would stop us from getting an 'A.' Therefore, to even insinuate that we are making arrangement to achieve something is unacceptable and untenable.

Suspension of S.O 5[2], being 12:00 noon.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Mr Speaker, the motion made this morning by our dear leader makes a lot of sense. We want to undertake and promote an electoral system that is legitimate and acceptable by all; and the only way by which we can do this is to make sure that we do not undermine the ability and the capacity of our people to be registered voters. We know what we have gone through during this very short time and we would not come here and ask for more expenditure. I am saying this because it costs a lot of money to conduct this registration exercise. Most of us spend a lot of money to make sure that our people go and register, but we resist that we also respect our citizens. We also respect our people and we respect the democratic process, which is very important for us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state here that it is quite right that we did not create an open ended mechanism for the conclusion of the registration exercise. The NEC Act is very clear on the issue of date relating to the registration exercise. Mr Speaker, I also want to state here that they should be reasonable enough to know that we have spent a lot of time going through this process. They should also know that the process entails a lot of expenditure and that they will continue to cooperate with us. They should be magnanimous enough to come up with a suggestion that will make everybody comfortable, not only allowing more of our people to register as we demand an extension for the registration date. They should make it easier for even Parliament. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before we came to this House, there has been a Parliament and after us there will be a Parliament. Therefore, in our own days, we should make sure we do not do the wrong things. We should make sure that we do the things that are proper because prosperity will catch up with us if we do the things that are not correct.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is a motion before us today which is interfering with the operations of the NEC. As the Rt Honourable from Bombali said, the decision of dates for elections and registration is the sole responsibility of the NEC.

THE SPEAKER: Make sure you guide yourself.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the motion is before us.

THE SPEAKER: The request for an extension of the registration exercise came from the NEC. That is what we are told; and for you to use those words, you must advise yourself.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: I have not been told, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The Paramount Chief confirmed it few minutes ago. Maybe you were not paying attention and that is why NEC is here. I am sure it is because they are in consonance with what is happening.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, thank you very much. I think we in the Sierra Leone People's Party [SLPP] are part of the governance system of this country. We have always advised this Parliament to do the proper thing. When the issue of census came up, we advised that it was not proper because of the timing. This Government did not listen to us and they went ahead to conduct the census. Everybody was crying for an election date and the President announced the election date almost one year. Before now, we know that election dates were announced almost one year six months.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please advise yourself. That is also not true. You are in the Chamber and whatever statement you make here, you have to guide yourself appropriately. The election for 2012 was also announced a year to the elections. You have to guide yourself appropriately.

HON BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when the census was conducted, Statistics Sierra Leone told us that they were going to bring out the provisional results in 2016 and they were going to announce the final results in 2017. We are struggling in this Parliament to even move with the situation because the process is illegal. We are struggling. In fact, the boundary delimitation that was done and presented to the Attorney General's Office sometime in November/December was done with the provisional result of the census because the final results of the census came out in January, 2017.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is no way you can delimit a boundary on provisional results. You can do boundary delimitation on the final results. The final result came out in January, 2017.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I hope you are taking notes.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker we have been advising and we will continue to give advice. We know how difficult the economic situation is and we have been advising accordingly, but nobody listened to us. When the issue of the National Civil Registration [NCR] came up, we advised the Government to suspend anything that has to do with NCR and focus on the voter registration. This Government insisted that we should do a dual system of registration. We want to now cast aspersions on

NEC. The process looks cumbersome because of the dual responsibilities given to the NEC. The procurement of logistics and equipment was done by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The machines were also procured by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and not the NEC. Most of their activities are being controlled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. If the NEC is given leeway to conduct its affairs without external influence or control, it will be properly done. We now have a cumbersome situation because the NCR is also pressuring the NEC and NEC cannot withstand the pressure.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, posterity will catch up with all of us one day. We are Members of Parliament and we will have to ask for another mandate from our people and the people will question some of the decisions we take here. We are not here to contravene the laws. The Government should listen to us because we are part of the governance process in this country. Sometimes we oppose not because we do not like the APC, but because we want the proper thing to be done. If you are now casting aspersions on the NEC, why has the Government allowed both voter registration and the NCR to be conducted concurrently?

THE SPEAKER: Who are those casting aspersions on the NEC?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: We have listened to speaker after speaker in this Parliament.

THE SPEAKER: So, who are those speakers?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, the Hansard is there to guide us. There is a speaker who even said that the NEC is reckless.

THE SPEAKER: I am asking a simple question. There is a reason for the use of the word reckless.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, the NEC is asking for **Le 70bln** to conduct elections. This Government has provided only **Le 10bln**.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are making too many statements that are not true. The **Le 70bln** is for registration and not for the elections. You should not be doing this too frequently.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The NEC asked for **Le70bln** for registration and this is almost the last days to registration exercise and has only provided with **Le10bln**. If you provide **Le 10bln** when in actual fact the sum of **Le 70bln** was asked for, what are we saying, Mr Speaker? We only have two more days to the end of the entire process. How do you expect the NEC to run the whole system when you cannot provide the required funds to expedite the process? If these funds are not made available to the NEC, more problems will affect the NEC's operations. We are all Members of Parliament and we cannot go to our constituencies when we do not have money. We cannot! You cannot cast aspersions on the NEC when you do not provide the required funds. Mr Speaker, even if we extend the registration date, the NEC is spending a billion Leones per day for registration.

THE SPEAKER: You seem to have a lot of information.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, the Government cannot even provide **50%** of what the NEC has asked for and we are asking for an extension of the registration exercise. Mr Speaker, on what grounds we are asking for an extension when you cannot provide adequate funds for the institution.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Majority Leader of this House is asking for an open-ended extension. This means that they are now interfering into the operations of the NEC. In other words, this Parliament is proposing a law that will be interfering into the election calendar. There is already an election calendar. We are going to have the exhibition immediately after the registration exercise and the elections are on the 7th March, 2018. I want to remind this House that before the 7th March, 2018, there are conditions that have to be fulfilled. That means we are now interfering with the process. If you interfere with the process, it is like telling the NEC that you have to extend your time. In other words, if you interfere with the process, it is like telling the NEC that the election date in March 2018 is not appropriate for the elections. When some of you are not sure of coming to this House as Members of Parliament, you want to circumvent the law, so that you continue remaining in this Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, whatever we do today as Members of Parliament, we will have to answer to our people one day. They will say, 'look at them; they are here again.' Like I said, before we came to this House, there were Members of Parliament, but because they were prudent enough to respect the law of this country, that is why we are here today as Members of Parliament. We should not circumvent the law to consolidate our stay in power. After we would have gone, there will be Members of Parliament to take our places. We should not set the wrong precedence at all. If you set a wrong precedence, you would have questions to answer tomorrow. If you are going to extend the registration exercise for one week, two weeks or more, when are you going to do exhibition, where are you going to get the money? You have not been able to provide **50%** of what the NEC has asked for.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the set date for the elections should be respected. The problem has been caused by this Government because of the dual registrations being introduced. We should delink the NCR from the voter registration and give the sole responsibility to the NEC. We gave that advice some time ago, but nobody listened. We said that the registration process should be done by the NEC and the procurement of logistics should be done by the NEC. If you look at the behaviour of these Chinese machines, some of them do not come until 10:00 a.m. some of them go off after 2:00 p.m. We are faced with some of these challenges. Why are we blaming the NEC officials for a procurement they did not undertake? They did not do it at all. The Ministry of Internal Affairs should answer some of these questions from us. We are always summoning the NEC to cast aspersions on them. What have they done? You have not questioned the Ministry and you have not questioned Government. They are responsible for these challenges we are going through.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, even if we extend the time, the economic situation has resulted in registration apathy. The people are not happy with the current trend; and as a result, they will not register. You cannot force them to register, but to encourage them. We have been encouraging them. These are poor people and who are suffering. The unemployment rate in this country is very high

and you cannot force them to go and register. Do not create ploy to meander your way to extend the elections. You have to respect the law and we are here because of the law. If there was no law, some of us would not have been here. It is better for me not to come back than to be here and work against the law.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my advice is that if we are extending the registration date for any reason, we should not extend it above forty-eight hours. The reason is because those who are happy for this extension are those who are not going to their Constituencies.

THE SPEAKER: Did you listen to the Monologue radio programme on Saturday? Bo was specifically mentioned.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, I listened to the programme and what is happening in Bo is also happening all over the country. As a young man conducting this debate, these actions should not be endorsed when you are chairing.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: I am saying this because you still have more time. We have to retire from this Parliament and we have people who will be coming to this Parliament and what we are doing here today will be in the annals of this country. If for any reason we are going to do an extension on the registration exercise, the problem is not from the NEC because the Government has made the process so cumbersome for the NEC. It is our Government and we should hold ourselves responsible and stop blaming the NEC. The NEC has done nothing wrong in this registration exercise. The flouting of the law has been done by our Government. Therefore, forty-eight hours period is enough and more than enough. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we have listened to the Honourable Member. Amongst what he said, he has made two very strong statements. I hope the records are there. One of them is to confirm that the registration exercise is illegal. Therefore, even extending the registration exercise up to forty-eight hours is of no importance because it is illegal. Those were his words. He also said that the boundary delimitations were done on provisional census results. We believe that the

boundary delimitations were done by the NEC and not by Statistics Sierra Leone. So, I hope the records are there. The public is here to listen and I have a responsibility to guide the proceedings.

HON. ALHASSAN KAMARA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, indeed posterity will judge those occasional parliamentarians who come here and dramatise, thinking that they are speaking on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone. Posterity will also judge those who want to disenfranchise a large number of people because of their own selfish interest. If the Honourable Member from Bo had done drama at the university, he would have become the new Idriss Elba of Hollywood. The way he was speaking in this Well, his postures and gesticulations are sufficient enough to explain to this very House where he is coming from.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the reality is that from the first day of voter registration exercise to this day, there have been problems. From the first day of this exercise, the process has been very slow and chaotic. There were centres that refused the NEC officials from using their facilities, especially in the Western Area. The machines did not work at all and that continued for three to four days, which took significant time from the registration process.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, from the distribution of machines around the country, if you put the distribution of machines into statistical perspective, three hundred 300 machines can only capture ten thousand voters throughout the stipulated period by then. If you go to places like Moyamba and Kenema Districts, twelve machines captured ten thousand people. The fact of the matter is these machines do not capture space. What these machines do is to register people. It does not really make sense whether you are coming from four or five miles to come and register. When you are at the registration centre, if you spend eight hours to nine hours for you to be registered, what difference does it make with the person that is making the journey for three to four hours to a registration centre to register and go back home? What is the difference?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, posterity will judge those who think they can politicise this registration process, saying that it is a ploy to validate the census results. Posterity will judge you and us. For Western Area, I was just reporting to the

Commissioner of the Western Area that I needed a machine at the Orogu Baptist registration centre. The number of people that showed up for registration yesterday caused chaos in that area. I had to call my people on the ground, so that they put the issue under control.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you go to Calaba Town at the market areas, most of the women have not registered because of the time they spend at the registration centres. Some of us are blaming Government and we are part of Government. The motion before us was moved by a Member of Parliament on our side and was seconded by a Member of Parliament on the other side of this House. We are here to ensure that we legitimise the extension of the registration process and you are here to blame the Government. It does not make sense at all, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am in favour of the extension of the registration exercise because I want the people in my Constituency to register. I am not only representing the All People Congress [APC] party in my Constituency, but I am also representing the people of the Sierra Leone People Party [SLPP] in my Constituency and other political parties. There is no way we can allow those people to be disenfranchised.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member from Bo said that the NEC is spending **Le 1bln** everyday on registration. He also said that the NEC requested **Le 70bln** for the registration exercise. If you link that amount to the number of days the registration exercise is expected to last, you will agree with me that the **Le 70bln** that was requested for by the NEC was too much. If you are spending **Le 1bln** per day and you have requested the sum of **Le 70bln**, then you need seventy days for the entire registration exercise.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member from Bo said that we are interfering in the work of the NEC. That brings to the question as to whether this Member of Parliament is the legal representative of the people. We are not interfering in the work of the NEC at all, Mr Speaker. Parliament is the law making body in this country and we are representing our people. In that regard, if you do not know your functions as a Member of Parliament, then you can

automatically question what you are doing in this Parliament. You have to make sure that you know the functions of Parliament and you are au fait with the 1991 Constitution of this country which you are claiming to know better than some of us.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member has requested seventy days for the registration exercise to last and I support his seventy days proposal.

HON. JUSUFU B. MANSRAY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to say something for Members on this side. It is very much unfortunate because parliamentarians are describing the NEC as being reckless, it is unfortunate. This is an institution created by the Act of this Parliament and the responsibilities to man that office have been given to very senior citizens of this nation; people with very good qualification and they have made their marks throughout their lives. Why are we describing as reckless? This is very much unfortunate. The NEC has to move on and it has the responsibility to prove to this nation that they are can perform. Today, with the present leadership, I think these people have proved their mettle by means of responsibility. We are no longer in the days of Christiana Thorpe when we were told to go to the police. Mr Speaker, you seem to be contributing in the debate so you have to guide us please.

THE SPEAKER: That is what I am doing, Honourable Member. I am here to guide you.

HON. JUSUFU B. MANSARAY: Mr Speaker, here is a situation where we have the NEC before us, an institution that is not being properly funded. They have been encountering series of challenges in terms of executing their responsibilities, but yet we do not appreciate them. It is unfortunate, Mr Speaker. If these people have asked for money to carry out the job for twenty-eight days and the money is not available, should we blame them? If they come with another endless time for them to work, it means you are giving them more trouble than ever.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is why we are saying you should guide yourself.

HON. JUSUFU B. MANSARAY: They may be asking for the extension because they have not been properly funded. They are not provided with the required funds to do their job; therefore, they have to ask for more time for the registration exercise. Are you going to give them the funds? Are you going to give them the difference of **Le 60bln** to make sure that they do their work properly? If that is not available now, I will honestly say that we just give an end to this whole thing and work with the figures that we have now for the elections. In every case, we will be looking out for simple majority that will take us to State House.

THE SPEAKER: Simple majority to take you to State House?

HON JUSUFU B. MANSARAY: Yes, Mr Speaker. Simple Majority, I said.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you said we would need majority to take you to State House?

HON. JUSUFU B. MANSARAAY: We will use the simple majority or whichever way you look at it now that the SLPP is very active to clinch power in 2018. I am sure the SLPP is going to defeat the APC in first rounds. Whatever figure is provided now, maybe we could work with that figure. I am saying this because if you give them time and the funds are not available, we should have in mind a second plan.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members let us be honest that we are asking for indefinite time. If we approve an indefinite time, are we ready as part of Government to provide the required funds? How are we going to get the funds? The country is undergoing some economic difficulties. Honourable Members, I want to state here that those working for the NEC are people who want to maintain their credibility in life. We want to make sure that we do not bend the rules at the middle of the game. If that is the case, we have to help the NEC for the few days that are ahead of us by providing adequate funds to enable them perform their duties. The extension of the registration exercise is not going to help us in any way. Let me give you one example, I am representing Constituency 073 and as we speak, we have problems because our people are feeding the NEC officials. These officials have not been paid when they were sent to those localities.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what you are saying now has already been said.

HON JUSUFU B. MANSARAY: We are asking the people to pay **Le1, 000** per day from each Household.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Jusufu B. Mansaray, you should address me and not your colleagues. I have just told you not to be repeating what has already been said.

HON. JUSUFU B. MANSARAY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was trying to state here that giving more time to the NEC is like giving more problems to them because at the end of the day, we will come back to this Well and say you have not done anything. If you do not help the NEC by giving them the required funds, I do not see any reason why we should extend the registration exercise. The sum of **Le 10bln** cannot complete this job and that amount is not going to make any mark as far as this exercise is concerned. If they have set a target of 3.5 million voters but maybe they will only register 2 million voters, we have to make sure that we do not extend time. We are giving the government more responsibilities, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if more time is approved for the NEC to go and continue the registration exercise, we will come again here to blame the NEC that they failed to do 'A' or 'B.' The NEC is an independent body and an institution cannot be independence if it lacks adequate funds to perform its functions. I am very concerned about funding and the extension cannot make any good result if the funds are not available. Thank you very much.

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, at times it pains me when the people's representatives stand here to talk and then refuse to say what is correct either because we fail to do our research or we say things wilfully. The issue about the NEC is very sensitive and we must deal with things that are factual. We are here this morning because of Section 31 of the 1991 Constitution, which states that it is mandatory for every Sierra Leonean of voting age to be registered. Therefore, I want to believe that as lawmakers, it is our responsibility to ensure that that mandate is carried.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let briefly talk about interference as already mentioned by Members on the other side. I want this House to look again at the Motion before this House. With the leave of Mr Speaker, it reads: "**Be it resolved that the period of registration of voters that was approved by a resolution of this Honourable House on Tuesday, 4th April, 2017 be further extended.**" We are just getting back to the motion or to a resolution by this House that it is necessary that that resolution be further extended. The question is, do you take that to be interference?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second issue I want to talk about is the issue of funding. I want to admonish Honourable Members to be doing their research well before they come to this House. Sometimes it is necessary for our political parties to brief us accordingly before they ask us to take some decisions. Each and every party is represented at the NEC's briefing. The NEC briefs every political party in every two weeks and the SLPP is usually represented by Mr J. J. Saffa and Mr Lawrence Leama. They know something about how the NEC is being managed. Why the SLPP Members of Parliament are saying things that are not correct on the finances of the NEC? However, let me borrow page from the last speaker from Bo. He did say that the NEC is spending **Le 1bln** on a daily basis. According to him, the NEC had only received **Le 10bln**. This is the 25th or 26th day when the registration exercise started and if the NEC is spending that amount of money per day, how much can NEC spend in 25 days? It means they have spent **Le 25bln** in twenty days. We are confusing ourselves and we tend to confuse the public because we do not do our research well as Members of Parliament. We are just standing here for the cameras to catch us or for us to make unnecessary headlines. I want to restate here that posterity will judge us.

As we speak, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the NEC has registered about 2.5 mln eligible Sierra Leoneans. Let us go back to the records in 2012. In 2012, the NEC registered 2.69 mln Sierra Leoneans. five or four years down the line, how many Sierra Leoneans have turned the voting age in in 4^{1/2} years to be added to this 2.69 mln Sierra Leoneans who were captured in 2012. As we speak, about 2.5 mln

Sierra Leoneans have been captured and that tells you we are yet to hit the 2012 registrants.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as the people's representatives, Section 31 of the 1991 Constitution of this country is very clear that those who have reached voting age must be registered; and if that is the case, we need to give more time for Sierra Leoneans to be captured for the 2018 elections. And as one of the speakers did say, we are not asking for this extension to give more time to the APC supporters to be registered and we are not doing this to deny SLPP supporters from registering. We are asking for Sierra Leoneans who have attained the voting age to be registered. I think that it is but fitting that we, the representatives, listen to that. Additionally, the Civil Societies of this country have come out with press releases, asking for extension because of the challenges the NEC is going through. I am not talking about Bonthe District, but the Western Area and other places. This Parliament sits in the Western Area, if you go out of this building, you will find yourselves in the Western Area. Go out there and see how the centres are overcrowded. It tells you that the people are willing to register. If you have said that the people have been going to those centres around 10 p.m. or 1:00 a.m. to register and at the same time you are telling us that they do not want to register. This is confusing, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are more confused than those we are representing here. Why are you saying that the people are not ready to register after you have said that people are queuing to register around 10:00 p.m.? It is a pity and we must be conscious when we are talking in this House for the records. However, I want to commend other Members of Parliament on the other side who supported this motion for an extension of the registration exercise. The problem is about the time within which we should extend the registration date. Some are calling for four weeks and others are calling for two days. However, the NEC came to this House and requested for 28 days, but this House approved 30 days. This means that the NEC can continue with the registration exercise unto Tuesday, 18th April, 2017. We must know that for the records. That notwithstanding, the NEC is here listening to the cry of Sierra Leoneans and the request of Civil Society people that even before the 18th April, asked for extension.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the projection for the NEC is 3.6 mln people as per the census, but I want to draw the attention of this Honourable House that there are Sierra Leoneans in this country who were not captured during the census, but they are in this country to register and we must consider them. In other words, we have people in the foreign missions who are Sierra Leoneans and they are here to register. They were not here during the census. By extension, therefore, if the projection for the NEC is 3.6 mln as per the census, we must be talking of 4.3 mln people to be registered, including those who are presently in the country, but were not captured during the census *[Applause]*.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think the other side is with the notion that indeed we need to extend the registration period; and as we debate with the wisdom of the leadership, we will synchronise the views of every Member of Parliament and come to a meaningful conclusion. I thank you very much.

HON. PARTEH I. BAH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a very serious issue we are debating. I want to take this Honourable House to Section 97[b] of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. With the leave of Mr Speaker, it reads: **“All MPs shall regard themselves as representatives of the people of Sierra Leone and desist from any conduct by which they seek improperly to enrich themselves or alienate themselves from the people.”**

Mr Speaker, I want to inform this House that I am very close to my people and I have been going round to engage them on certain issues. I want to inform this Honourable House that they have been asking some of us to advocate for extension of the registration period because they wanted to be registered. What the Honourable Member from Bonthe said is true that some centres are empty, but it was unfortunate that he did not also underscore the point that other centres are also jam-packed.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my driver slept in one of the registration centres to enable him register early the following day. Unfortunately, I called him this morning to take me to work and he was unable to register. These are some of the reasons why we should consider the extension of the voter registration date.

Again, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to take this Honourable House to the 3rd Schedule of the 1991 Constitution. With the leave of Mr Speaker... -
[Interruption].

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, all of us took that oath and I want you to proceed.

HON. PARTEH I. BAH: Mr Speaker, it is incumbent on us as one of the speakers said that 'posterity will judge us' for what we are doing here. This is the time we should come together and work in the interest of our country. As individuals, as institutions and as a nation, we do face challenges. We have been facing serious challenges as a nation, but I am confident that if we work together, we will get these problems resolved. We have not come to the elections yet and by the time we come to that point, some of these challenges would have been resolved. With humbleness, about **60%** of the vote cast during the 2012 elections, the SLPP had about **20%**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as my colleague stated earlier, I am not only representing the APC constituents in my Constituency, I am also representing the SLPP in my Constituency. My position is very clear; i.e., I am in favour of the extension of the registration date. I would like to refer him to Section 38[5]. I am not going to waste time in reading that section. But an Honourable Member said that the NEC should go ahead with the extension of the voter registration exercise. However, the NEC needs the concurrence of this Parliament. I think it is for us to debate this and come to a conclusion and take this process forward.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I agree with my colleagues who have stated that we must have a time line on the extension of the registration process because if we leave it open ended, it will create a situation wherein people will not want to register. They will tend to relax, saying that they have more time to register. That is why it is very important for us to have a time line within which the extension of the registration exercise should last.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to give way to my colleagues who may want to make their contributions. I thank you very much.

HON. MIMA Y. M. SOBBA-STEPHENS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I just want to bring to the notice of this House and to the NEC Commissioner that I have got complaints from my residence at Goderich that the NEC officials are actually taking moneys to speed up the registration process. I think that is not good for the integrity of the NEC and the Government. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: So that is the information you wanted to pass?

HON. MIMA Y. M. SOBBA-STEPHENS: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: NEC have heard you and they will investigate.

HON. MIMA Y. M. SOBBA-STEPHENS: Okay, Mr Speaker.

HON. DAUDA J.B. KALLON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have put together earlier a lot more information, but I am going straight to the point. The point I want to make it abundantly clear that we still need more machines to be supplied to our Constituencies for our people to register *[Applause]*. Colleagues are saying that there are centres that are empty, but I want to inform this Honourable House that I represent a Constituency where we have all political parties and as we speak, people are queuing day in and day out to be registered. In fact, people are fighting in some of the registration centres. Sometimes we invited the services of the police to provide security. I had to call the Local Unit Commander [LUC] this morning in my Constituency to deploy security personnel at the registration centres to protect the NEC's property and to restore peace at the registration centers.

Again, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there are centres where the owners of those places could not allow the NEC officials to do their work. I had to send people there. I have reported this matter to the authorities concerned. I forwarded the complaint through their coordinator to inform them that because we were not consulted, that has created a lot of problems for us. I have been talking to school authorities to allow the process to continue. This has created a lot of problem for our people not to register. More people want to register, but the machines are not available. My appeal here is that as we are asking for extension, the NEC should

speedily supply these equipment to those centres that are still overcrowded, so that the people will have the opportunity to register.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, what is happening now is that there are lots of human rights abuses that are taking place because people are now sleeping at the registration centres, abandoning their homes. In fact, there lot of domestic violence taking place because husbands are now beating their wives for spending late nights at those centres. Mr Speaker, this is happening because of the willingness of people to register. They have now taken the registrations centres as their new homes, which is creating societal problems. Therefore, I want to make it abundantly clear in this House that we must ask the NEC to increase their machines in the Western Areas, so that those in the Western Area and other areas where they have similar situation can register. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI [*Acting Minority Leader of the House*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, indeed this debate has been an interesting debate. It is an interesting debate because it started when the Honourable Ajibola Manly-Spain's contribution. I thought we are going to stay on that course, but I have to say that a lot more has been added to this debate, which has swayed this House from the motive for which this motion was moved.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you would recall that I predicted in this House what we are debating now. I did that because I as a Member of Parliament, I participated in the registration exercise and I did that because I wanted this House and the people of this country to know that there are challenges that would affect. Section 31 of the Constitution of this country in tandem with Section 33 of the 1991 Constitution which gives the mandate to the NEC to carry out the registration that is ongoing. A good number of us could have wished that the civil registration aspect would not have been part of the voter registration because a good amount of the blame and the cause for the cumbersomeness of the registration process originates from there. This is the truth because that exercise is not among the functions of the NEC, but the NEC does not have a lawyer to defend that. Therefore, they should be persecuted because they do not have a lawyer. What I am trying to say here is that we should call a spade a spade. The whole exercise is cumbersome it has become a

burden on all of us. The problems we are encountering now started when the activities of the NEC and the NCRA were combined.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Parliament acted in accordance with Section 73[3] of the 1991 Constitution of this country, when we took the necessary action to legitimise the ongoing voter registration. We were right to do so because we did the right thing and because the people of this country would not want a postponement or a delay of the elections that have been announced to be held on the 7th March, 2018. In that regards, we must now endeavour to continue moving on the path that we have created. That is to say, we must do all that is possible in making sure that before the 31st August, 2017, the NEC is given all the necessary supports to enable them finish the registration process.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the registration exercise is a process and we must ensure that the processes are concluded within the timeframe. According to the NEC timetable, the registration exercise should conclude before the 31st August, 2017. This means that after the registration exercise, we turn our attention to the referendum. Immediately after that, we are going to conduct the general elections on the 7th March, 2018. We should be aware of the blame that has been put on Members of Parliament. We have been blamed that we did not monitor the relevant governmental institutions and that has contributed to the need for the Majority Leader of this House and the Honourable Ajibola Manly-Spain to move this motion we are debating now. We should not allow our efforts to go in vain.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe that majority of us love this country because this is the only country we call home. I stand here to say that as far as we are concerned, as Members of Parliament, the whole nation is watching us. They want us to do the right thing that we should not, by our actions, contribute to any delay in the elections that must be held on the 7th March, 2018. I want to emphasise that this exercise, by way of this motion, is in line.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as far as I am concerned, the NEC, as an institution, is adequately budgeted for to undertake these exercises and those of us who are privileged to see the budget and how much of it has been financed know that I am saying the truth. The Honourable Bashiru Silikie was right and I am in

support of what he has said. This Honourable House has a responsibility to monitor the activities of the NEC, so that we will be in a better position to know if they are adequately supported in this process. This is because some people are concluding that we must find a scape goat and that scape goat has to be the NEC. But for God sake, 'to thyself be true' and to others be true as well. Let us make sure that the **Le50, 000** that the NEC officials are claiming to have received from the NEC for this exercise is looked into properly. I am saying this because that has created some kind of financial burdens on us, our local Chiefs, Paramount Chiefs and the people. That should not happen and it should not be the case at all, Mr Speaker. It has never happened before and it should not happen now.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have seen several registrations in this county and what is being reported now has never happened before. If sufficient resources are not available now, I am calling on the Government to ask the international community to intervene immediately and salvage the situation; otherwise if this process collapses or continues with this sort of anaemia, it will result in us not achieving the necessary objectives on time. Therefore, Mr Speaker, let us make sure that the NEC is sufficiently supported. All of us should know that the ongoing process is being carried out in the interest of the NEC and the head of that institution must be given the necessary support to carry out his duties.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, majority of us have been carrying out economic burden since the registration exercise started and the indefinite extension of this process will continue to give us an indefinite economic burden, especially those of us who are representing people outside the Western Area. I am pleading on behalf of the silent majority here.

THE SPEAKER: Silent majority, Honourable Member?

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: The silent majority, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Where?

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Mr Speaker, let me land.

THE SPEAKER: I asked because I am counting nine people somewhere.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Okay, Mr Speaker. Continue to count them, but those ones are not the silent majority that I am referring to here. As far as I am concerned, those who are part of that silent majority in this House need the necessary help in carrying the economic burden I am talking about. I know that funding may be a difficult thing, but for God sake, I want to sympathise with poor Members of Parliament because we are going to continue this process indefinitely. I am therefore asking that the mover of this motion considers very seriously the indefiniteness of his motion.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, by profession you are not only a politician, but you are also a lawyer and there are a lot of others here who are part of humanity out there or who are educated enough to know that voting is a civic right that must be exercised by every responsible citizen.

THE SPEAKER: Do you want to go over that again, Honourable Member?

HON ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Mr Speaker, I said that voting is a civic duty as much as it is a right; therefore, it is a duty every responsible citizen must exercise. However, if an individual chooses not to carry out that civic duty and if by not carrying out his/her civic duty has no bearing on your neighbour or your fellow citizen, I would not force you to do it. Nevertheless, when you see the need for it, especially the ongoing registration exercise, you will do something, so that at the end of the day you exercise your civic responsibility. This is because apart from the voter registration exercise, the National Civil Registration must satisfy the national registry and the national registration exercise is what will validate your activities and your privileges at all levels in this county, including medical, micro credit, Sierra Leone Grant-in-Aid [SLG], etc.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, may be the other institution that is involved here did not educate the people of this country enough on those activities. We have jumped into the river and majority of the Members here will vote in favour of this motion. That notwithstanding, we want this country, this Government and this Parliament to be aware of the fact that this motion will call on those who have decided now not to carry out their civic rights and obligations to do so because they

should do so. I am saying this because you can force the horse to the river, but you cannot force it to drink the water.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, another aspect that few Members have mentioned during their contributions is the issue of underage voting. Let people realise that the age that they are going to be given at the registration is the age by which they will join the civil service and it is the same age they will use to obtain all governmental privileges and opportunities in this country. So, if your child is 15 and you decide to increase his/her age to 17 or 18 years, you are actually sub-changing that child by a couple of years. And for us politicians who may indulge in such practices, I want you to remember that you will get your way now, but when that child gets to the age of 58 naturally and he is called upon to retire because officially he is 60, you had committed a crime. Well, maybe you will not be alive by then, but you must pay on that day. Therefore, I want to adequately call on the mover and the seconder of the motion, that this motion should not be used to delay the elections. In other words, it should not be used in future as a monkey wrench in the process to delay the next elections. Awareness should be made of the fact that the people of this country have heard us and they have the records because the Hansard is the reference of what is happening here.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would want to plead with this Honourable House that the issue of blaming the captain and his mechanics in the middle of a storm is a bad decision. If such is done, others should follow because this process is not only the responsibility of the NEC, but the Office of the Attorney-General and Statistics Sierra Leone are also responsible. May be there should be a parliamentary investigation into the matter before pointing fingers at others or before scape goats are treated. I thank you.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have heard my colleague and brother, the Acting Minority Leader of this House. He has spoken eloquently and you might have as well allowed him to speak for the rest of the day. However, having heard the contributions from the other side of this House, let me hasten to allay the fears of this House and Honourable Members that it was the NEC that requested for the extension of the registration exercise. And because this

Government is desirous of maintaining the independence of the NEC, we negotiated and agreed that they would have to put a time line. Putting a time line for the NEC would sound as if we are controlling them. The NEC is going to come up with an announcement this evening and will tell this nation the time line within which the extension of the registration process will last. I want to assure you of that and I want to inform you that the NEC will live up to its expectations [*Applause*]. That is one demonstration to prove that this government is in no way in control of the NEC. We want to maintain the independence of the NEC as it is and with respect to the Acting Minority Leader, this House has no oversight committee on the NEC because immediately we do that, you would want to scuttle what they are doing. This Government wants to make sure that their next victory at the elections is legitimate and that is the reason why we want people to register. You cannot teach your grand mum how to suck eggs because she was already doing that before your mother was born.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other point I want to make to this Honourable House is the fact that making comparisons with other jurisdictions is onerous and no one in this Well has a monopoly of the practices. There are jurisdictions where registrations are open-ended. And let me stress this point that this particular registration exercise is extremely important and it is the first of its kind in this jurisdiction because the voter registration is going together with the National Civil Registration Programme. That is where the importance of this registration exercise lies. Mr Speaker, we have all gone through registrations previously and at no time we have been asked to give the time your mother gave birth to you. But the questions in the questionnaire are specifically meant for the civil registration exercise. The Acting Minority Leader has hit the point and I want to state here that a lot of us are going to be questioned because when your constituents do not register to carry that Identity Card [ID], they will come back to you. Therefore, the extension of the voter registration exercise will give an opportunity to the rest of us who have not registered up till now to go and register.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when the civil registration exercise starts proper, they are never going to register an adult again. It is the under aged from the ages

of zero to seventeen [17] years. So, if you lose this opportunity, you are not only going to lose your voting rights, but you are also going to lose your right as a citizen on this country because when you do not have that ID card and you go to the hospital, the very first thing they would ask for is your ID card. Therefore, this exercise is going to ensure that every person in this country is given an ID card to allow him to continue as a citizen in this country. That is the importance of this registration. In that regard, making comparisons with other jurisdictions to say that this exercise is cumbersome, this is the reason. We want to make sure that every opportunity is given to everybody. We would not even take the Western Area as an example because they are so close. It is in the provinces that people are not registering effectively because when you go to an old woman and ask her to tell you when she was born or how old was her mother when she gave birth to her, those are not good questions for our people in the provinces, but I think the reason for the registration is important.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, apart from the fact that this question is now coming from the NEC, but the Acting Minority Leader was one person who stood up here and made the proposal that the registration time be extended, even though that was not put as a motion before the House. Subsequently, we came here on the 4th April, 2017, his request was put as a motion and the resolution was made and the time was extended. Here is a situation wherein the NEC has now gone ahead to do the job he had requested for and they are still confronted with a lot of challenges and difficulties. I am not going to talk about financing because the NEC has told me that they want an extension so that they can complete this exercise. There is no Ministry, Department or Agency [MDA] that will say that there are no funds to do what they are supposed to be doing. As a Government, we must make sure that they are properly funded and they are doing their work *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we know the reasons why we are here. As I have said, we all came here initially believing in the importance of the registration and that is why we are here to extend the time. There is no Member of Parliament in this Well who did not vote for that resolution. If NEC comes back to say that they have problems and challenges which we are all aware. Again, all of us have been to the

registration centres in our various Constituencies and we all know that the machines are not enough and they keep giving some mechanical problems and above all, the the people are subjected to a lot of questioning. For the sake of good registration purposes, I think it is but wise to give them some time, so that they can do a good job. The election itself is a process and I want to admonish this House not to get jittery over an election. When the time comes for the elections, it will come and the people will vote for a Government they want.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank all those who have contributed to this motion and I want to plead that we vote overwhelmingly for the extension of the registration exercise. As I have assured you, the NEC is definitely going to have a time line on this proposal and they are going to come up with a notice this evening to make sure that everybody knows the importance of the registration and the reason why the extension has been given. No indefinite time is going to be given to people because if we do that, they will continue to sit complacently without going to those registration centres to register. I want to assure you that the same spirit in which you did the other extension, it is the same spirit we are asking to extend this registration exercise. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Private Members motion by Honourable Leonard S. Fofanah to further extend the period of registration of voters has been carried]

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 1.10 p.m. and was adjourned to Thursday, 20th April, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.]