

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

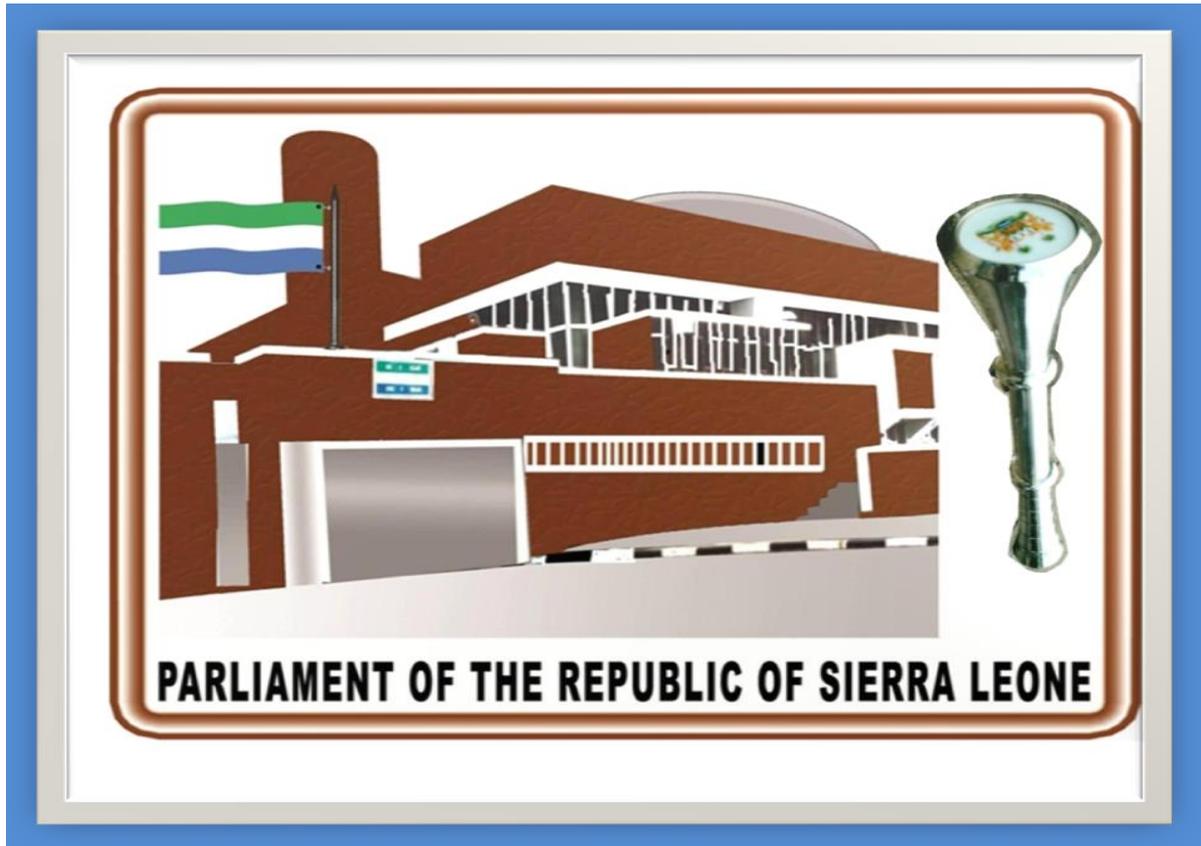
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FOURTH SESSION - THIRD MEETING

THURSDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 2016

SESSION – 2015/2016



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

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Third Meeting of the Fourth Session of the Fourth Parliament
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Thursday, 17th November, 2016.

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[SECOND READING]



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

**FOURTH SESSION – THIRD MEETING
OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Thursday, 17th November, 2016.

I. PRAYERS

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

[The House met at 11:15 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown].

[The Speaker, Hon. Sheku Badara Basiru Dumbuya, in the Chair].

The House was called to Order

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTINGS HELD ON THURSDAY, 3RD TUESDAY, 8TH AND FRIDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER, 2016

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave the indulgence of this House to amend the Order Paper. I want to insert an item III on the Order Paper to read 'Bill, the Local Council Act, 2004, Act No. 1 of 2004, which has to do with the postponement of Local Council elections; Election Order 2016. I want this item to be included on the Order Paper.

THE SPEAKER: So, you are saying that item III on the Order Paper becomes item IV?

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Ansumana Kaikai, any objection to that amendment?

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Mr Speaker, my only concern is that the Majority Leader did not stipulate his reasons for doing so.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Majority, would you like to comment?

HON. IBRAHIM R. BUNDU: Mr Speaker, I can understand the angle the Honourable Member on the other side is coming from and we spoke about this issue earlier. The reasons are always obvious that sometimes the information comes late. That is the reason I said earlier that I want to crave your indulgence, so that this particular item is included on the Order Paper. We all know that elections are coming faster, so every instrument that has been attached must pass through the legal process. We want to facilitate the election process. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I take it to be an explanation for the Honourable Ansumana J. Kaikai. Therefore, I assume that there is no objection. Mr Clerk, please take note of that and amend the Order Paper accordingly.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sittings, held on Thursday, 3rd, Tuesday, 8th and Friday, 11th November respectively. As usual, we go page by page. Page 1?

HON. ALBERT DEEN SESAY: Mr Speaker, I was present on the 4th November, 2016 but I have been marked absent.

THE SPEAKER: Any proof of that, Honourable Member? Page 2? Page 3?

HON. ALBERT DEEN SESAY: Mr Speaker, I was here sir. My colleagues can testify what I am saying. They all know that I was here.

THE SPEAKER: That is no proof, Honourable Member. In fact, we have three Votes and Proceedings for the 3rd 8th and 11th November, 2016. Which one are you referring to, Honourable Member?

HON. ALBERT DEEN SESAY: I was referring to 3rd November, 2016.

THE SPEAKER: The 3rd November, 2016?

HON. ALBERT DEEN SESAY: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: But before that, were you present when there was sitting? Honourable Lahai Marah, can you attest to that?

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, he was present.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, please mark him present. In that case, I can attest to that because I saw you on that day.

HON. PATEH BAH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Page 2?

HON. BAI J. KALOKOH: I was also present on the 3rd November, 2016.

THE SPEAKER: What is the name?

HON. BAI J. KALOKOH: Honourable Bai J. Kalokoh.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, please have that corrected. Page 2? Page 3?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Since you have asked for the microphone, I want to state here that that has always been our challenge. We have been complaining since we came to this Parliament in 2012 about these microphones. I was out on official assignment on the 3rd November, 2016 with the Committee on Fisheries and Marine Resources. We took a formal leave from the Clerk of this House.

THE SPEAKER: Which Committee, Honourable Member?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, the Committee on Fisheries and Marine Resources.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Bashiru Silikie, it has been said by the Clerk's Table that the Committee went on oversight on the 7th and not the 3rd November, 2016.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: No Mr Speaker, we started from the 3rd

THE SPEAKER: Do you have any notification to the effect?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Yes, Mr Speaker. The Clerk can attest to that. Mr Speaker, you can also crosscheck. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, mark him absent [*Laughter*].

HON. P.C. SHEKU FASULUKU SONSIAMA: Mr Speaker, there is problem with the spelling of my first name. The mistake is in all the three Votes and Proceedings

THE SPEAKER: Which case are you referring to in this case?

HON. P.C. SHEKU FASULUKU SONSIAMA: Page 2, item seventy-three. My first name is Sheku and not 'Keku.'

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, please have that corrected. Page 3?

HON. SUAHILO M. KOROMA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Page 3, item 15. We were attending a workshop.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, I received the notification.

HON. SUAHILO M. KOROMA: I was in fact present in the Well. I even spoke to you on that day. I came before the workshop commenced.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, please mark him present.

HON. HELEN KUYEMBEH: Mr Speaker, on the same page, I was on an official assignment.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please mark her present, Mr Clerk.

HON. HASSAN G. SESAY: Mr Speaker, for Friday, 3rd and 11th November, 2016, I was out on oversight engagement with Presidential and Defence Committee.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please mark him present.

HON. KADIJA SILLAH: Mr Speaker, I have the same problem. I actually went to attend a conference on the 3rd November, 2016.

THE SPEAKER: Mark her present as well.

HON. ABIE KALOKOH: Mr Speaker, I was here on that day, but I have been marked absent.

THE SPEAKER: Mark her present, Mr Clerk.

HON. ALHAJI SERAY DUMBUYA: Mr Speaker, on Page 3. I went to attend a Conference with the Chairman on Water Resources at Hill Valley Hotel, but I have been marked absent.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, were you co-opted?

HON. ALHAJI SERAY DUMBUYA: No, Mr Speaker. I am a Member of that Committee. I was representing the Chairman of the Legislative Committee on that day. I am a member of the Legislative Committee.

THE SPEAKER: Did the Chairman ask you to represent him?

HON. ALHAJI SERAY DUMBUYA: Yes, Mr Speaker.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, I can attest to that claim.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, please mark him present.

HON. DAUDA KALLON: Mr Speaker, the fact remains that we were on oversight visit with the Committee on Fisheries and Marine Resources. I think this was not properly communicated to you.

THE SPEAKER: Have I told you that the communication was not before me? Mark him absent. Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? And Page 9? Honourable Members, we now go to the record of Votes and Proceeding for the parliamentary sittings held on Tuesday, 8th November, 2016. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7?

Finally, Honourable Members, we go to record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Friday, 11th November, 2016. Page 1?

HON. NAVO KAIKAI: Mr Speaker, I was absent on the 11th November, 2016, but I was marked present.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, this shows that you are not doing your work well. That is most honourable of you. Page 2?

HON. P.C JOSEPH ALIE KAVURA: Mr Speaker, we are gradually coming to an end and they are emphasising on the registration. My name is P.C. Joseph Alie Kavura and not Joseph 'Kavra.' So, the Alie should always be added. But all throughout, the Alie is been left out. 'Alie-Kavura' is a compound name.

THE SPEAKER: Page 3? Page 4? Honourable Members, there being no more correction or amendment could somebody move for the adoption of the records of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sittings, held on Thursday, 3rd November, Tuesday, 8th November, and Friday, 11th November, 2016 respectively be adopted as amended?

HON. BENNEH BANGURA: Mr Speaker, I so move.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, I so second.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Records of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sittings, held on Thursday, 3rd Tuesday, 8th and Friday, 11th November, 2016 have been adopted as amended].

II. PAPER LAID.

THE MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENTS

MR MAYA KAIKAI *[Minister of Local Government and Rural Developments]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the Table of the House the following documents:

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO. 10 OF 2016

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 2004 [ACT NO. 1 OF 2004]

THE LOCAL COUNCIL [POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS] ORDER, 2016.

III. BILL

THE APPROPRIATION ACT, 2017

[SECOND READING]

[FIRST ALLOTTED DAY]

MR MOMODU KARGBO [*Minister of Finance and Economic Development*]:

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members... - [*Interruption*].

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister would you like to take your seat for the time being? A Member of Parliament has the Floor.

HON. SUAHILO M. KOROMA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I rise on S.O 34. I just want to bring to the notice of this House about the conspicuous absence of Ministries, Departments and Agencies [MDAs] to witness these debates. We are here this morning to debate a very sensitive motion, which is the National Budget. I am saying this because even when it was announced in this Well that the MDAs should be here this morning to listen to the issues Members of Parliament would be bringing up, they are not here at all. I just want to bring that to your knowledge and for the information of this House. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, please ensure that they come here tomorrow.

MR MOMODU KARGBO: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Appropriation Act, 2017 being an Act to authorise expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the Services of Sierra Leone for the year 2017 and other related matters be read the second time.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

MR MOMODU KARGBO: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Appropriation Act, 2017 being an Act to authorise expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the Services of Sierra Leone for the year 2017 and other related matters be read the second time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is planning for next year and there is a real big difference this time. I did lay the fiscal strategy statement for 2017. Honourable Members would recall that in May, 2016, you did pass into law the Public Financial

Management Act, 2016, which replaces the Government Budget and Accounting Act, 2005. The new Public Financial Management Act is a fairly rigid document that stipulates a number of requirements. One key requirement is this fiscal policy statement. This is a new innovation and we are really not obligated to do it this year; and because we will be doing that, we have taken that opportunity to do it.

In the first place, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a new document and it is a learning process. We have done it and we are going to send it to our peers in other countries to evaluate it to see how we stand against them. This document is now a requirement and the articles state that for any new government that comes into office, you should lay out a fiscal strategy statement throughout the duration of its stay in office. To some extent, looks like a vision statement because it shows you how you intend to run your government. Therefore, this is an important document for the progress of this country. If you compare this to the past, you would realise that we used to read, lay and process the budget. The present budget goes beyond that tradition and that is the key difference I was referring to. This would give us the chance to be plucking a bit of it every year and present it for implementation. It should be part of our budget. In essence, this document is forward looking document and we have realised that there are now lots of risks in the budget implementation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for the past two to three years, the price of iron ore declined; and during those years, whatever projections that were made, those projections did not happen as expected because the price was pitch at the market price then. However, when the price of the iron ore fell, it meant the revenue we were expecting was not coming and it undermined the budget. And then in the subsequent year, the Ebola epidemic emerged, which also affected the implementation of the budget. We just heard in Haiti there was Hurricane Mathew and in New Zealand, there was earth quark. These natural occurrences undermined the budget process. So, you will have a budget in which you make certain assumptions. The prices of oil, coffee and cocoa will be this, and this is what I will expect. These are all the assumptions you make in the preparation of your budget to generate revenue; but at the end of the day, things started going in a different

direction. The key about this particular document is that you have to pay serious attention to risks which are likely to undermine budget implementation and it is a very important document.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I like the theme of this year's budget; which is **"Recovery through Economic Diversification and Fostering Entrepreneurship."** The portion of this budget where I want to draw the attention of this Honourable House is the area that deals with 'made in Sierra Leone.' I think that is the key message that we are bringing to this Honourable House and to the larger population. Again, when I was here last week Friday after the fifth review by the IMF, under the ECF Programme, it was a successful review and one area that caught my attention in the press statement is the statement that says, 'donor funding is declining and the Government should make effort to diversify the economy.' In other words, we have to be independent. We should be depending on ourselves and that is my interpretation of that statement. This is what this budget tries to talk about. We have been to this House several times and we have spoken about diversification of the economy. This budget is now beginning to say that this is what we should do and this is our proposal to do it. It is clear in this budget.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we import toothpicks, chalks, rulers and even water into this country. Honestly, if you look around this House, you would realise that everything around us is imported, including the attires we wear. That is really our challenge and that has been one of the main reasons for the depreciating value of the Leones against the Dollars. In other words, the exchange rate is depreciating and the Leone is declining rapidly. The prices of Coffee, Cocoa, Iron Ore and Diamond have declined considerably. We need to pay attention to this country and we need to protect Sierra Leone. We cannot expose Sierra Leone in this way. We have to manufacture some of the things we consume in this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I take my seat, this budget is advocating that Sierra Leone should begin to move from an import dependent country to a local production dependent country. If we do this, it would give us more revenue and all the issues discussed this morning in Committee Room 1 and so many other things

that are outstanding would be addressed in a more robust manner. I think that is what I would like to say by way of introductory remarks.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Appropriation Act, 2017, being an Act to authorise expenditure from the consolidated revenue fund for the services of Sierra Leone for the year 2017 and other related matters being read the second time.

[Question Proposed]

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and his team for presenting the 2017 Annual Budget to this House. This is no surprise because it is an annual event. It is a convention that we have to follow every year. Therefore, the Minister of Finance is expected to present the national budget two months before the close of every year to this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable members, please allow me to make reference to the Public Financial Management Act, 2016, which was passed in this House in 2016. I would refer the House to section 32, Page 34 of the PFM Act, 2016. The short title is **"Budget Proposal and Public Consultation."** This is one aspect of the budget and the consultation took place at the Miata Conference, which is a requirement before the budget is presented to this House. Budget consultation has always been the beginning of the budget process. That consultation took place at the Miata Conference, but regrettably, I must bring it to the attention of the Minister seated before us that Parliament was not informed. This was why it was rumoured that Parliament did not participate in the public hearings that took place at the Miata Conference. I want to state here that Parliament was not informed and that was why the Finance Committee was not represented.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to also refer the House to Section 33 of the PFM Act, 2016. The short title states, 'submission of state budget.' Mr Speaker, permit me to read Section 33 [1]. It says: **"The state budget shall be laid before Parliament by the Minister not later than two months before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates."** Mr Speaker, I am

bringing this issue up because the law states that the budget should come before Parliament two months before the close of the financial year or the beginning of the following financial year. Regrettably, this budget was presented to this House on the 11th November, 2016. This budget should have been brought before Parliament before the 11th November, 2016. We have to be adhering to principles and procedures if we want to move this nation forward. In other words, the annual budget should have been brought to this House by 31st of every October or the 1st of every November. I want the Minister to take note of this very seriously.

In light of the above, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I refer the House to again to Section 34 of the PFM Act, 2016, which states that the state budget laid before Parliament shall be accompanied by information annexes, which is included on Page 35, 'A' to 'L.' One of the information that should come together with the budget has been presented with this financial statement for 2017. If you go through the annexes, a lot of information was also presented on the budget speech, including duty waivers that must be controlled by the Government. These policies, in my opinion, are meant to guide the financial activities of the Government. They must be used, so that there would be no over spending. Last year, for instance, I realised that the Ministry of Finance spent above what was in the 2016 Budget. We have limitations and the budget should be guided by those limitations as presented in this House by the Minister.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to make reference to the duty waiver in this year's budget. I said so because Parliament has been accused of given duty waivers. People are saying that Government has not been able to raise the much needed funds to run the programmes of Government because of that reason. I want to challenge that assumption as Chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Finance. I want to state here that responsibility of duty waiver rests with Parliament and it is in Section 110 of the Financial Provisions of Parliament. If there is any Act that gave power to the Ministry of Finance and other institutions, I would like to refer you to Section 171, Subsection 15 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. It says that any Act that is being passed by Parliament that is not consistent with the provisions of the 1991 Constitution is null and void. I believe the Constitution takes

precedence. Therefore, nobody has that mandate to give duty waiver or concession of waiver without reference to Parliament. What we did last year was that Parliament approved about six duty waivers because we have the right to do so. It surprised me when I was called to a meeting at the Cabinet Secretariat to discuss issues about duty waivers being granted by the Government and that Parliament has granted so many duty waivers.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Hassan B. Sheriff, let it also be said, not only did you do it because you have the right to do it, but you did it because you were justified in what you did. In other words, there was justification to the effect.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Indeed, Mr Speaker, there was justification for granting duty waiver and two of those have to do with Members of Parliament and a Ministers of State. It is not in the law, but by Cabinet conclusion, Ministers and Members of Parliament are entitled to duty waiver at least for one vehicle per term. Again, by Cabinet conclusion, Parliament has the right to grant duty waiver to those who deserve it. Therefore, I want to believe that Parliament did not do wrong by granting duty waivers to our colleagues and Ministers of Government. However, Parliament has been accused of granting duty waivers to too many people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have the right to investigate the Minister of Finance for those duty waivers they granted without Parliament's approval. I want to assure Honourable Members about that. We have asked the Financial Secretary to submit to us all duty waivers granted during the course of the year, so that the Committee on Finance will review those duty waivers and take the Ministry to task. I say so because when one institution considers you doing the wrong thing, you must be able to go the extra mile to extricate yourself from any allegations. Mr Speaker, this is exactly what we are going to do, with a particular reference to the Director of Revenue and Policy Unit at the Ministry of Finance, who was pointing fingers at Parliament. He has been saying that whenever the Ministry rejects application for duty waivers, Parliament approves. I was in the meeting where he was blaming Parliament. I tried to caution him, but he did not listen.

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

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Speaker, I was making reference to the Director of Revenue and Tax Policy at the Ministry of Finance, who challenged Parliament that whenever the Minister of Finance rejects applications for duty waivers, Parliament approves. The Director was oblivious of Section 110 of the 1991 Constitution of this country. I tried in my own little way to explain to him that Parliament is the only institution that has the legal authority to grant duty waivers, he failed to listen. What I said is in the minute of that particular meeting and the matter went as far as State House and I also defended Parliament.

Ironically, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Director of Revenue and Tax Policy is an Economist. He is not an Accountant that supposed to do required tax calculations. Tax calculation needs somebody with Accounting background to run that particular department. You cannot just put anybody in that Department because at the end of the day, the officer-in-charge would have to do some calculations. I learnt that the Director of that Department was trained for a period of six months. How effective would you learn issues dealing with taxation within six months, whilst others are spending four years in the University to study Accounting? He needs to learn more about taxation because six months is not enough at all, Mr Speaker. We want to see some changes in that Department, so that those mistakes would not be repeated within the Executive, particularly so at the Ministry of Finance. If he needs help, he can refer to the parliamentary Committee on Finance because we have graduates in Accounting, Economics, Finance, Banking, and other disciplines. We have trained and qualified Accountants with the relevant experience. You should not call a Member of Parliament to demoralise him in the public.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in line with the provision in the Public Financial Management Act, the Ministry of Finance prescribed, in one of the annexes, what should be granted as duty waiver for 2017 and that should serve as guide line for granting duty waivers. This is not about publishing reports or putting figures on paper, but we have to make sure that the rules are followed. For instance, if the Minister of Finance wants to grant duty waiver, it should not exceed the amount stipulated on paper. The National Revenue Authority [NRA] that is responsible to

mobilise revenue told me certain issues about duty waivers. I want to inform this House that the information we have in this budget in terms of duty waivers is slightly higher. For the first seven months of 2016, about **Le 235 billion** was granted as duty waivers. What is projected in the budget is about **Le 268 billion**. I think that is an understatement because by the time you get to the end of the year, we will be talking about **Le 300 billion**. Therefore, if you have figures that are far below the expected figures in your budget, it would be very difficult to implement Government programmes. This is affecting the present Government and the Ministry of Finance has to do more to improve on its reporting system.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of the provisions in the 2016 PFM Act is the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill, according to the law, should be presented to Parliament before the budget. This is because the Finance Bill is expected to support the annual budget programmes. Again, the Minister failed to present the Finance Act to Parliament before the budget. However, he included some of the provisions he had in mind in the 2017 Budget. It is clever move, but that is not to say it is the Finance Bill. In fact, that would not help us to calculate the extra revenue the Government is going to generate to support the budget. The Minister is expected to put all relevant information on paper, but has failed in that regard. And I want to inform this House that we are planning to fail because of the absence of the Finance Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue about fuel subsidy has been the topic of discussion on most radio programmes. Fuel subsidies should have been removed long time ago. However, because of the political will, it has now been removed and I believe Government is going to gain from the removal of fuel subsidies, as stated in this budget. The Minister has attempted that within the period of ten months, about **Le 200 billion** would be saved. The question people would like to ask is if you realise **Le 200 billion** Leones from fuel subsidies, on what programmes are you going to expend that money? That is the question that comes to our minds as Members of Parliament. What are the areas you are going to spend that money?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I would like to hear that again.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Speaker, I am saying that the removal of fuel subsidies would provide extra funds to support this budget. The projection made by the Minister for a period of ten months is **Le 200 billion**. I want to give him twelve months projection because budgets are based on twelve months projection. I want the Minister of Finance to note within twelve months, the projection would be **Le 240 billion**. In that regard, what are the areas Government is going to utilise that money? If you ask me personally, I would like to propose for a moderate increase on salaries and wages for the working class and the provision of public transport to serve the common good. Our regional headquarter towns are getting bigger and we need more public transport. To start with, this Parliament would like to recommend that town service buses be provided for Bo, Kenema and Makeni. We should be mindful of the fact that Road Transport is not running those vehicles to make profit. The Road Transport is running the buses to provide the much needed services to the people of this country. It is the responsibility of Government to provide basic social services, including transportation at a minimal cost. It is also the responsibility of this House to guide the Minister of Finance in terms of utilising those funds prudently.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to draw the Minister's attention to the fuel subsidy. According to the Minister of Finance, he said that a litre of fuel would now cost Le 5,500 and this proposal should be implemented in 2017. I want to state here the increase has taken effect at a price higher than what the Minister proposed in his budget. The proposal was implemented before the stipulated date announced by the Minister in this Well. The question is why the rush? Government has been providing subsidies that the people never knew before. The government's subsidy per litre was **Le2, 250**. The people should be educated on this before the increment takes effect.

However, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Minister for the political will he has demonstrated in terms of removing the fuel subsidy. Government was suffering for far too long. We also have to make sure that we communicate this information to the people we represent. We are the elected representatives of the people and we should be able to take the message down to the common man and woman out there. We have to inform them that nobody has control on fuel prices and we should allow the market forces to determine the prices of fuel.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are not alone because the prices of fuel in our neighbouring countries like Guinea and Liberia are higher than what we have in this country. Therefore, there is no need to smuggle fuel to Guinea. Guinea is our sister country and we have the Mano River Union to engage in multilateral or bilateral trade agreements. The prices of fuel in other countries, besides Liberia and Guinea, are also slightly higher than Sierra Leone. So, if Government has been providing subsidies for the past years, I believe it is time for us to also sacrifice for the development of this country. If the Minister's statement is something to go by, a litre of fuel should be **Le 5, 500** instead of **Le 6, 000** per litre. So, I am calling on the parliamentary Committee on Trade and Industry to engage the Minister of Trade and Industry in terms of asking proper questions and demand for answers. The Minister should be able to tell us the reason[s] behind the rush and why the Minister of Finance's statement was not respected.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to briefly talk about the school feeding programme. When we were going to school in those days, we were being fed on a daily basis. We were provided with lunch in school by government. So, if the Minister is proposing a feeding programme for the school going children, it is a move by this government to encourage our school going children. This is part of the responsibility of Government and the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone is very clear and specific. It is the responsibility of government to ensure the welfare of its citizens. This is fantastic and we must support the Government to successfully implement this laudable venture. This is because if this feeding programme is properly implemented, parents, guardians and even the beneficiaries [school going children] would appreciate the efforts of the government. This is not the government of the All People's Congress party, but a government for all Sierra Leoneans. It is not about a political party. It is about the whole country, Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, issues bothering on Procurements and Internal Audit were also mentioned in this budget. These are issues that are not new to us. We have Internal Audit Units in all the MDAs. What we need to do as a Parliament is to perform our oversight functions effectively, so that these Internal Units in the various MDAs do their work as expected. The Internal Auditors have specific

requirements they should meet. Those requirements are also in the Public Financial Management Act we passed into law this year. Internal Auditors and heads of Internal Units are required to submit report on a quarterly basis. Some of them are adhering to that provision, but some do not. If you ask them questions, they would say: **"I don't have working materials. I don't have a laptop or a desk top computer to do my work."** Some of them would tell you that they do not have pens or papers to write reports. Sadly though, these Internal Auditors are being supervised by their immediate superiors. In other words, the Internal Auditors are being compelled to report to the Permanent Secretaries in the various MDAs and the Chief Administrators in the various Councils. The question is how can you audit somebody and report to him/her, instead of somebody else? The auditees would not even bother to give the auditor the needed materials to perform that exercise.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about the allocation to Parliament. I want to state here loud and clear that the allocation to Parliament, as a whole arm of government, is **Le7.7bn**. There are offices whose allocations are close to **Le7 Billion**. Out of the **Le7.7bn**, about **Le2.5bn** is for Parliamentary Service Commission. In that case, Parliament would be left with **Le5bn**. Mr Speaker, if we take some money from the **Le5bn** to pay for the representatives to attend the Pan-African Parliament conferences, how much money would be left in the account? There would be little or nothing we would be left with for parliamentary oversights. And I want to inform members of the public that one of the primary functions of Members of Parliament is to check the activities of government. In other words, oversight is an important function we perform as the representatives of the people. If nothing is provided for oversights, we are left with no option but to stay at home.

As I speak, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the salaries for the staff of Parliament have still not been paid. These are our support staff and they should be paid on time. I think it would be good if we look after the interests of our support staff in Parliament. Today is the 17th November, 2016 and our support staff have not been paid for last month.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Clerk, are salaries for the support staff not been paid?

MR IBRAHIM SULAIMAN SESAY [Clerk of Parliament]: Mr Speaker, the salaries have now been paid.

THE SPEAKER: The late payment of our staff salaries has now become a trend.

MR IBRAHIM SULAIMAN SESAY: It has become a trend because Parliament, according to the Ministry of Finance, is regarded as a subvented agency and I don't know where they get that description. The Ministry has placed us under subvented agencies.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, please stand. Did you get that? Mr Minister, did you hear what the Clerk of Parliament said?

MR MOMODU KARGBO: Yes, Mr Speaker. I heard him.

THE SPEAKER: Did you also hear what the Chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Finance said about the allocation to Parliament?

MR MOMODU KARGBO: Yes, MR Speaker. I have taken note of what he said.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: We want to call on the Minister of Finance to increase Parliament's allocation. According to Section 74, sub-section 4 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, salaries, allowances, gratuities, pensions and other benefits are to be determined by Parliament. This is clearly spelt out in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. Parliament's allocation has to be increased and Parliament should not be marginalised when it comes to budget preparation. We want the Committee on Finance to be part of the budget process, so that we can make our comments.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Minister of Finance for submitting the budget to us. I want him to take note of the various issues I have raised. The national budget must be presented to Parliament two months before the close of the year. Secondly, Parliament's allocation should be increased. I want to send a message to all Vote Controllers to be part of the Sub-Appropriation hearings that would start very soon. I want to state here that any Vote Controller who fails to appear before his/her assigned Sub-Appropriation Committee to defend his/her budget would have him/herself to be blamed. That particular MDA's budget would be held. In this regard, I want to suggest to all Chairpersons and deputy

Chairpersons of Sub-Appropriation committees that Vote Controller who fails to appear should have his/her budget withheld. I am sure the message will be conveyed today by the Clerk of this House. They should be here to listen to the various comments and suggestions from Members of Parliament. I am sure this debate is recorded and they would have themselves to be blamed if their budgets are withheld for not appearing before the Sub-Appropriation Committees.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, at the inception of his intervention, the Chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Finance, Honourable Hassan B. Sheriff, did say inter alia that this issue of duty free waiver has been causing some problems. Members of Parliament have been meeting me in my office, sending for vehicles almost every year. I think we have tried to clarify the situation. For the total avoidance of doubt, the five years of the life of Parliament is strictly a Session. In that regard, I want to refer you to Page 3, number 15, in tandem with Section 87 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. Members of Parliament are entitled to duty waiver for one vehicle per session.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. BRAIMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have had an opportunity which I have been longing to get by having a Member of Parliament speaking like a parliamentarian. This is what we have been looking out for in this House. I am very much impressed with the submissions made by Honourable Hassan B. Sheriff on the other side of the House. Some of us are very happy for the issues he raised in this Well. Indeed, it has been a wonderful lecture. The position taken reflects how capable we are as parliamentarians to discuss issues bothering on national development. I thank you very much, Honourable Member.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member touched on very important issues. However, if you look at this budget and the accompanied policy statement, you would realise that [without being the Adam Smith or Gibson, who prepared documents on Economics and Accounting], you don't need to be an Adam Smith to know some naked facts in this budget. Therefore, I want to take this opportunity to look at the peculiarities and features in this budget. Mr Speaker, by

the time I finish my presentation, you would have realised that those peculiarities, features and implications are well addressed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Bible states in the book of Proverbs 14:31 that **“He that oppresses the poor reproaches the Almighty God and he that honours the Almighty God the maker, have mercy on the Poor.”** I want to start my debate from that angle. I am not going to be a reproach to God because I hate oppressing the poor. There are indications of this Budget, especially in a critical moment like this that the poor are being oppressed. The poor are being oppressed in this country, Mr Speaker. My Bible tells me you don't have mercy on the poor when you oppress them. I know that this Budget is very unrealistic. In Economics, there is something called pro-poor, but this one is against poor. It is against the poor masses of this country. It is unrealistic, inconsistent and it manifests bad financial management. As already mentioned by the previous speaker, the budget was presented to this House late and as a result we have very limited time to look at it critically. This budget indicates that the needs of the poor are not looked after.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, looking at those manifestations and peculiarities, I want to discuss an issue. There has been some rhetoric about the justification by the Minister. Again, there have also been some meandering by the Finance Committee Chairman, but I will also look at it from a critical point of view. The point has already been stated, which is the fuel subsidy. It will be good for a country to remove subsidies, but the time at which this particular removal is done is not only absurd, but very ridiculous. This is a clear indication to suggest that the livelihood of our people in this country is not taken care of by this budget. The removal of fuel subsidy is untimely and it is not the time to increase the prices of fuel. Secondly, the removal of fuel subsidy would result in untold sufferings to our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I had an opportunity to go up Leicester Village Honourable Parteh Bah's constituency. I experienced what I never imagined in this country. I saw people carrying little children on their backs and they were almost crying because they could not afford to pay the transport fare to go to that village. Why are we so insensitive to the sufferings of our people? Why are you so heartless to know that people are crying along the streets everywhere in this country? I have

a vehicle that takes 96 litres. Two weeks ago, I went to Pendembu with that vehicle and I used to spend **Le 360,000** on fuel. Today, with the present situation, I will be spending **Le 576,000** on fuel to go to my village. This is no laughing matter, Mr Speaker. You are seeing what I am saying as ridiculous because of your mono focal attitude. Your mono focal outlook can allow you to say that because you are not in sympathy with the people of Wellington.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is one aspect I wanted to examine. Our people are suffering; especially those in Kailahun District, Constituency 002. With all the noise about our infrastructure from Pendembu to Kailahun is not drivable at all and our people are suffering in that part of the country. People stay in Freetown and claim that they have constructed the Kailahun road. This is very unfortunate, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to briefly talk about an aspect that is not mentioned here; the excise duty. We all know the simple Economics that these are levies on goods produced within the country. With the leave of Mr Speaker, I would like to read Paragraph 94[ii] on Page 19. **"The reintroduction of excise tax on cigarette and tobacco product at 35%."** We are not producing cigarettes in this country. Why are you blind to the fact that we have stopped producing cigarettes in this country? Where are you going to get that 35% excise duty? This is fake and unrealistic. It is because of the unpreparedness in preparing this budget that some of these issues are coming up. You do not even know the direction you are taking to prepare a budget.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other aspect that is also portraying bad management is the lack of transparency. The budget states on page 20, Roman figure [xvi] that, **"All Non-Governmental Organisations [NGOs] are required to pay import duty on their imports into an Escrow Account which can be reclaimed."** The question is who is going to guard the guard? If you are going to put the duties they pay into an Escrow Account that could be reclaimed, who are going to decide on the parameters to reclaim those funds and what are the conditions? This particular aspect beats my imagination, Mr Speaker. We have been listening to budgets in this Well, but this one is not transparent. I want to caution

the Minister that whenever he is preparing a national budget, he has to be very realistic and allow it to be practicable.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about the school feeding programme. According to the budget, **Le600.00** has been allocated per child. I want to state here that even my 3 year old son in the nursery school would not be given **Le600.00** to go to school for his lunch. This is a clear indication to show that the purpose is almost defeated. This is not going to be materialised because whose child is going to feed on **Le600.00** per day. This is unacceptable and unobtainable and cannot be achieved.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to refer the House Page 15, Paragraph 72. It says, with the leave of Mr Speaker: **"Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, total expenditure and net lending is projected at Le5.4trillion and it is important to note that about 95% of the projected additional resources of Le780 billion will be utilised to finance key statutory expenditure."** What I am trying to say here is that if you look at the object of this Act, you will find out that we are talking about **Le4.7 trillion**. Therefore, there is an indication to show we will be working with **Le4.5trillion**. The question is, why the disparity? Where are we heading to, Mr Speaker?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are talking about the livelihood of people of this country. We are also talking about how genuine our governance system is and how committed we are to the wellbeing and livelihood of our people. This is completely absent because we had gained a lot of interest in the royalties from these mining companies. When it was booming in this country, a seasoned policymaker would have ensured that these royalties are collected and utilised prudently, but those funds were misused. Nobody could account for the benefits derived from those royalties. If those funds were properly managed in this country, this would have been the appropriate time to utilise those funds. In other words, these external shocks would have been taken care of through the use of our reserved funds. That is a clear indication of bad economic management.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other area I need to talk about is the respect we have for International Agreements and Protocols. We have been in this

Parliament for more than three years and we make commitments every year in terms of ratifying protocols and agreements. There is a commitment in the Maputo Protocol that Agricultural productivity should be increased to at least **15%** in budget allocation. The question is where are we today? Out of **15%**, we are still struggling to achieve **4%**. Are we actually growing, as a nation? I don't think we are not growing as a nation. There are good policies Professor Monty Jones is trying to implement, but this budget is undermining the implementation of those policies. This budget is not in any way supporting those policies because the allocation to the Agricultural sector is not up to **5%**. I want to state here that Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy and it takes on board more than **75%** of the population in this country. In other words, **75%** of the population of this country are dependent on this sector; but unfortunately, this budget has failed in that direction.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you look at the Abuja Accord that talks about the health sector, you would realise that this budget fails again to address our health issues. This is because no significant increase was made in that direction, which means that we are not recognising the relevance of those protocols we have ratified in this Parliament. That is a defeat on our part and it is very unfortunate.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to refer the House to Page 2, paragraph 6 of this budget. We have realised that even these figures are false and they are not properly stated in the budget. We have 'cooked' figures in this budget. What I am saying is on Page 2, Paragraphs 5 and 6. I will just look at Paragraph 6, under the heading to support local production of food and reduce... - *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Foday Rado Yokie, your undertone has become an overtone. If that happens again, the Speaker reserves the right to send you out.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Speaker, please don't send me out.

HON. MUSTAPHA BRAIMA: With your leave, Mr Speaker, I read Page 2, Paragraph 6. It says: **"To support local production on food and reduce the pressure on foreign exchange resources, government spends about Le 40.7b for the supply of seedlings, fertilizers and other agricultural tools and equipment to rural farmers and provided rice to the security sector; Military, Police, Fire Force, Correctional Services, estimated at Le36.8b in**

September, 2016.” According to this budget, as at September, 2016, those subsidies and transfers amounted to **341.4b**. If you do the calculations, you will get **Le 331 billion** and there is a surplus of **Le10b**. These figures are not correct, at all. Mr Speaker, **Le 10b** is no small money. Mr Speaker, there is **Le10b**, which means that this budget has not got the credibility it deserves. This is a fake and unrealistic budget. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

HON. ALBERT DEEN KAMARA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to start where my colleague was quoting scriptures. There is a particular scripture which says that when you call anything that is good not to be good is a curse and if you call anything that is not good to be good, also is a curse.

With those opening remarks, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have two different budgets with two different themes in my possession. With the leave of Mr Speaker, I want to read the themes of these two budgets. The theme for 2013 Financial Year states: **“Accelerating structural transformation and inclusive green growth for prosperity.”** This is a clear indication to show the whole world that the economy of this country was on the move. It simply means that the economy was on the move and in the right direction. However, it was interrupted by the Ebola Virus Disease. The theme for this year’s budget reads: **“Recovering through Economic Diversification and Fostering Entrepreneurship.”** The operative word here is ‘recovery.’ It means that the economy is recovering from all the setbacks it encountered.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Foday Rado, do you agree with the Honourable Member’s analysis?

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Speaker, I reserve my comments for now. The Honourable Member was simply analysing English and not economics.

HON. ALBERT DEEN KAMARA: Mr Speaker, this economy is recovering very fast. Naturally, if you are recovering from an illness, it depends on the type of illness but if it is malaria, for instance, you will lack appetite to eat food. However, medics would agree with me that there are some diseases, if care is not taken when you are recovering from those illnesses, you will be taken to a physiotherapist to be taught how to walk and how to talk. We all know that the Ebola epidemic contracted our

economy by **21%**. Mathematically, our economy extrapolated the X axis towards the Y axis by **21%**. I want to explain to my brother, the Engineer that our economy went in the inverse level of **21%**. In such a situation, what do we expect?

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: I stand on a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Foday Rado Yokie, please sit down. At times people ask what point. All of us are Members of Parliament; and normally, when you stand on any point of order, you know it is S. O. 34.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In spite of the fact that we are colleagues and we are debating issues, it is sometimes nice to inject some laughter into the debate. However, I want to remind colleague Members of Parliament that this is national budget and it is a serious business. My colleague, who is making his presentation, is misinforming not only this House, but the country as a whole. This is very serious and I do not want anyone to trivialise this issue. The Minister who is representing the Government will not take it that this government or this country has contracted 21%. There is no point in time in this country's economy we had bad economy to the point of contracting 21%. The Honourable Member is misinforming the public.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: As an Economist, I want to challenge the Honourable Member from Bo that this economy contracted 21%. This is in the internet and it is a document.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Speaker, he never said so.

HON. ALBERT DEEN KAMARA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to inform Honourable Foday Rado Yokie that I read a lot in various disciplines. If Sierra Leoneans are honest enough not to conceal the truth, there are certain good things about this budget. I want to emphasise here that these are just projected figures we are going to work with. If you look at the budget, the first thing you need to know is the risk factors. For this year, there is nothing like Ebola, but there are other risks.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with the help of God, we would overcome these risks and this budget would be implemented successfully. There are few good things about this budget. The budget makes provision for the construction of new roads

like the Kambia Road, Tompare Road, Kamakwei Road, Rogbere I Junction Road to Mile 91, Matotoka/Yele/Bo Road, etc. These are road projects many people never thought of. The Kuwait government has already approved **Le20b** for the completion of Phase II. Last night, I heard my brother talking about **\$6m** per km. I want to say he is treading on dangerous grounds. He does not know what is happening. In other words, he does not know what that road entails. If he knows what it entails to complete that road, he should just give credit to this Government. I want to inform this House that the Bo/Bandajuma Road will be completed. I also want to inform Honourable Mustapha Braima that the Pendembu/Kailahun road is on track.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to briefly talk about the energy sector. At times people are asking if Bumbuna is been completed, why are we experiencing problems? I want to state that most of the transmission cables are very weak because these cables cannot withstand the heavy current being supplied from Bumbuna and this is why the India Exim Bank has provided the sum of **\$78m** which will bring a lot of boost to the energy sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me bring something that will interest the Honourable Foday Rado Yokie from Bo City and those from Kenema District. The West African Power Pool [WAPP] is meant to cater for the cities of Bo, Kenema and its environs in terms of electricity supply. If this budget is going to support these projects, can you describe it as 'a bad budget?' And if you call anything that is good as bad, it is a curse. This is a budget that is going to cater for the city of Kenema. We all know what is happening now with the Dodo Dam at Kenema and Bo. With the implementation of the WAPP Project, you will enjoy constant electricity supply. As far as this project is concerned, Port Loko is not mentioned here. The budget makes provision for Bo, Kenema and its environs. Therefore, why are you describing this budget as a bad budget?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to talk about the water sector. I think we have to be proud of the Guma Dam because when it was constructed in the early 60s with a capacity of 21m, it was meant to provide twenty-one billion liters of water to a population less than one million people in Freetown. Presently, the population of Freetown is about 1.5m people. If the Dam is rehabilitated, it will take

care of Freetown throughout the year. There will be no water shortage in the city. In that regard, the UK has already committed **\$37m** for the rehabilitation of the GUMA Dam. This is good news from this budget.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, because of the economic situation of the country, when the National Electoral Commission [NEC] submitted a budget of **Le300b** to conduct the general elections, a lot of people were doubting the financial strength of the government to provide such amount. In view of that, some people were saying that the elections are going to take place in 2030. I want to inform all doubting Thomases that the elections are going to be conducted in 2018 as scheduled. I am saying this because the money has already been provided to NEC for the conduct of these elections. This is a donor driven country and for any election, the donors usually provide more support. However, most of the funds for the conduct of the forthcoming elections are provided by this government.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this budget talks about empowering young people and I want to appeal to the Minister to ensure that in as much as funds are going to be provided for the construction of new roads, our local people should be considered. If you provide jobs for foreigners, **95%** of the profits they make would be taken out of this country to their respective countries. If our people are considered, they would invest the profits they make in this country. We have to respect the Local Content Policy and empower the youth. I want the Minister to think about this very seriously.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to once again state here that as far as this budget is concerned, we are recovering from this present situation for the better. With those few words, I want to thank the Minister, the people of this country and the Almighty God.

[The House was adjourned for lunch and resumed at 2:20 p.m.]

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to begin by thanking the Minister for presenting this document to us. When we came to this Parliament four years ago, there was a Minister of Finance who presented a document to us entitled: 'Agenda for

Prosperity.' After four years, we have another Minister of Finance who presented a document entitled: 'Agenda for Austerity.'

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, which document is titled 'Austerity'?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, this document is talking about Austerity. It is an austerity budget.

THE SPEAKER: No. You are very wrong. That is not the title of this budget. If that is how you have chosen to call it, okay; but that is not the title we have here.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I will call this document an 'Austerity Budget' because it is talking about austerity. The people of this country have been patiently waiting for the prosperity this government wanted to ensure, but we are presently fighting austerity. This is the ninth year of the regime of the President Koroma and we are talking about austerity. I am beginning to imagine how we are going to achieve the prosperity at the end of 2017. My colleague from Bombali talked about the title of this document. With the leave of Mr Speaker, Page 3, Paragraph 11 of this budget states: The theme of the 2017 budget is **"Recovering through Economic Diversification and Fostering Entrepreneurship."** As the Minister mentioned earlier, diversification would not be achieved immediately when the budget come into effect in January, 2017. Diversification is a long term plan. You only have one year to the elections and we are expecting you to hand over power to us after the elections. This means that you would not be able to achieve this diversification in one year.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, diversification is not like taxation, wherein you ask people to pay tax and they pay the next day. Diversification is a long term process and I am wondering how they are going to achieve this in less than one year. This budget is going to make things very difficult for the people of this country. I believe this budget should not be passed in this parliament, considering the present situation in the country and the amount of taxes the people are going to pay. If this budget is passed, I believe the people of Sierra Leone will be crying because this is the first budget that has increased taxation without salary increment. How can you increase taxation without salary increment? We are still paying people **Le 500,000** when the cost of a bag of rice is **Le 230,000**. You are going to tax

everything, but the people are still paid **Le500, 000**. I don't know how you want Sierra Leone to move forward. Taxation has been increased so much so that we cannot even compete with other countries. For instance, the wheat flour has been taxed from **10%** to **35%**. That is unbearable because the bulk of Sierra Leoneans depend on bread and other products made from flour. The increment on that product has only succeeded in empowering the flour company. That company is being managed and controlled by foreign investors. When you go to other countries in the sub-region, Ghana for instance, they place **10%** tax on flour and Guinea **7%**.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Foday Rado Yokie, I see that you are supporting what he is saying. Please tell me if that is true economics.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are part of these international treaties and we are a Member of ECOWAS. I believe we are talking about the harmonisation.

THE SPEAKER: Therefore, if Ghana is taxing flour at **10%**, we too have to tax flour at **10%**. Is that realistic?

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: It is realistic, Mr Speaker. Let us take the argument for petrol as an example. For instance, the price of petrol was **Le4000** and now it is **Le6000**.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, all of us supported and voted for you so that you can listen and appreciate us. This debate is between us as political parties. The price of flour in this country and other countries should be the same, so that smuggling is discouraged. Recently, people were smuggling flour from Sierra Leone to Guinea. We have to discourage that practice by ensuring that the prices are the same. I believe Gambia the highest tax on flour [**18%**]. I got these figures from the United States Department for Agriculture. If you fail to do this, things are going to be very difficult for the people because the bulk of Sierra Leoneans rely on flour products for their survival.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Honourable Albert Deen Kamara was talking about roads. I do not want to go to that direction because if you are preparing to

construct new roads, it means you have completed the existing roads. Since we came to this Parliament in 2012, this government has been constructing new roads year in year out. How can you come here and present a budget for the construction of new roads when the existing roads have not been completed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member was also talking about about GENTO, a road contract which should have ended in 2015. That contract is still on-going because the government failed to pay the contractors. If government cannot pay the contractors, why don't you raise funds to pay these contractors? Why do you want to make new roads when you have not completed the old ones? That has spurred the President to use the Wilkinson Road rather than using the shortest distance to his office. Mr Speaker, this government needs to think twice. The government should raise more funds to complete the roads that are under construction, rather than proposing new roads. I think you want to embark on the construction of new roads so that you get kickbacks. You take external and internal loans for the construction of these roads. The amount of debt this government has incurred from 2007 to date is very alarming.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would move a motion to throw this budget out of this House because if we pass it, I believe all of us would not come again to this Parliament as Members of Parliament. People would vote us out because this budget is going to bring more hardship to the people of this country. When the President came to deliver his Speech in 2012, he told us that he has not seen most of his friends and that is because of sycophancy. That is exactly what this government is doing. You are bringing hardship to the country and you are laughing about it. When we go outside to the canteen, you will tell us to come and talk for you. That is sycophancy to the highest degree. We should begin to talk about these issues because at the end of the day, they are not going to ask these Ministers questions but Members of Parliament. We are going to face the people and we are going to explain to them about things we don't know. We are going to explain about things these Ministers and other officials have done which we do not know. The people of this country are going to punish us for things we did not do. If we are not bold

enough to tell this government the truth today, the people would eventually run after us after 2017. Some of us would not even go to our constituencies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this government inherited a debt free country. Today, we are talking about **1.3 billion USD** as our external debt. Please look at annex 8[a] and you will see the figure. Who is going to pay that money? It is us because we would be taking over power in 2018. Again, this government has a domestic debt to the tune of **Le3.3 trillion**, which includes payments to contractors. The contractors are crying all over the country because they have not been paid. If these people cry to us, it is incumbent on us to come and convey their cries to this government. We have to pay these moneys with interest. The interest accrued from these debts can fund the Police Force of this country. We need to be sincere with ourselves.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is no increase in salaries, but there are increases in taxation. The Minister was telling us that they are going to pay **10%** of the annual gross for rent. I have a brother who is working at the Office of National Security [ONS]. He has been in that office for eight years and his monthly gross salary is **Le3.5 million** whilst his net salary is **Le3.1 million**. We all know that if you want to rent a room and a parlour in this country, you have to pay nothing less than a thousand dollars. We know now that a thousand dollars is nothing less than **Le 7,500,000**. If you are going to pay a worker **10%** of his annual gross, he would be getting less than **Le 3,500,000**. His rent used to be **Le 13,000,000** and now you are going to be giving him **Le 3,500,000**. How do you expect that man to live? He has a wife and children and he would not survive in a room and a parlour. In this country everyone that is paying rent would have to pay nothing less than a thousand dollars per room. I believe this government should not touch the rent allowances of workers. This is the more reason why people are corrupt in this country. If they cannot pay their rents and they have wives and children who depend on them, what you would expect to do with funds allocated for operational purposes? They will simply divert those funds into their personal pockets. Therefore, there is no reason why they should reduce those rent allowances. You should not because these landlords would not reduce their rents and they are going to kick some of these

officers from their quarters. Where would they go when you are busy selling government quarters? What is the status of the OAU Villas? You are selling these houses to your party stalwarts. You have not created a housing scheme for these people in the civil service and now you are reducing their rent allowances.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I do not want to go into the criminality that is done in this budget. You presented a budget to us and told us that the increase in fuel price should be **Le 5,500** and you criminally taxed the people **Le 6,000**. There is no way you can effect any change of price this time because the law says this budget should be implemented in 2017. You criminally went ahead to impose more prices on fuel.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your use of the word 'criminally.' It is dishonourable of you. Withdraw that word.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, it is withdrawn. Why are you asking the people to pay **Le 6,000** after you have stated in this budget that the pump price per litre is **Le 5,500**? Who is going to eat the **Le500**? Who is going to collect the **Le 500**? There is no way you can implement this budget when it has not yet been ratified by this House. That is lawlessness, Mr Speaker. We are all going to suffer from this increase.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when I was talking about the passport in this House, I moved a motion to summon the Minister of Finance to come and explain to us some of these issues. Politicians were on the radios informing the people that the government was subsidising **Le 1,300** per litre. We expected them to add what they have been paying per litre, but that has not happened. They went ahead to tax the people **Le 2,000** per litre. That means the Minister of Information was lying to us and the people of this country. I want to state here that any time you increase the price of fuel, the price of other commodities and services in this country would also increase. For instance, if you want to bring coal from the provinces to Freetown, you have to pay for transportation. As I speak, transportation has increased in every part of this country. This is unbearable on the people of this country. Mr Speaker, I would move a motion at the end of this debate to revert the pump price with immediate effect to **Le 3,750** per litre until this budget is ratified. Lawlessness should not be

the order of the day in this country. You cannot present a budget and start implementing it before its ratification. That is lawlessness, Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am telling my brothers and sisters on the other side of this House that if you do not speak the truth as we are doing; if you do not support us, I can assure you that the people would throw you out of this Parliament. If, because of party lines you are not saying the truth, the people would throw you out of this Parliament. My people are suffering at Baoma.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me go to education. This government told us that they have done 'A' and 'B,' which is very good. I want to however state here that the standard of education has dropped to a point where our universities do not have confidence in the certificates candidates are applying with to enter those universities. Applicants are forced to take entrance exams before they are finally admitted. This means that our universities do not trust our results from WAEC; and by extension, international universities would not also accept our WASSCE certificates. If our own universities are not accepting certificates from WAEC, there is no university in Ghana and other countries that would accept those results. We are paying huge sums of money for our children who are taking these exams. If we pay those money and at the end of the day the universities in our own country do not trust their certificates, it means our educational system has a problem. Therefore, we need to go back to the drawing board and address those problems. When the Speaker of this House sat to his O' Level Exam, he was not subjected to an entrance exam. He only bought his application form and he was admitted at Fourah Bay College. As it is, you have to take entrance exams even if you have a first class result because of lack of trust in the certificates from WAEC. This government should look at the educational sector and reform it for the better. If that is not done, the future of this country is bleak. I am saying this because if those that would take after us are not well educated, some of us would not rest in peace after our deaths.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as Honourable Mustapha Braima was saying, the figures in this budget were cooked. They have to explain to us why that happened. You presented figures to us after doing your calculations and at the end of it all, over **Le 10 billion** is now in abeyance. This budget should not be accepted in this

Parliament because this government has not been able to provide jobs for its citizenry. The bulk of our youth are now surviving through mercury. Again, the government has increased taxes on these betting companies. Some of us that used to survive through mercury are going to be taxed **20%**, instead of the **10%** that we used to pay. You are making life unbearable for the people. There is a great error in this budget. You have told us in this budget that the price of fuel is **Le 5,500** per litre, but you are now asking people to pay **Le 6,000**, which is unlawful because this budget has not been ratified by this Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am moving a motion that this Ministry should go back and make the necessary corrections. I am also moving that the price of fuel per litre should be reversed with immediate effect to **Le 3,750** until this budget is ratified. Let us not forget that in 2015, there was a budget that was read to us. That is the budget that we are still using and we are still in the last quarter of that budget. In that budget, there was a subsidy that should run through 2016 for fuel.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we will never get tired of talking about the prosperity of Sierra Leone. Our brothers out there are surviving at the detriment of the voters. Today, you are dancing and they would remind you tomorrow. You want them to continue to suffer till they die. They are seeing you and they would remind you in 2018. Like I said earlier, the 2016 budget is still in operation and there is no need for you to make any increment when we have not ended the financial year. The 2016 Financial Year will end on the 31st December, 2016. On that note, they should compensate the people of this country for the unlawful increment they made. In that regard, I am moving a motion that the pump price of fuel be reversed from **Le 6,000** to **Le 3,750**, with immediate effect.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I see that the moment somebody talks about moving a motion, people are always very anxious to second it. There is a process in moving a motion. Just simply say that you are suggesting. When you want to move a motion, you should look at the relevant Standing Orders. It is very difficult to move a motion.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: What is the difficulty, Mr Speaker? This is an opportunity for us to advise this Ministry. I am moving a motion that the fuel price should be

reversed with immediate effect to **Le 3,750** and the pump price for 2017 should be **Le 5,500**, instead of **Le 6,000**.

HON. EMMA J. KOWA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are here to debate and deliberate on an important document that has been laid before us on Friday, 11th November, 2016. It is true that we are facing difficult times in Sierra Leone. Of course, few months ago, we were hearing that this was the fastest growing economy in West Africa. It was said here by the Minister of Finance then and many other ministers who have been in that Ministry. What has happened between then and now is the big question for all Sierra Leoneans. We are spending more money than what we are generating as revenue. Therefore, we end up borrowing more and owing more than what we generate. This trend would have a downturn effect on our economy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are broke; the country is broke and we are trying to resolve issues. This is no trivial matter at all, Mr Speaker. We can sit here all day, screaming at each other because we do not want to hear the truth. We do not want to hear what the other person has to say. But each and every one of us in this Well is experiencing the negative effects of what is happening today in this country. The prices of commodities have risen considerably in every corner of this country, including our canteen. If you go to your constituency in the streets, you would realise that things have gone up. Somebody went to the canteen today to buy food. The person ordered for Le 12,000 food but was told that the price had changed. Therefore, we are all affected, no matter how loud we scream, we must find a solution. And before we find that solution, we should voice out the lapses and where the problems are. Mr Speaker, until and unless we accept our faults and the problems within the system, we won't be able to rectify them at all.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there are lots of wastages within the system. If you look at the Audit Service Report, you would realise that most of the MDAs are still grappling with procurement procedures and that has adverse impacts on us and the progress of this country. Officials of these MDAs usually overprice goods they procure for their MDAs. Ministries must be responsible for what they procure in their ministries. Parliament is being suppressed because the allocation to Parliament is

always inadequate; and as a result, Members of Parliament are unable to perform their oversight responsibilities as expected. I believe Parliament as a whole should stand up this time round to make sure that we have adequate allocation in this budget to perform our oversight functions. Many parliamentary Committees in this House are unable to perform their oversight functions because there are no funds. Officials from the Executive are always here to approve Bills and loans. Who monitors those loans and how are those funds utilised? Parliament cannot because we do not go on oversight to do our work effectively.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is the duty of this House to oversee the Executive. We are not only here to approve loans and make laws, but to also monitor the implementation of those laws and the utilisation of those funds. Parliament is very important in terms of ensuring checks and balances. And the only way we can do that is to empower Members of Parliament in terms of enabling us scrutinise the activities of these MDAs. We should be able to look at the leakages and wastages in the system and find possible solutions. They are always blaming Parliament for everything. I want to state here that Members of Parliament have not got the finances we need to do our work. We cannot do anything because our hands are tied.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we must try to harmonise the country's tax system. If there is an effective tax system that is efficient in terms of targeting the domestic tax in the country, I believe we would be able to reduce some of the unemployment and even help to prioritise other areas like price stability.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Abuja Declaration states that **15%** of our national budget should be allocated to health sector. It is prudent to think and to know that in a post Ebola country like Sierra Leone, we should be looking at improving the health sector. This is because when Ebola epidemic broke out, we had no proper structures in place to combat the disease. We could not sustain the impact of Ebola because of the dilapidated health system in the country. We must be able to make provision for **15%**, so that our health system is improved. According to this budget, only **6%** is being proposed for the health sector and it is far less than the

actual figure that we are supposed to propose. Mr Speaker, we can trivialise this issue, but it is affecting our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to look at the Fiscal Strategy Statement for 2017, Page 20, under import and duty. According to this document, it is clearly spelt out that the increment should be **Le 5,500**. It is left with us, as a Parliament, to sit down and look at the petroleum agency. Why are they charging us **Le6, 000** per litre when it is clearly stated that it should be **Le5, 500**. This is going on till June, 2017. Page 20 reads, **"The new retailed price will be kept unchanged until June, 2017."** The new retail price is **Le5, 500** and not **Le6, 000**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, some Members of Parliament in this Well are not sincere with themselves. Their people are suffering out there and they are sitting complacently without rebuffing this budget. But we have had this document since Friday and this is not a classroom. You should be able to read it and raise salient issues bothering on the welfare of our people. If I have referred and read a paragraph for your hearings, you must be able to understand the simple English in that paragraph.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I was interrupted, I was talking about the increment made on the pump price of fuel. The sum of **Le 500** has been added to the **Le5, 500** being announced earlier by the Minister. Immediately after the budget has been presented to this House on Friday, the pump price for fuel changed from **Le 3,750** to **Le 6,000** per litre. How are we going to recoup the **Le 500**? The people are suffering because the cost of transportation has also increased. In fact the price of our staple food, which is rice has been increased. This is the trickledown effect on the increment of fuel price. Nobody is here to protect our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this document has been laid for it to be ratified at the end of the debate; but regrettably, it is presently under implementation at the petrol stations. This is a total disregard of this Parliament and it is very sad that Parliament has always been undermined by the Executive and those who are bringing Bills to be passed in this Well. They treat us with levity. They have taken this Parliament as a rubber stamp Parliament. Why are we rubberstamping issues we know that they have the tendency to affect the livelihood of our people? You should

be able to stand against them and say enough is enough. We have to make sure that what they bring to us for ratification has a positive bearing on the lives of our people.

Mr Speaker, honourable Members, we must sit as a Parliament and look into issues affecting us. This is because the Executive has developed the habit of bringing Bills and other projects after they have started the implementation process for us to ratify. This is very sad because they are treating Parliament with levity and even accusing us of rubberstamping everything they bring to this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to touch on the leakages and the wastages within the system. In 2009, this Parliament passed an Act which spells out that **35%** should be paid a tax. The question is, how much of these taxes are really being paid to government? Besides, why some of these mining companies are paying in advance? It is because it prepares the ground for corruption and mismanagement. If the tax is meant to be paid yearly and you pay five years in advance, you are defeating the purpose for which the taxes are paid and the country would end up losing. These are some of the leakages and the wastages in the system. I want to implore the Ministry of Finance to look at this issue and have a rethink. If we are suffering today as Sierra Leoneans, it is because some of these leakages and wastages are not been addressed.

Apart from that, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there are also differences in the way the revenue is being collected. These corporate mining companies are using our asset to secure huge sums of funds. Regrettably, when these funds are secured, nobody is there to monitor their utilisation. Nobody is there to monitor these funds and as a result, they are being misused by few people. It is the ordinary man and woman who are mostly affected. They always have the option to leave when things go wrong. They would say 'we are bankrupt and we cannot continue mining.' And any time they leave, a big gap is being created in our budget.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Ministry of Finance must take active measures to address some of these leakages in the system. These are some of the issues affecting us today. If we are broke today, it is because these issues have not been addressed appropriately. Our domestic debt, as pronounced in this Well by the

Minister, is **3.3** trillion Leones. This figure is almost our 2016 budget. This simply means that what we are living on is being borrowed. We are borrowing because we are spending more than what we are generating. We must do something to close these loopholes in the system.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to look at the school feeding programme. We must ensure that the children are fed throughout the week. If the programme is only designed to feed these children twice a week, it is not a feeding programme. They must be fed from Monday to Friday. Again, if you look at the amount of money being allocated for that programme, one would begin to imagine its sustainability. It is going to benefit school going children in our constituencies and it must be carefully examined.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, some Members of Parliament are screaming, maybe on party line, but I want to inform this Honourable House that for a government to succeed, there must be a very active and vibrant opposition; and that is my role as opposition Member of Parliament. It is my duty to defend my people and to defend myself. I am not here to be cheated. Five hundred Leones from every litre of fuel is a lot of money.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to talk about the leakages in the ministries. For example, the sum of **Le 10 billion** has been allocated to the Office of the Diaspora Affairs, the Open Government Initiative and the Chief of Defence Staff, whereas a whole arm of government has been allocated **Le 7 billion**. These are offices that I believe can be properly managed under a unit in one Ministry. If you have a unit in a ministry, that would have been fantastic. The amount of funds being allocated to the above named offices is too much. If we are trying to cut down expenditure, it must be done across the board. Parliament is not the only one to suffer.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to refer the House to Page 19 of the budget. The price of flour has been increased from **10%** to **35%**. Realistically, this is going to affect the women of this country because we are not only making breads from flour, we are also making cakes for marriages and birthdays. Majority of the women of this country depend on flour to make their cakes and sell them at the

school gates. That is their source of income which they use to pay their children's school fees. Some of these women are breadwinners and they have to put food on table for their families. Now, the increase is going to make things difficult for them and their families. Mr Speaker, **25%** has been added to the initial **10%**, which is too much. These women are either going to stop businesses or they find another source. Therefore, we must look at some of these tax increments because they directly affect poor people who cannot afford to pay tax.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you look at Page 20, Non-governmental organisations are required to pay import duties into an Eschew Account, which according to the document can be reclaimed. What is the point of giving an import duty that is going to be reclaimed anyway? If they are reclaiming it, then why should they pay import duty? Who is going to be qualified to claim the moneys? Do you think all of them are going to reclaim those moneys? Are there specific NGOs that are going to reclaim these moneys? We do not want NGOs that are favoured to be allowed to claim these taxes whilst those that are not favoured would not be having access to claim their taxes. I believe this area should be further explained for better understanding. From the look of things, this is not going to benefit even the NGO world. I do not see how it is going to benefit them because if you are paying only to collect, it is just adding more burden on you.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we as Sierra Leoneans demand our **Le 500** Leones back. Secondly, I want to plead for the unity of this House to make sure that we enforce what is written in this document. According to this document, it should be **Le5, 500** and that is what should be at the pump price. I thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, I have not seen any official from your Ministry.

THE MINISTER: They were here this morning, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Once they were here this morning, they should continue to be here when the debate is still on-going. It is a shame from your very Ministry. Those officials should be here for your consultation. I would not want to see that tomorrow.

THE MINSITER: Noted, Mr Speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 3:25 p.m., and was adjourned to Friday, 18th November, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.].