



**OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENT
PARLIAMENT BUILDING
OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL
FREETOWN**

E-mail: sierraleoneparliament@hotmail.com/admin@parliament.gov.sl



22nd October 2018

PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT ACCEPTS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Monday 22nd October 2018 extensively debated three constitutional instruments that are related to the setting up of Commissions of Inquiry, aimed at investigating the conduct of the immediate past government from 2007 to April 2018. This breathe taking and marathon debate was carried live on radio and television stations for wider coverage and the parliamentary galleries were filled to its brim.

In view of the fierce debate, the APC was unable to secure not less than a two third votes of the ballots cast by Members of Parliament to annul the three Constitutional Instruments bordering on the setting up of Commissions of Inquiry that are due to mature tonight. According to the votes counted, tallied, and returned by the Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Paran Umar Tarawally, the APC polled 72, SLPP 60, and 2 voids. The APC needed to have secured 2/3s of the total ballots cast to annul the said Constitutional Instruments.

In light of the above, the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu had said that “upon maturity, tomorrow I am going to direct the Clerk of Parliament to issue a certificate to the Executive that the Constitutional Instruments have been duly mature by law and that they should go ahead and establish the Commissions of Inquiry, having certified the provisions of the law”.

Moving the motion, Hon. Daniel B. Koroma referred to a press release that was put out and signed by the APC’s Secretary General, Ambassador Osman F. Yansaneh “that the APC is not against the Commissions of Inquiry, save for selective APC operatives and the deliberate exclusion of Permanent Secretaries”. He also said that the Instruments should be annulled and brought back to Parliament on the grounds of “wrong titling, limitless timing and that the Commissions are not going to be bound by the rules of evidence applicable in both civil and criminal matters”. He furthered that “the APC is not against the fight on corruption, but that it is against witch-hunting, which I considered as a pretext of rounding up dissenters in the guise of public interest”, noting that in cases of disagreement, provisions contained in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone should take precedence.

Hon. Shiaka Musa Sama, an Independent MP from Pujehun affirmed his support for the setting up of Commissions of Inquiry to investigate the misuse of public funds that had benefited few people, whilst noting the failure of other Commissions of Inquiry over the years. He called on President Bio to strive very hard to bring corruption to a halt under the auspices of the New Direction, whilst saying that “the Commissions should also look into land lease agreements and that there should not be sacred cows, but the recommendations should be implemented to the letter”.

Hon. Matilda Minah, a Paramount Chief Member of Parliament from Pujehun also concurred and supported the formation of Commissions of Inquiry for the development of the country.

Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina, Leader of C4C in supporting the formation of Commissions of Inquiry said that “the country is plagued and divided along partisan lines”, whilst recalling the establishment and the collapse of the Justice Semega’s Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of the past SLPP Tejan Kabbah led regime. He also reminded the House that “these Instruments could only be overturned by a vote of not less than two thirds of Members of Parliament”, noting that “they would clear uncertainties and nip impunity in the bud”. He also said that Section 62 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone had already captured Permanent Secretaries “some of whom are even richer than politically exposed persons”, whilst observing that a certain flag bearer had “served as Bank Governor, Finance and Foreign Ministers of government and as such participated in the negotiation of loans and other activities of Government”, whilst recalling his indictment but was exonerated by a 32 page audit report, the unconstitutional sacking of the former Vice-President, followed by a decision of the Supreme Court that would have almost plunged this country into chaos.

Responding, the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Chernor R.M Bah said “the APC is not against the Commissions of Inquiry”, whilst assuring the Speaker that most of the ruling MPs will see reason and vote along with them. He decried clause 4 (a) as “completely incorrect” as it hinges on the acquisition of assets either lawfully or unlawfully and the failure to include Permanent Secretaries, who depending on the context may be referred to as administrative heads or vote controllers. He furthered that the wording “and other related matters” are unclear and ambiguous, whilst calling for the annulment of these Instruments for necessary corrections before being regarded as part of the laws of the country. He also averred that “the Commissions of Inquiry should be bound by natural justice and the rules of court evidence as they are bordered on the rights to property and the liberty and freedoms of individuals”, noting the Commissions do have the effects of court and that “I prefer a Sierra Leonean judge to a foreign one”.

Reacting, the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Sidie M. Tunis said that he was considering himself as a very proud parent, being that the SLPP had won the debate and that the SLPP was also going to win the vote, whilst recalling the laying of the Instruments and the long rehearsals

of the APC that had ended in futility. He referred to the then Acting Speaker, who is now the Leader of the Opposition as having presided over the passage of laws bearing the words “and for other related matters”, observing that the law will not cover everything, and that it is not unlawful by law and practice to solicit the services of foreign Judges, citing Justice Semega Jammeh, a Gambian Judge led Commission of Inquiry. He also said that “the Commissions will not be bound by the rules of evidence and that the Commissioners are not Judges, but investigators”.

Department of Public Relations
Parliament of Sierra Leone
+23278495023/+23277669726/+23278426851