

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

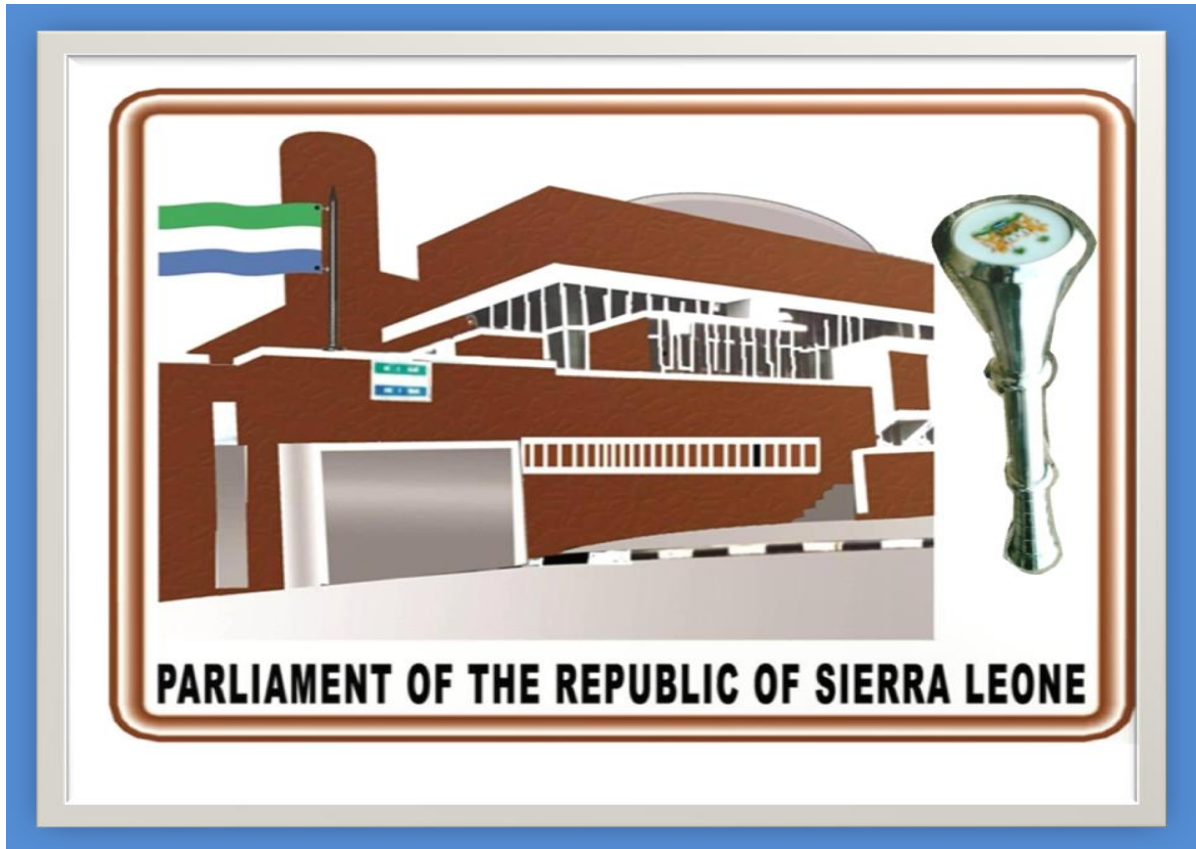
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION - FIRST MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 26TH 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 on Wednesday, 26th April, 2017.

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THE FINANCE ACT, 2017

[SECOND READING, COMMITTEE STAGE AND THIRD READING]



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**

Wednesday, 26th April, 2017.

I. PRAYERS

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

[The House met at 11:00 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: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave your indulgence of this Honourable House that the record of Votes and Proceedings is not available this morning, but will be made available at a later date. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we take it that the Order Paper is amended accordingly.

II. BILL

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE FINANCE ACT, 2017

[SECOND READING, COMMITTEE STAGE AND THIRD READING]

[THE HOUSE RESOLVES INTO COMMITTEE STAGE]

Clauses 1-10 proposed

MR MOMOH VANDIE [*Deputy Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that clauses 1-10 stand part of the Bill.

[Question Proposed]

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, we go page by page. Page 1? Page 2?

HON. UMAR PARAN TARARALLY: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, I am so concerned about the numerical strength of the stakeholders. When it comes to the numerical strength of the stakeholders, which is Mercury, they outweigh the Sierra Leone State Lottery. On Page 2, Mr Chairman, I want to look at the Clause 3[2b] and I would want the percentage for any sum above **Le10mln** to be reduced to **15%** instead of **20%**.

MR CHAIRMAN: Why, Honourable Member?

HON. UMAR PARAN TARARALLY: Mr Chairman, if you look at the situation before now, it used to be **10%** across the board and it used to be **10%** for **Le1ml**. If you compare **10%** to **Le10ml**, the **10%** exceeds that for **Le1ml**. In other words, whether you make it flat or not the more you win, the more tax you are going to pay. That is the more reason why even though as earlier intended to be flat, but

with further consultation with few other colleagues, we strongly feel and agree with the Ministry that above **Le10ml** should be increased. So, I am of the strongest opinion that **15%** would be moderate and in place.

MR CHAIRMAN: Noted, Honourable Member.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I want to refresh the mind of my colleague from Bo that the intent of this Bill is to raise revenue. We are not taxing the company, but individual winners. So, I want to believe that **20%** on winning above **Le10mln** is more than reasonable for us to collect in the form of taxes with the intention to raise revenue. That is the focus we should have in mind. I want to plead with my colleague from Bo to please allow the **20%** to be maintained on all winnings above **Le10mln**.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Mr Chairman, in the state of New Hampshire in the United States, the winnings from the State Lottery is what is used to fund the education Ministry, or the university system. These are moneys in a lot of other jurisdiction that tied to specific programmes. For instance, **20%** or **25%** is actually not enough, as far as I am concerned from betting. I am against somebody who would want to move a motion to say it should be increased, but only that the increment should go towards specific expenditures, such as the support to our university system in this country. Maybe the **10%** should be specifically meant for paying university fees.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, I have listened to my elder brother, who is also another economist. Unfortunately, we are trying to raise revenue for government programmes. The young Honourable Member from Bo said we have to reduce from **20%** to **15%**. Unfortunately, he predicated his argument on dangerous grounds that the drafters of this Bill said **10%**, but we call it progressive tax, i.e., the more you win, the more you pay. It is a flat rate. If I win **Le1,000**, I pay **20%**, if somebody else wins **Le100,000**, he/she pays **20%** flat rate. I you want to win more, we as a government would want to get more from you. That is the rationale for this. I am saying that we should not increase, but rather leave it as it is.

MR CHAIRMAN: The **20%**?

HON. RODO YOKIE: Yes, Mr Chairman.

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Umar Paran Tarawally, I am sure you consulted with him earlier. Please allow it to remain as it is. The Chairman has pleaded with you. Thank you very much for accepting the decision.

HON. UMAR PARAN TARARALLY: With all the submission by other colleagues, I have reasoned in that direction, but I will also want to move that in as much as sport is very underfunded in Sierra Leone, whatever increment is made on tax, let increment be directed to sporting activities. I want that be mentioned in this Bill, Mr Chairman.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr Minister, please take note of that. Any more on page 2?

HON. AJIBOLA MANLEY-SPAIN: Mr Chairman, I am concerned about Clause 'b'. If you read, Clause 'a,' it says for price winning money up to **Le10mln** at the rate of **10%** of the price winning amount. Clause 'b,' states that for price winning money above **Le10mln** at the rate of **20%**. It sounds tautologous. I believe it should end like what we have in Clause 'a' on amount. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr Minister, I am sure you do not have an issue with that amendment.

HON. AJIBOLA MANLEY-SPAIN: It should read, 'for price winning money above **Le10ml** at the rate of **20%** of the amount.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr Ibrahim Sorie, next time when you come you ensure you are here with the draft men. Meanwhile, Mr King please be taking note. Any more on Page 2? Page 3?

HON. AMADU FOFANAH: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, my concern is on Page 2, but it spills over to Page 4.

MR CHAIRMAN: You have to wait for a while. We will look at Page 3.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: I want us to look at Page 3. With your leave, Mr Chairman, it says: "**A withholding agent or any price winning money shall submit to the Commissioner General the following particulars in respect of every person to whom every price winning money is paid:**

- a. Name and contact address of that person; and**
- b. Tax identification number.”**

To me, Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, how many people really have tax identification? There are winners who are finding it very difficult to go to the NRA and obtain tax identification. I am asking that it is expunged and the others go to the total price money won. Let us remove the Tax Identification Number [TIN].

MR CHAIRMAN: I could remember when Honourable Umar Paran Tarawally won just **Le500, 000.**

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI: May be we can accommodate the tax payers' TIN where it is available. However, where it is not available, other forms of identification would be provided. So we can say, tax payer identification number and in bracket, we put if available or other forms of identifications so that those who have the TIN number provide them and those without, you can be asked to give other forms of identification. That is what we are saying here. Not everybody would have a TIN. Therefore, for those who will have the TIN, they will provide upon request and for those who do not have, they will be asked to give other forms of identification. I hope we now have a meeting point.

MR CHAIRMAN: Madam Minority Leader, I think what you have just said is covered by Clause 'a.'

HON. DR BERNADETTEE LAHAI: Where, Mr Chairman?

MR CHAIRMAN: This is because you cannot give your name and contact address without providing an ID. You cannot because when you want to identify yourself, you must identify yourself with an ID and that is what is in Clause 'a.'

HON. DR BERNADETTEE LAHAI: If that is the issue, then we have to use sex because if you are given identification, you have your ID and your ID will show your name and maybe your age or place of residence. But when we come to 'b,' it is now for those that have it. It is for those that have it because if you are asking for the TIN, it is not everybody that has a TIN. For instance, if you go to my village now, my grandmother does not have a tax identification number.

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, but 'b' is insisting that you must have a TIN.

HON. DR BERNADETTEE LAHAI: Well that is it. What I am saying is that in giving your name, age and place of birth means you have already given your ID, then it means 'b' stays.

MR CHAIRMAN: No, 'b' should go away.

HON. DR BERNADETTEE LAHAI No, 'b' should not go away. He was saying that 'b' should go away because not everybody has a TIN. I am saying yes, it is not everybody that will have a TIN, but we expect everybody to have some form of identification. Therefore, that should be captured by 'a.' However, 'b' will still be in existence because some people would still have 'b.'

HON. ALHASSAN KAMARA: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, the argument to retain the TIN is that if we make the availability of TIN optional, people might have a TIN and refuse to give it. This means that we have totally eliminated the significance of this provision. So, if you have TIN, but you make it optional for someone to provide it, it is not different from someone who does not have it at all. Therefore, I think we should just expunge this provision.

HON. ANSUMANA J. KAIKAI: Mr Chairman, now we are apparently seeing the necessity for the National Civil Registration numbers for every citizen. In place of where this has to be expunged some members are calling on us to do away with it. Let us have in its place the National Civil Registration number.

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, the tax officers are worried that by the time those cards would be available, there will be a vacuum. The ID cards are not going to be available today and the moment we pass this Bill into law, it takes effect. So, they are suggesting that for now, we can expunge it.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Chairman, let me just explain the rationale... -
[Interruptions]

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Clause 'b' has been expunged]

MR CHAIRMAN: Any more on Page 3?

HON. DAUDA J. B. KALLON: Mr Chairman, we are saying that people should have a form of identity. The question is, are we talking about the Civil Registration ID card? This is very important, because many people do not understand. Thank you.

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, I want to state here that all things being equal, all of us are expecting those ID cards. By January, 2018 there will be another Finance Bill and that will be the time we think of what you are suggesting. For now, it is not in existence. We have agreed that Finance Bill should come before the budget.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Provided if they yield to that agreement.

MR CHAIRMAN: If they fail, we will not take their budget this time. Any more on Page 3?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Page 3 Mr Chairman. I want to make sure that we do a perfect job on this Bill. Let us look at Section 4[1] for each employee who is a citizen of an ECOWAS country. I think it should read of 'an' ECOWAS country. The second part should read 'who is a citizen of a non ECOWAS country.' An 'a' should be inserted in the second sentence and 'an' in the first sentence.

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, are we in agreement? Any more on Pages 3 to 4?

HON. AMADU FOFANAH: Mr Chairman, I will read from page 3 and go to 4 before I make my comment. Under foreign travel ticket, it reads, **"Every person departing from Sierra Leone by ship, aircraft or any other means of transport shall pay on or before the date of his departure."** On Page 4, it states, **"The tax shall be paid by the person departing from Sierra Leone to the owner or to any other person issuing the travel ticket."** Mr Chairman, my point is that I want the Ministry of Finance and National Revenue Authority [NRA] to consider some exemptions because the tax rule should not be ambiguous for people to have loopholes to do other things. We all know that there are people who should be given exemptions. For example, flight crew, cabin crew, escorting passengers or undertaking repairs and maintenance of the aircraft and other safety equipment. In that regard, I want us to insert a section that will give exemption to these people

because they are part of those who will be boarding the flight and some of them are not paying, but tickets will be issued to them. This is because according to the flight rules, tickets will be issued and they will be in the manifest and when we will be calculating the amount, we need you to take all those into consideration. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

HON. RADO FODAY YOKIE: Mr Chairman, I beg to differ from the presentation made by a colleague. Those are people who are part of the crew and they are not buying tickets. We are talking about commercial passengers who are buying tickets. If they buy the ticket for you in Sierra Leone or in America, you pay a certain percentage. So, I am asking that what is in this Bill should remain as it is. For instance, when you are moving, the passengers are the people who buy the tickets. The crew, i.e., the airhostess, the engineers and the pilots are not buying tickets. We are talking about people who buy tickets; and when you are buying ticket, these are the people this Bill is catering for. So, let it remains as it is.

HON. AMADU FOFANAH: Mr Chairman, I have done a lot of research by looking at the previous Bills and we have to be consistent with best practise. In all other Bills that I read, provision is being made for exemption because all those people are issued tickets. The Bill says, "**Every person departing.**" If you look at the other section, it says: "**departing from Sierra Leone.**" As long as that person is in Sierra Leone a ticket has to be issued to him, especially those escorting others. Those who are escorting people are issued tickets and they should be on the manifest.

HON. PATRICIA U. DANKAY-BANGURA: Mr Chairman, one thing I know, even when I was in the travelling business, taxes have to be paid. If your ticket is free, you still have to pay tax. So, taxes must be paid and I want to agree with my colleague from the other side that taxes must be paid. There is no exemption on the taxes. Everybody has to pay the tax for flying in and out of a country. There is no exemption for taxes.

MR CHAIRMAN: Honourable Patricia Dankay-Bangura, do they issue tickets to cabin crew?

HON. PATRICIA U. DANKAY-BANGURA: Commercially no. It is not issued by an agent, but this particular one is asking for all agents who are issuing tickets. Airlines can give passes to their flight crew without levying taxes on them, but this is for commercial use only.

HON. AJIBOLA MANLEY-SPAIN: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I believe this Bill has the answer. If you look at the side note, it says the imposition of tax and persons liable to pay. I would think it should have been imposition of tax on persons liable to pay. There are people who are not liable to pay at all. So, we do not need to put an exemption clause because we are not in the business to exhaustively make a list of people who should be exempted. It will be a problem for us if we attempt to do that, unless the Honourable Member can come up with an exhaustive list. I think what is already in this Bill is okay.

HON. MOSES A. SWARRAY: Thank you, Mr Chairman. As far as taxes are concerned in the flight industry, anybody who is on that flight is accepted to pay the tax. For example, the airline pays for every airline crew on that flight entering any other country. In fact, there is another tax the passengers do not see because they do not ask. It is called the zip tax. For example, if you are flying from Brussels to Monrovia and your aircraft stops in Freetown, whether you come off that plane or not, you are going to pay that tax. It is stated in the ticket. So, there is no relaxation in the price of the ticket and there is no relaxation in the taxes you have to pay. All the crew members are being paid for. Again, if I am to travel to New York with a free ticket, I still have to pay that departure fee, which comes out of my pocket. However, if you are on the airline, the airline pays for you. So, the idea of exemption is not working. It will not work at all, Mr Chairman. You have to pay.

HON. AMADU FOFANAH: Mr Chairman, I want us to understand this point. Those using our Airport should pay taxes because you are taking off from the airport. This is very clear in this Bill. The Bill is saying that every person departing at the Lungi International Airport will have to pay. If he or she is travelling with Economy Class, he/she will pay **\$25** to the ECOWAS state. My point here is that the person that is paying the tax when deported from Britain to Sierra Leone, the flight is issuing them ticket and when they land in our airport, who is paying the **\$25** for them? Mr

Chairman when we deport people as well they are taking off from our airport, who is paying?

THE CHAIRMAN: Somebody will pay. Honourable Members, we have wasted a lot of time on this issue. The Honourable Ajibola Manley-Spain made a suggestion. I want to take us back to that suggestion which I believe will allay the fears of sceptics. On the side note, the word liable is there, but changing the word 'an' to 'on' to read as, 'on the imposition of tax on person liable to pay.' So, I want to believe that would cure whatever doubt people may have. In other words, whether somebody is going to pay or not those who are liable to pay will pay and who are exempted will be exempted as well. I hope we are in agreement with that suggestion. Page 4? Page 5?

HON. PATRICIA U. DANKAY-BANGURA: Mr Chairman, Page 5, Clause 8. It says: **"Section 14 of the Foreign Travel Ticket Act, 1975 is amended by deleting the words five hundred Leones and substituting them with twenty million Leones."** Now, we are talking about airlines whose prices on tickets are always expressed in dollars. Therefore, this is good and I want to believe that it will encourage them to do the right thing. Therefore, their fines should be in dollars and should be a minimum of **\$5,000** or equivalence in Leones.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let us finish with Clause 8. You have to suggest something. If you want the amount to be expressed in Dollars, then you have to say it.

HON. PATRICIA U. DANKAY-BANGURA: Mr Chairman, the amount must be converted to Dollars at a rate of **\$5,000** or equivalent in Leones as a fine for not doing the right thing. This is a fine to the airlines and all their price tickets are charged in Dollars. So, if we leave this in Leones, by the time the year ends, that amount would have dropped significantly.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Minister, we need to be guided on the amount because we do not know rationale. What does the **\$5,000** meant for?

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I would like to accept what has been suggested by the Honourable Member.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any more on Page 5?

HON. PATRICIA U. DANKAY-BANGURA: In the Schedule on Page 5, the taxes were not shown in details on what these taxes are meant for. I know they are going to Government, but we have to boost tourism sector in this country. My suggestion could be accepted or rejected, but I would like to suggest here that the proposed **\$25** departure to ECOWAS countries should be reduced to **\$17** for those travelling in the Economy Class, **\$34** for those in the Business Class and **50\$** for First Class. The idea is to encourage more people to come to this country. This will bring some economic benefits to the country. There should also be **\$1** fee for tourism across the board per ticket and another insertion of passenger facility charges of **\$2** per ticket for anyone arriving into Sierra Leone. This is because when passengers arrive at the airport, they do not have the local currency to pay for **Le10, 000** for cart. That will be the time you start wondering where to get the local currency. But if we have passenger facility charge of **\$2**, it will take care of such issue.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I think this is very important because we do not have details of what these taxes are meant for. So, we can add **\$1** for tourism and this is found all over the world, within Africa. When we go to South Africa for parliamentary work, we still pay **\$1** as tourism levy. It does not matter what you go there to do. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, your point is noted, but it seems as if they have an answer to your suggestion. Mr Minister, I have been convinced by the Honourable Member, but I do not know about your views.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, those figures are very reasonable. For instance, if you are travelling from here to Ghana, you pay about **\$700** and **10%** of that amount is about **\$70**. We have reduced it to **\$25**, which is very reasonable. If we reduce it further, then it is insignificant.

THE CHAIRMAN: I hope he is very clear on that. They are taking away the **10%** flat charge, replacing it now with figures. It makes a lot of sense. Honourable Members, I want to encourage all of us to allow it to stay as it is because it makes sense.

HON. UMAR PARAN TARAWALLY: What the Honourable Member from Kambia suggested with regards the tourism charge should be considered greatly because the

tourism sector has been starving. If we boost the tourism sector, we are most likely to generate more revenue for Government etc. Therefore, I still think that we consider the **\$1** charge the Honourable Member has suggested.

THE CHAIRMAN: For now let us try these ones and see. Mr Minister, please take note of that in future. Anymore on Page 5? Page 6?

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I move that Clauses 1 to 10 stand part of the Bill as amended.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Clauses 1 to 10 form part of the Bill as amended].

Clauses 11 to 20 proposed.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I move that Clauses 11 to 20 stand part of the Bill.

[Question Proposed]

THE CHAIRMAN: Page 6? Page 7?

HON. DIXON ROGERS: Mr Chairman, I want to look at pages 6 and 7. I am sure it is the same on Page 11, under tariff. Mr Chairman, when the Minister was giving his justification for this Bill yesterday, one of the issues he mentioned was to broaden the tax collection base. What is missing in this Bill is tax on cement. I want to believe that cement is one of the most used commodities in this country. Therefore, if there is no levy on cement and we are talking about local content policy. We have a cement factory in this country and they are paying a lot of tax to Government. The importers of cement are not paying taxes at all.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, there is a tariff for cement.

HON. DIXON ROGERS: The tariff is too small, Mr Chairman.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I think I did suggest yesterday that we want **20%** on the CIF value as excise duty on imported cement if it is considered by this Honourable House. I did make that suggestion yesterday. Therefore, it is in line with what the Honourable Member is saying.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Minister, is that not going to increase the price on cement? I will advise that we do not bring issues that would bring controversies.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, we have to remember that our goal is to raise revenue and we have to start somewhere. After some consultations, we are suggesting **10%** on excise tax instead of **20%**.

HON. ALPHA B. LEWALLY: Mr Chairman, that will not only be seen as controversial, but let take example of what happened in 2015-2016 when we raised the taxes for some imported goods, the demand increased in the local market and they were unable to meet that demand and the prices increased.

Secondly, Mr Chairman, a bag of imported cement will produce 25 to 30 bricks, whereas a bag of the local cement is about 16 to 17 bricks. Therefore, this is very controversial and I am kindly pleading that we suspend this until the 2018 Finance Act.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Mr Chairman, part of the infrastructural programme of this Government also includes the construction of houses, both by the private sector and Government; therefore, for us to begin to tax imported cement, that will undermine even Government policy. I want to advise that we leave it out for the time being until a future date.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, I want to remind my colleagues that the intent of this Bill is to raise funds to meet Government's programmes. Therefore, we should not lose focus of what we want to achieve. We are talking about the **10%** levy on imported cement and not on local cement. I believe that is more than reasonable as a start off point for us to collect taxes on cement, particularly imported cement.

THE CHAIRMAN: I do not want people to give the impression that importers of cement are not paying custom dues.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: I am saying here that we should give that consideration for additional **10%** on this Bill because our intent is to raise revenue, so that we can be able to run Government programmes. I am suggesting a **10%** as a start-up point for imported cement.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, the cement is not captured in this Bill. It is an afterthought. If there is any need for it in the future, they would come as a way of amendment.

Suspension of S.O 5[2]

HON. IBRAHIM NOX-SANKOH: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I need to contribute or give advice. I am talking about the increment on flour on Page 6. The increase on the flour is too much because it is about **200%** increase. The duty on flour is **10%** and not **20%**. We know very well that we are trying to protect our Infant Industry, especially the flour mill industry in this country. However, in doing so, we should not, at any point, try to discourage the Business Community. When we are looking at the tariff, it is not just only the **30%**. Mind you, you have to think of the sales tax as well. We are looking at it on the basis of **30%**. I want to state here it is not just the **30%** because it is about **48%**. There is another **15%** sales tax being added to this **30%**. How do you complete it? You take the CIF and add the **30%** and the duty, which will give you about **48%**. I am suggesting that if we are to protect the Flour Mill Industry, we should reduce it to **20%** instead of **30%**. Therefore, **20%** and **15%** is **35%**. Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

HON. DAVID JOHNSON: I thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Sometimes it is better to sit down and listen for a while and see where we are heading to. This is a transitional period and we should not raise any taxes. Honourable Dixon Rogers, I want to tell you that this is your second time you are raising irrelevant points. This means you are sick. It means you are suffering from '**gastropic epidermises serosa.**' I thank you, Mr Chairman.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, after consultation with the experts, we are suggesting **25%** instead of **30%**. Mr Chairman, I want to believe you accused the Ministry of Finance and the Economic Development of not listening to the experts. We have been advised and I want to take that advice. Please Honourable Members I want you to accept the **25%** because this advice is coming from the experts. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, we have heard from the Minister.

HON. JUSUFU B. MANSARAY: Mr Chairman, I believe the experts have guided the Minister, but we are looking after the people of this country. We all know the present situation in this country, we want this Government to raise funds to run Government programmes. The most important thing here is that if we are raising funds, let us equally understand where the funds are coming from. If that is the case, if you look at all the tariffs, all of them are talking about **30%**. There are few areas where Parliament does not accept **30%**. Most of the **30%** being proposed should be reduced to **20%**. That is an appeal, Mr Chairman. I want all of us to be seen as people giving good hopes for Sierra Leoneans in this case. So, let us go for **20%**. In some areas, we can propose for **20% or 25%**. The **30%** is too much. Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, the Honourable Dr Bernadette Lahai was also making a statement encouraging the people to grow more cassava, so that the local market itself will benefit from it. It could be an incentive as well. The Minister says he is acting on the advice of the experts.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Chairman, that is an advice, but we are the people's representatives. We are saying that we have to cushion the burden of the people. If we are to cushion it, let us be equally reasonable. In this same Bill under Agriculture, for instance, tractorisation and other things are being given duty waivers, which will encourage cassava growers to increase their production. We also want to state here that because most of the wheat we consume in Sierra Leone is imported, the bread issue has been compounded. Immediately after the Budget Speech, you noticed that the size of bread reduced tremendously.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, what is your point?

HON FODAY RADO YOKIE: My point is that we go with the reduction from **30%** to **20%**.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Chairman of the Finance Committee, what is your take?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, I want to go with the humble suggestion made by the Minority Leader during the yesterday's debate that we should encourage our local farmers to grow more cassava, so that food can be

provided on the table on a daily basis. I believe it is currently **20%** and the duty is **10%**. You consider my colleague who is an expert on this side. I was going to say to my colleagues on the other side that you should have 'let sleeping dogs to lie.' Now the goose is loose and you will continue to hear more.

Anyway, Mr Chairman, going back to Page 6, it should be **20%** because it is pegged on the Bill here. We will have to make some considerations. In life, you win some and lose some. As the Minister has said that he has been advised by the experts, and I want to consider the increase from **20%** to **25%** for now. If it does not work, we can always go back and make some amendments during the 2018 Bill. For now, let us leave it at **25%**. We can always amend the tax laws that we pass in this House. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, we have to close this issue. Madam Minority Leader, are you convinced by the Chairman of the Finance Committee?

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI: In this Bill, we have **30%** and Honourable Members are asking for **20%**. Based on expert advice, the Minister is asking for **25%**. If we say it should be **20%**, we do not even know how that is going to stimulate more import by reducing it. If we leave it at **30%**, of course we know that it is too much and it is also going to affect domestic consumption. So, let us at least come half way between what the Members of Parliament want and what the experts had advised by setting in for 25%. That is my own suggestion.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: Mr Chairman, having heard the Minority Leader, I want to plead that we accept the **25%** as endorsed by the Minority Leader. Tax laws, as the Chairman has said, can always be amended as and when necessary.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, please listen to the Majority Leader.

HON. LEONARD S. FOFANAH: We have always insisted that there should be consultation between the Ministry and the experts. Having got their advice, I would suggest that we accept the **25%**, so that we can move from there.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, both Leaders have suggested **25%**, agreeing with the Minister.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Mr Chairman, I have read books and have witnessed occasions in Sudan and other places like Somalia when an increase in the cost of the second staple food, which is bread, created a revolution. Already, we are talking about austerity, but we are proposing for tax increments on flour, including bread, which the ordinary people use to buy on the street. I would plead with the Minister to leave it at **20%**.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Honourable Members, I still stand here talking to this Honourable House to accept the **25%**. Honourable Members, I want you to note that if we take the **20%**, that will be a revenue loss.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Minister, at this point I am forced to put it to a vote.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, let me refresh your minds that a Budget was read in this Well by the Minister of Finance and a Finance Bill following that Budget wherein projections have been made on that Budget. That is why I believe the Minister of Finance came up with this Bill to support the Budget. That projection was estimated, according to the Minister, to be **Le40bln**. That is the amount expected to be raised by this Bill. Any further reduction we make is going to affect this Bill.

Honourable Members, this is my area and I have practised it in the United States for over twenty years. There are Honourable Members in this Well who can attest to that. Anything that we reduce from this Bill is going to affect the Budget implementation process. So, let us consider that and support the Minister's position on the **25%**. I am pleading to all of you. I also want to remind you that the Committee on Finance sat for four days on this issue, including discussions on the CDF. If you think we are not doing a very good job, so be it.

MR CHAIRMAN: Mr Chairman, we have heard you loud and clear.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The motion to reduce the tax on flour from 25% to 20% has been carried]

MR CHAIRMAN: Page 7? Page 8?

HON. DR MICHEL SHO-SAWYERR: Mr Chairman, I want to look at Page 8, under the heading, 'Beer made from Malt.' I ask that the **30%** go down to **15%**.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Chairman I have just been informed that the beer made from malt had always been **30%**. The document before us only recorded few changes, but it has been reproduced for coherence. However, beer made from malt had always been **30%**. I was also discussing with him that the tax on soft drinks has been increased from **20%** to **30%**. Yes it is very expensive. I want the Chairman of the Finance Committee to take us through. This schedule is very complicated.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Are we looking at Page 8 or Page 9?

MR CHAIRMAN: We are looking at Page 8.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: On Page 8, the heading is Soft Drinks. For vegetable juices, I believe it should stay at **20%**, soft drinks it should be **20%** and imported Water **30%**.

The soft drinks and all the juices should stay as they are. If you go back to Page 7, we have other juices like Grapefruit Juice; Pine Apple Juice; Tomato Juice and all other juices. To me, they should stay at **20%** and water mixture of juices should be **20%**. For water I go by what we have in the Bill. Honourable Members, we should be mindful of the **30%**

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, the **30%** is good.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: It has always been **30%**. Page 9?

HON. SUAHILO M. KOROMA: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, it is just a general concern I want to make. I am aware of the fact that we are operating a free-market economy; i.e., trade has been liberalised, but what happened in this country I just want to know who regulates the market?

THE CHAIRMAN: Regulate on what? Are you referring to the prices?

HON. SUAHILO M. KOROMA: Yes Mr Chairman. This is because sometimes when we increase taxes by **10%** to **15%**, the price for commodities doubles, and sometimes it even goes up by **75%** to **120%** and nobody checks that in this country. People will just say oh, taxes have been increased. Mr Chairman, I am worried about that and I do not know how we are going to deal with that.

THE CHAIRMAN: We will discuss that, Honourable Member.

HON. SUAHILO M. KOROMA: Okay, Mr Chairman

THE CHAIRMAN: Your comment is noted and it is a good idea.

HON. SUAHILO M. KOROMA: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, anymore on Page 8?

THE CHAIRMAN: Page 9?

HON. NAVO KAIKAI: Mr Chairman, I want to suggest something on Page 9. I want to suggest that tobacco products are increased to **30%**. This is because of the health implications. From the economic point of view, smokers end up spending more if they get ill as a result of cigarette. If water that helps to sustain life is been taxed at **30%**, I see no reason why tobacco products should be **20%**. I want to suggest that we increase it to **30%**.

HON. DR FODAY I. SUMA: Mr Chairman, I fully support what my colleague on the other side has said and we should also be thinking about the cost to the Government, but our young people are taking to smoking all over the country and the cause to the Ministry of Health should be considered here. These are the areas that could be taxed safely without any effect on the economy. If we leave taxes on tobacco very low, then we are undermining our health system in this country.

THE CHAIRMAN: Noted, Honourable Members.

HON. DR FODAY I. SUMA: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KARGBO: Mr Chairman, looking at the charges on tobacco and tobacco products, I think it makes sense to increase it to **25%**. This is because if we reduce it so dramatically, it could lead to massive smuggling of cigarettes and tobacco products from Guinea. I have this experience in Makeni because if you go to most of these shops, you will see Guinean cigarettes smugglers from Guinea. It is good for us to levy taxes on those items that have health hazards, but it is also important for us to be very careful not to trigger smuggling of such commodities. So, I think **25%** will make good sense.

HON. IBRAHIM KNOX-SANKOH: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I want us to concentrate on the **20%** or **30%** beer. Mind you, this cigarette has excise charges. They are paying **10%** to **15%** of excise charges. Now, when we are talking about the tariff, we should not just be looking at the **10%** and **15%**, but also the sales tax that are to be added. So, if it is **30%** plus **15%** is about **48%** because you take the CRS plus the duty. That was what happened with beer. For the cigarettes, I do not dispute the fact that we should not add the duty, but let us think about the excise. Let us take the excise off because with the **10%** or **15%**, any 40ft container is paying over **Le100mln**. Mr Ibrahim Sorie from the NRA can attest to that, Mr Chairman. They are paying close to **Le100mln** per 40ft container without excise. So, with the excise, they are going to pay **Le160mln** and that will stop them from importing goods. I would want to advise that we take the excise duty out on cigarettes and increase the duty or leave it as it is.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr Minister.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Honourable Members, after consultation with the experts, we are recommending **25%** and remove the excise.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. That makes a lot of sense [*Applause*]. Any more comment on Page 9? Page 10?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, let us look at Page 10, Section 14, under 'Luxury Vehicles.' Mr Chairman, we do not have many people who are importing luxury vehicles at above **\$30,000**. We have few people who are importing luxury vehicles in this country. The Bill is suggesting that the value for 'luxury vehicles' should be **\$25,000**, instead of **\$30,000**. The **\$30,000** is a miss-print and I want Honourable Members to understand that. Let us leave the luxury vehicle at **\$25,000**. Mr Chairman, with **\$25,000**, it means you are lowering the tax-base, so that more revenue can be collected for importers of luxury vehicles.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Chairman of the Committee on Finance, I want to stand down this House for five minutes.

[The House was adjourned at 12:40 p.m. and resumed at 12:45 p.m.]

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, I believe we are still on Section 14 of the Finance Bill, under luxury vehicles. Again, like I said, sometime last week, I received a text from the World Bank during the meeting at the World Bank and a suggestion came that we should reduce the value for luxury vehicles from **30%** to **25%**. The Honourable Ibrahim Ben Kargbo can attest to the fact that IMF conditionality must be met because they are funding part of our budget, particularly when the Government's revenue mobilisation is very low, so as to meet our monthly payroll. Therefore, we have to take note of that I will endeavour to show the text to any colleague of mine who may want to read that text.

THE CHAIRMAN: So, what is your point, Honourable Member?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: My point here is the suggestion made that came from the World Bank meeting on luxury vehicles to be valued at **\$25,000**. We should leave it at **\$25,000** instead of **\$30,000**.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you saying we have committed ourselves to IMF as a Government?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Well, we have not committed ourselves, but more or less we are getting the much needed support from IMF on a monthly basis. Thank you very much.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. We have listened to the Chairman of the Finance Committee and I am very particular about revenue mobilisation. In as much as we are trying to protect our people, but Government also has a responsibility in terms of meeting its obligations. The only way Government can meet some of its commitments is to ensure that we have the required revenue. We have trashed substantial areas. I want this House to take cognisance of the fact the more we slash, the more difficult it will be for Government to meet its commitments.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Alhassan Kamara, I hope you are taking note.

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: Mr Chairman, the only thing I would want my Finance Committee Chairman to take note of is that I will rather prefer it this way which is the same thing because it is about revenue. I am appealing not to further tamper

with some of these figures because it will affect Government's target. I also want us, as a Parliament, to take cognisance of old vehicles. This is because some of these old vehicles are polluting the air. For instance, all vehicles imported in Sierra Leone with the age 2000 and above will pay **20%** and those below 2000 downwards will pay **40%**. I am merely helping to balance the equation.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, the age for vehicles is not in this Bill. What the Honourable Member is saying can be captured some other time. I am appealing again to the Honourable Member from Bo to accept the **\$25,000** as a baseline for luxury vehicles. We have to consider the fact that age is not captured in this Finance Bill. What do you determine as luxury? The price is one of the factors we have to consider in this case and in addition to the fittings you have in the vehicle. There are vehicles with no better fittings. In other words, there are vehicles coming from Europe with no air-condition. A lot of vehicles are imported into this country without air-condition and air-condition is considered as luxury. Therefore, I want to state that the age for vehicle is not for this particular Bill. My colleague from Australia who was advocating for tobacco used to smoke tobacco when he was in school *[Laughter]*.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let us make progress. Page 11?

HON MICHEL SHO-SAWYER: Page 11, under HS Heading 22.03, number 1, 2, 3 and 4. Mr Chairman, from what has been researched, statistics has shown that when the prices were increased in 2016, the taxes were increased and there was a loss of revenue due to low importation of alcohol and other beverages. This is due to the smuggling of beverages and that quadrupled in terms of increases in prices of these drinks. I have the statistics that over **Le200mlm** loss in revenue. For instance, before that was implemented, Star Beer was at **Le2, 500 to Le3, 000**, but today, we are talking about **Le7, 000 to Le8, 000**. So, the demand in the market was not even met. Therefore, Mr Chairman, I am asking this House to go back to what obtained before 2016.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, I do listen to my colleague from the Western Region and he has asked this House to go back to the tax-base before 2016. The 2016 added value to the CIF for beer beverages was **30%**. Our focus

again for the intent of this Bill is to raise revenue at **30%**. We are not going anywhere and I will simply ask this House to maintain what used to happen in 2015. What I would like to suggest here, Mr Chairman, is the fact that because of the tax increase on beer beverages was too steep in 2016, low revenue was generated for that period. I would like to suggest here that for the purpose of this Bill, we move away from specific unit price [**\$4** per litter on beer beverages above **10%** Ad Valorem], to where we add value to the CIF from **30%** on beer to **40%**. That is what we have on Page 11. We have to move away from unit price.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, with the **40%**, you can be assured that what we need to raise as revenue, can be achieved this time around. We have lost three months already, which is a huge sum of money for this year.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Chairman of the Finance Committee, proceed to the next point.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, I was saying that we have lost three months of revenue mobilisation; i.e., January – April. Well, this is the fourth month. We are deleting the new price of **\$4** per litter and insert the **40%**. Ad valorem at customs level, which is value added to the Cost Insurance Freight [CIF]. I think we should be able to take what we think is affordable for the benefit of the general public. We are looking at Page 11 on the far right, under 'rate of excise', from 1, 2, 3, 4 and the second schedule at the bottom under 1, 2, 3. Let us remove the **\$4** per litter and insert **40%** ad valorem on beer beverages above **10%**.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, sparkling wine is at 10% and is pegged at **\$6** per litter. The question is do you think it would attract the same **40%**?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Yes, Mr Chairman. The **40%** for sparkling wine. Mr Chairman, if you go the next page, it should read **40%** added value to CIF.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Minister, do you have anything new?

HON. MICHEL SHO-SAWYER: Mr Chairman, I so yield to the **40%**.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Minister, the suggestion is that we change from the litter price to what used to happen.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, the issue of beverage is a very critical topic as far as I am concerned. I want to thank Honourable Members for their suggestions, but I want to maintain the position of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development that we leave it as it is. That is our position, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, we have heard the Minister and we are saying that we want to increase revenue, but he has confirmed to us that there has been no revenue in that direction. Honourable Hassan B. Sheriff, do you want to say something on this?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: I was going to give further explanation to the Minister of Finance. The question is why we have reasons to amend what we did last year if it did not work for you? This did not work for us last year, beginning from August to December, 2016. For this year, it is still not working and if you pass a Bill into law that does not work in favour of what you want, it is a problem *[Applause]*. Therefore, you should be able to resolve the problem and that is why we are here to do such.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to a report that I have before me here. I hope this will convince him. For September, 2015, the excise duty raised by the National Revenue Authority [NRA] was **Le1, 43,000,000,000**. Mr Chairman, after the passage of the 2016 Finance Bill, that revenue dropped by **Le220, 000,000**. That is a very big difference. For October, 2015, the revenue raised as excise duty was **Le2.7trn** and in 2016, it dropped by **Le230, 000,000**. For November, 2015, it was **Le3.12trn** and for 2016, it dropped by **Le 130,000,000**.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, when we passed the Finance Bill in 2016, we were not able to meet the trillion targets. So, I believe that if it did not work in 2016, it is our position to resolve that problem. If it is not broken, you do not fix it. Therefore, these are broken pieces and we need to do something about them. I believe we should be able to resolve this problem without any rancour. That is why we are here as law makers to make a change when the change is necessary.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I believe we should be in the same page with the Minister. I would be worried to go into election with these high prices on beer beverages. I have to be frank with my colleagues on the other side. We want as many votes as possible in 2018 to maintain our seats as Majority Leaders of Parliament *[Applause]*. Many of us would want to come on this other side. Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Minister, are you convinced?

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, I am not convinced. Let me add to what I said previously. Honourable Members, I want you to know that beer or alcoholic beverages are luxury goods as far I am concerned and I want you to tell me how many per cent of the population in this country actually take alcohol. It is a choice. It is not like the food or water we eat and drink on a daily basis. I believe it is a choice to take alcohol and besides the revenue aspect, I did say that we are trying to protect the local industry.

Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, Brewery, for instance, use Sorghum to produce beer and there are a lot of farmers who are making use of this opportunity. So, if we decide to expunge what you are appealing for, all these farmers who are benefitting from what we have suggested would not benefit. Therefore, I want to appeal that we leave it as it is; otherwise we might lose Brewery at the end of the day. We might as well lose the farmers and even the employment Brewery has created for the past couple of months. That is my submission, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, you have heard the Minister. I am sure the position of the House seems to be the same. So can we have a motion?

HON. AJIBOLA MANLEY-SPAIN: Mr Chairman, I move that the Bill be amended as suggested by the Chairman of the Finance Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any seconder?

HON. SUAHILO KOROMA: I second the motion, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any counter motion?

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

THE CHAIRMAN: Page 12.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, let us look at Page 12. I want to believe it is a continuation of the one on Page 11; i.e., the **\$4** stays at **40%**. However, where we have **\$6** per litre on spirit beverages for lines 5,6,7,8, 9 and 10, it should be **45%**.

THE CHAIRMAN: Page 12? Page 13? 14?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: For pages 12 and 13, where we have **\$4** should be **40%**, where we have **\$6** should be **45%**.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, 12, 13 and 14.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: I was referring to the **45%**, where we have **\$US6** per litre.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, that is the suggestion and it is being carried. We go to Page 15. We have already ruled on that because we have agreed to increase the custom on tobacco and expunge the excise. Any more on Page 15? Page 16? Page 17? Page 18? Page 19? Page 20?

HON. AJIBOLA MANLEY-SPAIN: I want us to take note of Clause 18, Page 20. It should be Act No. 8. We have to insert the word 'Act.'

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Cyril F. King, please take note of that. Page 21? 22? 23? 24? Mr Minister, do you want to move.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I move that Clauses 11 to 20 stand part of the Bill as amended.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Clauses 11 to 20 form part of the Bill as amended]

Clauses 21 to 37 proposed

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I move that Clauses 21 to 37 stand part of the Bill.

[Question Proposed]

THE CHAIRMAN: Page 24? 25? 26? 27?

HON. AMADU KANU: Mr Chairman, Page 27. I want to take this House down to rate for providers of transport services and I want to begin with [c], which deals with the rate for motor bikes. I want it to be reduced to **Le80, 000**, instead of **Le200, 000**.

THE CHAIRMAN: What is your justification, Honourable Member?

HON. AMADU KANU: My justification is that, I did say among other things in my last submission that change is a gradual process. I am mindful of the submission made by the Deputy Leader that our focus is on revenue generation. I still want to maintain that we cannot do so at the detriment of the people we represent. The current rate for motor bikes is **Le48, 000**. If we increase that amount to **Le200, 000**, is over **300%**. This is not in the interest of the people of this country. A good number of our brothers and sisters depend on these motorbikes for their daily living. This is not in the interest of the people. If you take the rate for taxis, the current rate is **Le96, 000** and you are proposing **Le200, 000**. That is on the high side, Mr Chairman. I want to suggest **Le150, 000** for taxi and **Le80, 000** for motorbikes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, your point is noted.

HON. AMADU KANU: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: I wonder whether you have convinced anybody.

HON. KOMBA E. KOEODYOMA: Mr Chairman, the Honourable Member has not convinced us. Again, I want to raise question of clarification here. We now have a new form of transport services for the poor people, the Keke [tricycle] and it has not been catered for here.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, they are all motorbikes. I have just been told that they are mini taxes. They are making so much money.

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDYOYOMA: But what I wanted to say here is that, I want to support my colleague on the other side who is advocating for a reduction.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is that the way you want to raise revenue? I am told that they pay **Le50, 000** a day to their owners.

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: It is more than that actually. Keke is **Le100,000** and not **Le50,000**.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motorbikes are paying **Le50, 000** a day and the Kekes are paying a **Le100, 000** and this is per annum. Honourable Members, we have to take these things very serious.

HON. ALHASSAN KAMARA: Thank you. Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, as we are going towards the end of the month, we are expecting our salaries to be paid.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have been paid.

HON. ALHASSAN KAMARA: That shows it comes from money generated by the Government and the NRA. Mr Chairman, I am kindly appealing to my colleagues to leave the prices as they are. Mr Chairman, as you rightly sated, it is just once in a year they pay **Le200, 000**. If you put that into perspective, it is only four days from what they are submitting to their masters.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Mr Chairman of the Finance Committee, do you support that suggestion.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Chairman, you asked me a question and my answer to that question is that I would stay with the Bill.

THE CHAIRMAN: So, it should stay as it is.

HON. ALHASSAN KAMARA: The last suggestion I want to make is on the buses category. Mr Chairman, as I said at the pre-legislative hearing, some buses are making more money than trucks. So, they shouldn't fall within the [b] category.

THE CHAIRMAN: Like some taxis are making more money than the motorbikes.

HON. ALHASSAN KAMARA: Absolutely, Mr Chairman. But again, if we are looking at raising revenue, I suggest that these bigger buses go to the **Le1, 000,000** category.

THE CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, do not forget that they are also providing social services. Madam Minority Leader, the Chairman of the Finance Committee is suggesting that they stay as they are.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI: I was just doing some calculations because if you take the **Le200, 000** for the third category [c] and divide it by 360 days... - *[Interruption]*.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is less than a thousand Leones per day, Honourable Member.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI: Mr Chair, it is not even to that amount because if divide **Le200, 000** by the days, it is **Le5.71**. If you calculate for the year, the amount is very small.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes and he has just added **Le2, 000** per day to their union.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI: They are paying **Le2, 000** a day to their union and you multiply it by 365 days, you will know what they are paying.

THE CHAIRMAN: It stays as it is. Page 28, even the sand trucks have not been charged too much. Page 29? Page 30? 31? 32? 33? 34? Honourable Hassan B. Sheriff, what 18[a] saying on Page 34? Is it **Le2, 000,000?**

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Yes, it is **Le2, 000,000**

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Page 35? 36? 37? 38?

HON. AMADU KANU: Mr Chairman, Page 38. Mr Chairman, I am moving a motion for an insertion of Section 18 of the National Mineral Agency Act to be accommodated under general provisions on Page 38. Mr Chairman, with your leave, my motion reads, 'all revenue collected by or due to the Agency shall be paid into a special treasury account of the Consolidated Fund, except for the following:

- moneys accruing to the Agency in the course of their operations;
- minerals and trading rights' application fees;
- monitoring fees and precious mineral valuation fees; and
- the regulatory fees, fines and other monetary sanctions imposed by the agency.'

THE CHAIRMAN: What other moneys are they collecting apart from those ones?

HON. AMADU KANU: They have royalty fees, the annual licence fees for companies, exploration licence fees, renewal licence fees, etc. Mr Chairman, this will not affect the present Bill we are discussing, except for these ones I have mentioned.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any seconder to that motion?

HON. FODAY RADO YOKIE: I so second, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any counter motion? Mr Minister, you have heard the motion.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, we support the motion, but we are only asking that it should be monitored.

THE CHAIRMAN: So the motion is carried. Page 39? 40?

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Minister, on Page 40. It says, Acting Minister of Finance and Economic Development. I think the word '**Acting**' there should be removed.

THE CHAIRMAN: It would be corrected. Mr Minister, it forms part of the amendment. The Act does not carry a memorandum. When it is going to be printed, there would be no memorandum. The Memorandum is only useful for the Bill and not for the Act.

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I move that Clauses 21 to 37 stand part of the Bill as amended.

[Question, Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Clause 21 – 37 form part of the Bill]

[THE HOUSE RESUMES]

MR MOMOH VANDI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I report that the Bill entitled, The Finance Act, 2017 having gone through the Committee of the Whole House with some amendments, I now move that the Bill be read the third time and passed into law.

[Question Proposed, Put and agreed to]

The Bill Entitled, The Finance Act, 2017, being Act to provide for the imposition and alteration of taxes for the year 2017 and for other related matters has been read the third time and passed into Law.

HON. HASSAN B. SHERIFF: Mr Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank colleague Members of Parliament for their contributions to the passage of this Bill and I also want to make a special appeal to my friend seated before me, the Minister of Finance that there is a letter on his table with regards to the CDF. So, I want to appeal, on behalf of my colleagues, to please look into that request and act on it as soon as possible. Thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 1:33 p.m., and was adjourned to Tuesday, 9TH May, 2017