



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

PARLIAMETARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIRST SESSION-FIRST MEETING

TUESDAY, 18TH APRIL, 2013

SESSION – 2012/2013



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: I

NUMBER: 28

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held on Tuesday, 18th April, 2013.

I. PRAYERS

**II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR TUESDAY, 16TH
APRIL, 2013**

III. LAYING OF PAPERS:

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"LOAN AGREEMENT ON THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MATOTOKA-SEFADU ROAD PROJECT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND KUWAIT FUND FOR ARAB ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DATED 20TH MARCH 2013."

IV. BILL:

THE SIERRA LEONE PRODUCE MARKETING (REPEAL) ACT, 2013

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING:

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

FIRST SESSION-FIRST MEETING OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

Tuesday, 18th April, 2013.

The House met at 10:00 a.m., in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown.

I. PRAYERS

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

[The Speaker, Hon. Justice Abel Nathaniel Bankole Stronge, in the Chair].

The House was called to Order

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR TUESDAY, 16TH APRIL, 2013

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

Honourable Members, we all have with us records of votes and proceedings for Tuesday, 16th April, 2013. Page 1? Page 2? Page 3? Page 4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? There being no amendment can somebody move that the record of Votes and Proceeding for Tuesday, 16th April, 2013 be adopted by the House as presented?

HON. AMADU FOFANAH: I so move Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. ALIEU BADARA MUNU: I so second Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any counter motion?

(Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to)

Record of Votes and Proceedings for Tuesday, 16th April, 2013 was unanimously adopted as presented.

III. PAPERS LAID:

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"LOAN AGREEMENT ON THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MATOTOKA-SEFADU ROAD PROJECT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONEN AND KUWAIT FUND FOR ARAB ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DATED 20TH MARCH 2013."

MR MOMODU KARGBO Deputy Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development): Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, I beg to lay this paper as stated on the

Order Paper, item III, "*Loan Agreement on the Reconstruction of the Matotoka-Sefadu Road Project between the Republic of Sierra Leone and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, dated 20th March, 2013.*" I thank you (*Applause*).

IV. BILL

THE SIERRA LEONE PRODUCE MARKETING (REPEAL) ACT, 2013

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING:

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

HON. S. B. B. DUMBUYA: Mr Speaker, this Bill should have been piloted by the substantive Minister, but since he is not around and the Deputy Minister is here, I was just asking him whether he is prepared to go on with the Bill and he said he is prepared.

MR ALIE B. MANSARAY: (*Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry*): Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I move that the Bill entitled: "The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act, 2013 be read the first time.

(Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to)

The Bill entitled: "The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act, 2013 has been read for the first time.

SECOND READING:

MR ALIE B. MANSARAY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled "The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act, 2013 be read the second time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act 2013, being an Act to repeal the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Act to dissolve the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board, to vest the property of the Board in the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company Ltd., and to provide for other related matters.

Part One, preliminary:

1. the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Act is hereby repealed; and
2. the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board, established under that Act is hereby dissolved.

Part Two, Vesting of Assets and Liabilities:

1. subject to Sub-section 2, all properties and assets which immediately before the commencement of this Act were vested in the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board for the administration of the repealed Act shall with effect from the commencement of this Act and without further assurance vest in the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company, hereafter referred to as a Company subject to all interest, charges, obligations, liabilities and trust affecting the property and assets;
2. except as provided in Sub-section 1, in relation to property, all contracts, debts, obligations and liabilities of the Board immediately before the commencement of this Act shall be vested in the Company and maybe enforced by or against the company; and
3. all legal proceedings or claims pending before the commencement of this Act in relation to the Board, shall be continued or enforce by or against the Company in the same manner as they would have been continued or enforced if this Act has not been enacted;
4. with effect from the commencement of this Act, the employees of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board as may be specified by the Minister responsible for Trade in

writing, are transferred to the Company without prejudice to any entitlement to pension, gratuity or other vested or approved rights from the previous employment on the terms and conditions of service no less favourable as were applicable to them in their previous employment;

5. a person's transferred to the Company under Sub-section 1(a) shall be subject to the disciplinary control of the Company and the Company shall have power to terminate the appointment of any person so transferred who is not able to perform assigned functions to the satisfaction of the company.

(b) May accept to continue in the employment of the company subject to the terms and conditions determined by the company.

The Memorandum of objects and reasons:

The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board was established by the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Act **Cap 2 to 9**. The Board was to secure the most favourable arrangements for the purchase, export and marketing of Sierra Leone produce and to assist in the development by all possible means of the agricultural industry of Sierra Leone for the benefit and prosperity of the producers and the areas of production. However, over the years, as a result of low prices of exportable agricultural produce, production became uneconomical; this adversely affected the farmers and the operations of the Board. In order to ensure and maintain the highest quality of cocoa, coffee and other agricultural produce, commodity price stabilisation and maximum benefits for farmers for the sale of their produce without the risk of exploitation by unscrupulous private sector entrepreneurs, this Bill seeks to transfer the interest of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board to the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company.

This involves the transfer to the Company of all the assets, liabilities, staff etc., of the Board as part of Governments majority share contribution to the Company.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled: "*The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act, 2013*" be read the second time. Thank you.

(Question Proposed)

HON. MOHAMED SIDI TUNIS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to contribute to the Bill entitled: "*The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act 2013,*" that seeks to transfer the interest of Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board (SLPMB) to the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company (SLPMC).

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before the collapsed of the SLPMB, it was the only institution that farmers across the country relied upon for support. And indeed, support was provided that led to increased in agricultural productivity. The SLPMB also monitored the produce and ensured that farmers were adequately paid for their produce.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board (SLPMB) acquired a lot of assets across the country. That led to the development of the Agricultural Industry and as such, the SLPMB became the main platform that farmers used to sell their produce. In fact, before 1992, the SLPMB was the major foreign exchange earner in this country. In the absence of SLPMB, and with little or no control, the Government continued to lose revenue and the much needed foreign exchange. The farmers found themselves in the hands of unscrupulous business men who did not only pay them low prices for their produce, but did nothing to help improve the Agricultural Sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Bill seeks to change that bad practice. I will refer Members of Parliament to the Memorandum of Objects and Reasons. With your leave Mr Speaker, I would read the fourth paragraph: "*In order to ensure and maintain the highest quality of cocoa, coffee and other agricultural produce, commodity price stabilisation and maximum benefit for farmers for the sale of their produce without the risk and exploitation by unscrupulous private sector entrepreneurs, this Bill seeks to*

transfer the interest of Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board to Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company."

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with the passage of this Bill, the Government would again monitor the whole business of produce for the benefit of our farmers and also the country as a whole. For us Honourable Members of Parliament, our responsibility will be to ensure that the SLPMC instill and maintain an acceptable standard in order to elevate the quality of our produce, improve the status of our farmers, and on the whole, improve the country in terms of profit maximisation. I therefore urge the management of the SLPMC to ensure that these standards are met and maintained. I also urge the Management of the SLPMC to broaden the scope of the Company, in terms of including other agricultural produce like rubber, for the maximum benefit of the people of this country. I am aware of the fact that this will require enormous resources to do everything that is required of you. And as such, I am calling on NASSIT to invest in this Company. As a business man, I know very well that it would be a viable venture.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having a Company like the SLPMC will not only bring huge profit to our local farmers, but to the country as a whole. I want to call on the Government to give due consideration when it comes to the issuing of shares to this Company and our local farmers. With these few words Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am calling on my colleagues to support the ratification of this Bill. Thank you... - *(Interruption)*.

HON. DR FODAY I. SUMAH: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to contribute to this debate and to support the passage of this Bill into law. In doing so, I call on the historical experience of the developed countries.

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Mr Speaker, I rise on S. O. 34. I need to be guided Mr Speaker. It appears as if the Honourable Member who is currently contributing is a member of the Interim Board of this Company we are debating on. And if that is the

case, I would kindly ask that he is disallowed so as to avoid a situation of conflict of interest.

THE SPEAKER: You are relying on S.O.34 Honourable Member?

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Yes Sir. It is a point of order Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Point of what?

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Point of order Sir. My point of order is that the document before me is pointing to the fact that the Honourable Member who is contributing now is part of the Interim Board of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company. And if that is the case Mr Speaker, I would kindly request, through your good will to disallow him as a way of avoiding conflict of interest. He should not contribute to the debate at all.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, which documents are you referring to?

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company document Sir. There is a provision for the creation of an Interim Board for the Company.

THE SPEAKER: Are those documents you keep referring to being circulated?

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Yes Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Just a minute Honourable Member. Honourable Member, I don't have that document you are referring to. You are referring to a letter.

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Yes Sir. The letter is confirming the.... – *(Interruption)*.

THE SPEAKER: A letter?

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Yes Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Dr Foday I. Suma?

HON. FODAY I. SUMAH: Yes Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I would suggest that you advice yourself accordingly.

HON. DR FODAY I. SUMAH: Point of order Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry!

HON. DR FODAY I. SUMAH: I want to make an observation Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: You want to make some observations?

HON. DR FODAY I. SUMAH: One observation Sir.

THE SPEAKER: You want to make some observations?

HON. DR FODAY I. SUMA: Just one observation Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry, I didn't get what you say. You want to make what? Honourable Member, you were in the process of speaking. I am suggesting to you to advice yourself. If you don't, I shall advice you.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as we have this Bill before us, and as the previous Honourable Members have already commented, we know the role of the Sierra Leone Marketing Board was to ensure the development of our economy. And the absence of the Sierra Leone Marketing Board had created a gap which is very necessary to be filled by any responsible Government. Mr Speaker if we rejuvenate this Company, then, we are moving towards the Agenda for Prosperity. If we look at the manner in which unscrupulous people were treating the farmers, it is going to be a prudent economic move to have a company like Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company. This does not only involve taking produce that are produced by our farmers and handled by the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company, but also looking at other produce that have now gained credence in the International Market. Most of the local produce will encourage other people to involve in multi-cropping. This

is because it will not only be rice, cocoa and coffee production but also involve other produce as one Honourable Member suggested. In that light, I think as Honourable Members of Parliament we owe an obligation to this country to make sure that this Bill becomes law. This would make us forge-ahead and make sure that this institution come back to revive our economic prosperity, especially now that we are moving from the Agenda for Change to Agenda for Prosperity. I will want Honourable Members on this side of the House to give due consideration to this Bill. Let us speedily pass this Bill into law. Thank you.

HON. ANSU J. KAIKAI: I thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to make my humble contribution to the Bill before us this morning. Mr Speaker, in the wisdom of the colonialist in 1949, they established the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board (SLPMB). And the intent of that ordinance then was to ensure that our farmers were adequately protected. That is, they wanted our farmers to receive fair value for their labour as far as cash crops were concerned.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is interesting to know that from 1949 to 1992, when the SLPMB was finally closed, it carried those functions among other functions. It became the foreign exchange earner for the Government of this country. There were three such corporations formed at almost the same time: the Sierra Leone Selection Trust, Delco and the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board. Two of these cooperations concentrated on our mineral resources. The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board concentrated on our agricultural resources. And one way or the other, this country benefitted from them immensely. There were a lot of educational contributions made by those corporations in their areas of operations. The 1949 Bill stipulates that the intent of it was to serve the people who lived in the areas were these companies benefitted in terms of their productions. Since 1992, the SLPMB became moribund. All that was left with the SLPMB as we speak now is the nomenclature. At one time or the other, there was the SLPMB, which was the bread basket of this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as this Bill is before us today, we have to move on with the times. In 2009, some good thinking Sierra Leoneans thought that they could do what the SLPMB used to do. They came up with what we have today as the SLPMC. If this Bill becomes law, the SLPMC is going to give what our farmers have not been getting for some time. Our farmers are going to get stable prices for their labour or cash crops. This Bill is going to guarantee farmers that the wealth which their fathers guaranteed them through the SLPMB will come back to them. We see lots of assets all over the country. There are carcasses of the SLPMB vehicles all over this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of my main concerns in this matter is that I would like to know if this ministry will cooperate faithfully with the SLPMC in making sure that the SLPMC do things that the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board used to do. Whether we like it or not, Marketing Board is in this Bill. The Marketing Board has to be resuscitated so that it would benefit our people. A lot of the houses that the Marketing Board used to have are still the bonafide property of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board; but are occupied by squatters. Why can't this Bill become law so that those properties will be productive again? Those properties should be used in the best interest of this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand here with some memories of what the SLPMB used to do for our fathers. There was a time when in this county, specifically in 1965 when those large plantations all over this country, like cashew nuts, palm kernel and rubber were produced by the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board. The question is where are those plantations today? Who are those that are benefiting from those plantations today? But I would like to know that the effort that was created in 1965/66 patterned after some progressive countries in Africa. Some people refer to them as socialistic in nature. But we are about to benefit from those socialistic ideologies. Whatever we want to refer to them, they were carried out by a progressive Prime Minister, Sir Albert Margai and other caring Sierra Leoneans. Amongst them was the man who occupied this seat then. He never disagreed with the principles and

operations of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board. Today, we find ourselves on this side of this House. Others are on the other side of this House. But this is one issue that we should all be united about. This is an issue that we should not deliberate on for too long. Let it go to the Legislative Committee.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let our Members (those who cannot afford for their voices to be heard on the Floor of this House because of certain reasons) go to the Legislative Committee and help us there. This Bill is a good Bill. The SLPMB was never a monopoly. It competed with CFAO, SCOA, UAC, and PZ. But they were able to do better than those foreign companies because they looked after the interest of the local farmers. Mr Speaker, every field worker in this country that worked for the Marketing Board almost had a bicycle. Each worker was given a bag of rice per month. They had canteens in the plantations. Can the SLPMB do that? Let them assure us now. I know they have capable men. Some of them have even worked for the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board. They must know what the farmers and labourers of this country (those who sojourned under the auspices of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board) did. Therefore, they should give better opportunities our farmers used to have in the past before the closure of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board, especially after 1969.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want us to relegate this Bill to the Legislative Committee. This is one of the most positive moves that we can make as a Parliament on behalf of the people of this country, especially those at the bottom of the development ladder. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, for my own enlightenment, was this Bill not dealt with in the Pre-Legislative Hearings?

HON. ANSU J. KAIKAI: Not to my knowledge Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Was it not dealt with in the Pre-Legislative Hearings? I just wanted to know.

HON. ANSU J. KAIKAI: Yes Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Alright! Thank you very much.

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, from the previous speaker, it is affirmed that this Bill before us is a good Bill. What I could remember about the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board back in the village, when I saw the first vehicle that tells me it's time for school, if the second vehicle met me at home, it means I was late for school. One of the benefits for me from the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board was timeliness. This is a good Bill. But not withstanding that, there are concerns that we Honourable Members of Parliament need to address. As we speak, Parliament is now between the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board and the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my concern is on Paragraph 2. It reads: "*except as provided in Sub-section 1, in relation to property, all contracts, debts, obligations and liability of the Board immediately before the commencement of this Act shall vest in the Company and may be enforced by or against the company.*" Mr Speaker, I want to ask that as a Parliament we request for all the properties of this Board. This is because there is an issue between the Commission for Assets and the NCP as to the list of assets of the Company. We as Parliament need to ask for these two documents and see how best we can sit as a Parliament, especially the Legislative Committee (*Interruption*).

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am sorry to interrupt. Don't you think this is a suitable issue for the Legislative Committee to look into?

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: Yes Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Well, if you think so, we should not belabor with that at all.

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: Mr Speaker, can I list the other documents so that the Minister or whoever is piloting this Bill would be reminded of?

THE SPEAKER: Just a minute Honourable Member. Are you still on your legs?

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: Yes Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Well, please proceed. I have advised you Honourable Member. Have you finished?

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: I have finished Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON. S. B. B. DUMBUYA: Mr Speaker I was simply going to comment on a piece of advice that you gave. The Member of Parliament did say that he wanted to list certain things. And these are things meant for the examination of the Legislative Committee. He is perfectly in order.

THE SPEAKER: Which Member? Are you referring to the Chief Whip?

HON. S. B. B. DUMBUYA: Yes Mr Speaker.

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is indeed a very good move by the pioneers of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company. Since the demise of the former Board, the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board, a vacuum had been created which led to sufferings, not only by the producers, but many workers of the defunct Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board. Many of them lost their good jobs. Their families suffered greatly.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the resuscitation of this new Company to take over where the SLPMB stopped is a very good move. And I think all that needs to be said on this issue had already been said by the previous speakers. The only concern I want to raise at this point is the one that has to do with the assets of the former Board. I think the list which has been provided to us is not very exhaustive at all. It seems we would need to do a lot of research to bring forth the assets that we used to know were owned by the defunct Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board. And I am making an appeal at

this juncture to the Ministry of Trade and Industry to do a thorough research in that regard. This is because when you look at the assets in Pendembu, they are not included on the list which had been provided to us. And I have no doubt in my mind that the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board had very good assets which are still in existence. In addition, we also have some of them in Freetown. When I was a small boy in the early sixties, I used to know that the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board had assets along Kennedy Street. But these are not included in the list we have at all. So, I am appealing to the Minister of Trade and Industry to please make a comprehensive research on this matter. But no doubt this is a welcome Bill. After it has been read for the second time, possibly more additions would be made to that effect. On that note, I want to thank you Mr Speaker.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI (Minority Leader of the House): Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to follow those that have spoken before me. I want to identify myself with the sentiments raised on the issue of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board and its utility then, both in terms of income earner, particularly employment and contribution to the socio economic development of this country. I also want to identify with the lamentable situation that existed after the dissolution of the activities of the SLPMB and... - *(Interruption)*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if we want to go strictly according to what the correct situation is, as I understand it, the SLPMB has not yet been dissolved. It would only be dissolved after the passage of this Bill into an Act of Parliament. That is the way I understand it.

HON. DR BERNADETTE LAHAI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the functions for which it was created may no longer be tenable. This is why we have this Bill before us today so that we can repeal that Act that created it in the first place and replace it with the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company. In that regard as I said, I identify myself with all the sentiments raised and all the concerns raised as to the current situation, with regard to our produce. I also agree that we speak with one voice. And in as much

as this move is a welcome venture for the reasons that have been proffered, I would also want to agree that we need further scrutiny of the Bill. For example, the issue of inconsistency with regard to the existing list. This is because we know that there are several lists of the assets that we need to harmonise so that when we shall have passed this Bill into law, we are left with no doubt that we have fully exhausted the assets of this Company.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for a Company like this, there must be a Business Plan. That Business Plan will tell us how this Company hopes to carry out its business and how it hopes to improve on the existing entity. It is only this morning that a copy of the business plan has been given to me. I am sure Honourable Members of Parliament do not have copies. The Business Plan will help the Legislative Committee to further scrutinise this Bill. I asked for it during the Pre-legislative hearing and the Managing Director had promised to send it. In fact, immediately after that meeting ended, he sent a text message to say he was coming with the document. But after a few days, he said he was busy and it was only yesterday, after I have left Parliament that this document was brought. I have just received few minutes ago. This is the document that Members of Parliament must have. They must study it, particularly the Members of the Legislative Committee. It is important for all of us. Mr Speaker, this and other reasons that have been proffered would make us have no option but after the second reading we would ask that this document be sent to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny. I rest my case. Thank you.

HON. S. B. B. DUMBUYA (Majority Leader of the House): Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if I could recalled in one treason trial of this country, the Judge was directing the jury and in the process of the case, the defence council said: *"My lord, the truth will never be known."* And the Judge then, in addressing the jury said: *"The Defense Council had said the truth will never be known. Now, you Jury go and find out the truth"*. There is an analogy between the jury and Members of Parliament. If you look at this Bill, the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company, it is so short. It is

just two pages. And Mr Speaker I am reminded of the Romans who said: "*moltem in pavo.*" This means much in little. But Mr Speaker, there is so much that has not been said. And as Members of Parliament, I want the public to know that nothing can be hidden from Parliament. Whatever you want to hide, we will investigate and find out, no matter how long. And the Minority Leader had said it all. She did ask for the Business Plan and it is here. Now, if you look at the Business Plan, it is a copious document. There is so much in it that even if we were to take two weeks in debating this Bill, we would never go to the bottom of it that can best be dealt with at the Legislative Committee Stage.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, talking about the Legislative Committee, let me say this for the edification of Members of Parliament, particularly the new Members of Parliament that there are processes in legislation. The first process starts with the Pre-legislative briefing. The word pre is a Latin word, meaning 'before.' Therefore, Pre-Legislative means that before you come to the legislation process, you first of all look at the content of the Bill. It is at this stage one tries to know what the Bill is all about. But Members would recall that when I was addressing the very first pre-legislative briefing in this new Parliament, I did say inter-alia that the Pre-legislative briefing does not obviate the need for a debate, even where one would have thought that everything would be exhausted at that stage. And when we debate, where we are not satisfied about certain things, where there are certain technicalities, or where we feel that things are being kept away from us or are being hidden from us, then, we commit the Bill to the Legislative Committee for further examination or further scrutiny. That seems to be the consensus and that is what I want to associate myself with.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, after the Second Reading of this Bill, I will join the Minority Leader of the House in asking that the Bill be committed to the Legislative Committee for further examination. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, will you like to comment on some of the issues raised?

MR ALIE B. MANSARAY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, let me first of all tender my deep appreciation for the many supportive statements and comments from the various Honourable Members of Parliament that have contributed in this debate. I must say that as a Sierra Leonean, I am deeply gratified and humbled that we as a nation are now thinking of moving in the right direction to make this country a better place for mankind.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me quickly state here that I appreciate all the concerns raised. And we would commit quite honestly that the Ministry of Trade and Industry would do all it can to ensure that the concerns raised by Members of this Honourable House are duly and quickly addressed. The concerns raised are very pertinent to the development of this nation. Many of the concerns raised are already in place. There is an issue that we need to ensure that if this Company is legalised, we have to ensure that we maintain the same standards that the SLPMB maintained in the past, in terms of ensuring that it created opportunities for farmers and our Sierra Leonean counterparts with employments, increased income, stable economy and also ensure that good quality produce is marketed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is also the issue of the needed resources to make sure that this Company becomes efficient and effective. And one of the Honourable Members, Honourable Sidi M. Tunis advised us to consider NASSIT as an option to look forward to, to see how we can raise funds from that institution. Already, we have engaged the Government to provide some resources to start the operations of this Company. And I want to assure you that the Government is looking at our proposal. So far, the Government seems to be positive in that direction.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there is also the issue of ensuring that farmers are given the opportunity to be the major shareholders in this Company. I think this Company has to be owned by farmers. That is why apart from the 51% assets which the Government has kindly consented to offer this Company, they are giving up the 49% to the farmers to buy shares. And that will include not just the rural farmers in the

villages, but even farmers in this Honourable House. We would not just concentrate on the traditional export crops like cocoa, coffee, etc., but we would also look at the rice as our staple food. This is because one of the major objectives of the Agenda for Prosperity is to see how we can move our rice production beyond subsistence to a situation where we would begin to see our rice in the supermarkets. And we can export some of it as well. This is a major key challenge that the SLPMC would begin to address.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we also noted that the absence of the SLPMB has caused a lot of hardship for everybody, especially those of us who are old enough now. We used to benefit a lot from the SLPMB. And I think this is the major rationale why this Bill has been forwarded to this noble House for consideration. I am appreciative of the unity that has been shown on both sides of this House. And I want to commend this House for that. You have just shown to us that when an issue like this, that hinges on national development of this country, we have to come together to address it accordingly. I want to thank all of you for this unity.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would also want to reiterate the issue that was raised by the Honourable Ansu J. Kaikai that the SLPMB had never been a monopoly. There had always been competitors and today, in a liberalised economy, there is no way somebody can convince another to create monopolies. But for the SLPMC to be a viable Company, it has to be supported by the Government to adequately compete with the many players out there. Some of them are unscrupulous business people who are bent on creating undue disadvantages to our farmers. We would ensure that there would be no monopoly.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we also want to guarantee this noble House that we would do all what it takes as a Ministry and as a Government to ensure that the SLPMC emulates the good aspects of SLPMB. We are going to ensure stable prices of produce by providing a ready market for our farmers and good quality information system. And

with the age of the internet facility, I am sure this would increase the income for our poor farmers.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue of assets has been a more thorny issue. We are also aware as a Ministry that the information we have now is not enough and we are doing all we can to ensure that we do not only harmonise the two, but we would also come to the public, including the Members of Parliament and Local Councilors to help us unearth information on every available asset that used to be the property of the SLPMB. We would commit funds for this process. The Ministry of Trade and industry would solicit funds from the Government to ensure that this assessment is done as quickly as possible. It would be an easy assessment if we devolved it to the Local Councils, or to colleagues in the field. We would also involve the Paramount Chiefs. If we do this, it would take only few weeks.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I noted the issue raised by Honourable S. B. B. Dumbuya. He said that this Bill is very brief and that, it has a lot of facts. I agree with him. We have supporting documents that we can avail at any time. That document would add flesh to what we have presented in the form of this Bill. And we are ready at any time when we are called upon to provide more information that are required to support this process.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having said that, let me once again on behalf of my Ministry thank you very much for this very impressive debate, which by all indication seems positive. And as a Ministry, we promise that we would do all we can to ensure that we benefit our farmers. Thank you very much.

Having said that Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I move that the bill entitle: "*The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act, 2013*" be read the second time.

(Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to)

The Bill entitled: "The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (repeal) Act, 2013" has been read for the second time.

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S. O. 51 (1). I move that the Bill entitled: "*The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act, 2013*" be committed to the Legislative Committee.

THE SPEAKER: S. O. 51, Sub-section 1?

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: Sub-section 1 Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Koedoyoma, you are referring the House to Standing Orders 51?

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: Yes Mr Speaker. S. O. 51, Sub-section 1.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. What is your motion again?

HON. KOMBA E. KOEDOYOMA: Mr Speaker, I stand on S. O. 51(1). I move that the Bill entitled: "*The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing (Repeal) Act, 2013*" be committed to the Legislative Committee.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder to that Motion?

HON. CLAUDE D. M. KAMANDA: Mr Speaker I so second.

THE SPEAKER: Any counter motion?

ADJOURNMENTS

(The House rose at 11.05 a.m. and was adjourned until Thursday, 25th April, 2013, at 10.00 a.m.).