

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

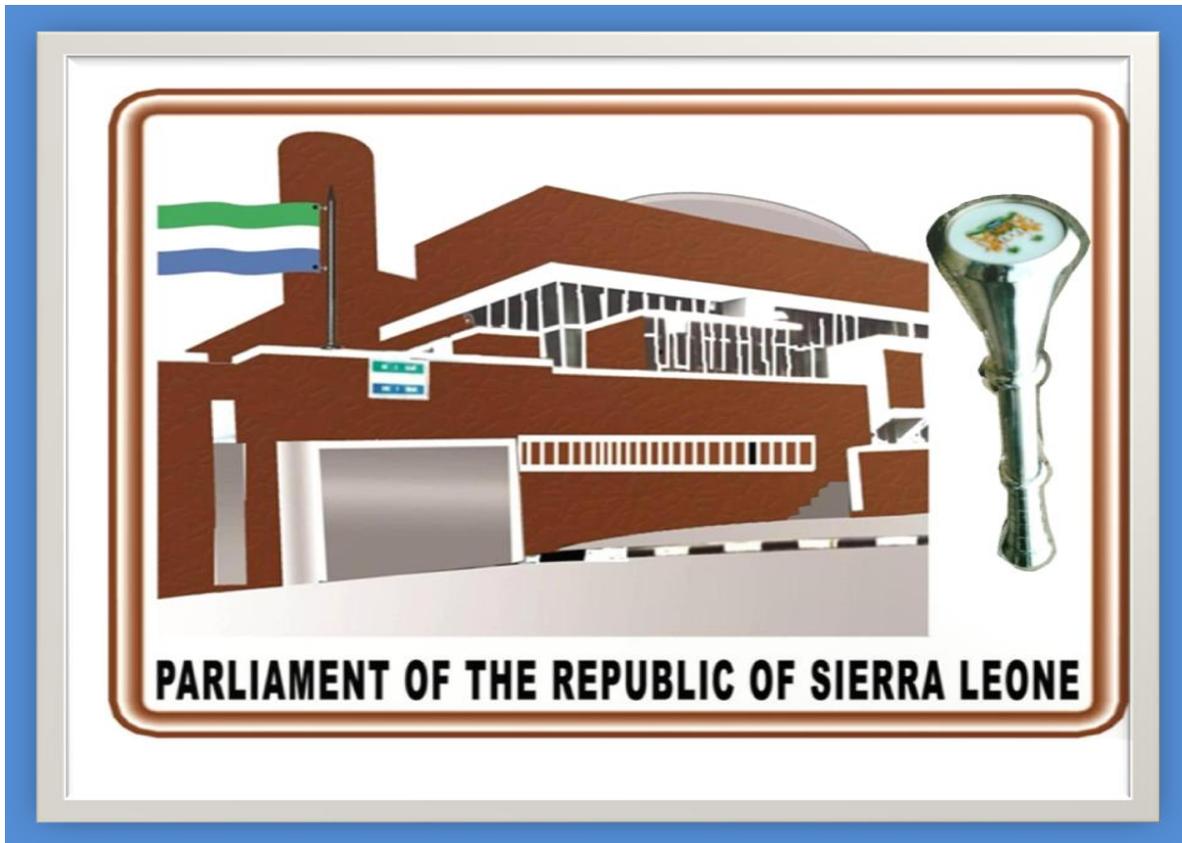
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FOURTH SESSION –FIRST MEETING

TUESDAY, 26TH OCTOBER, 2021

SESSION – 2020/2021



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

VOLUME: I

NUMBER: 20

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
held Tuesday, 26th October, 2021.

CONTENTS

I. PRAYERS

II. RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY

SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY 21ST OCTOBER, 2021

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

IV. GOVERNMENT MOTION

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY [*DR EWARD HINGA SANDY*]

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE HEREBY RATIFIES THE FOLLOWING AGREEMENT WHICH WAS LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE ON THURSDAY 21ST OCTOBER, 2021:

AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE [GoSL] REPRESENTED BY THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY [MTI] THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE [MoF] AND GOLD BREWERY SL LIMITED DATED MARCH 2021

V. BILL

THE MINISTER OF TECHNICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING FOR THE SIERRA LEONE STUDENTS' LOAN SCHEME FUND ACT, 2021



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Tuesday, 26th October, 2021.

I. PRAYERS

[The Table Clerk, Mrs Bintu Weston, read the Prayers]

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

[The Speaker, Hon. Dr Chernor Abass Bundu 2021 in the Chair]

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S. O. 5[2]

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: *[Deputy Leader of Government Business]* Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to move a Motion to amend the Order Paper. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that Roman figure IV be expunged from the Order Paper because unavoidably, we do not have the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs or his Deputy. Therefore Mr Speaker, *[B]* should now be IV and V should be *[B]*.

THE SPEAKER: Before I put your Motion to the Floor by way of asking for a Seconder, let me once again remind this Honourable House about what I said in our last Sitting. I drew the attention to the work load before this House, drawing particular attention to the Notice Paper, the Reports of the various Select Committees before the House and the Budget session that is pending. The cumulative effect of those three items clearly demonstrates that there is a lot of work before Parliament from now till the end of the year.

Honourable Members, let me start with the end of the year first, when Ministers send their papers or their Bills we expect them to come and ensure that they are dispatched in this House expeditiously. If they fail to do so, then their papers will be transferred for consideration to next year because there is a lot before this Parliament to deliberate upon. I want that to go out as a clear warning to all those who have asked for papers or for Bills to be presented in this House; that once it has been prescribed on the Order Paper, we expect to proceed with it. If they fail to turn up, we would not consider those items until next year. Having said that let me now ask for a Seconder to the Motion.

HON. CHRISTOPHA K. VANDY: I so second Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Motion moved by the Acting Leader of Government Business to amend the Order Paper has been carried]

II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY, 21ST OCTOBER, 2021

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, as usual we shall skip the first 4 pages and start our consideration of the Votes and Proceedings from page 5. Do you have any amendment on page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? Page 9? Page 10? Page 11 and Page 12? Honourable Members, can a Member please move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Thursday, 21st October, 2021?

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: I so move, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any Seconder.

HON. TENNYSON H. SANDY: I so second Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for Parliamentary Sitting held on Thursday 21ST October, 2021 has been adopted]

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we are starting proceedings today exactly one hour late and that is not good enough. Let me recount and relate to you for your benefit my own personal experience as a Member of Parliament of this House many decades ago. I first entered this House in 1982 and next year would make me forty [40] years, so I think I can claim to have some experience that I wish to pass over to you.

Honourable Members, you have been elected to come to this House to protect and promote good governance and the welfare of our people, that should be given primacy at all times. The moment you reverse the order and you begin to give your own interests, your own privileges, your own welfare and priority over that of the people at a critical time when prices are skyrocketing in this country; the consequences that can flow from that can be unimaginable. I would say more to you because at the end of this sitting, I am going to invite all of you to my Chambers to address you on this issue

[Undertone]; wherever you chose, but we must have our priorities right. A word for the wise is quite sufficient. I would invite all of us to deliberate on this question of lateness when we rise from this Sitting. Shall we proceed with the order of the day?

IV. GOVERNMENT MOTION

THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

DR EDWARD HINGA SANDY *[Minister of Trade and Industry]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of the House on Thursday, 21st October, 2021; An Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone *[GoSL]* represented by the Ministry of Trade and Industry *[MTI]*, the Ministry of Finance *[MoF]* and Gold Brewery Sierra Leone limited dated March, 2021.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Gold Brewery Agreement is intended to provide a platform to attract large scale investment in light of manufacturing and industry. This would provide employment opportunities for Sierra Leoneans. The Government's role is to provide concessions and waivers that would enable Gold Brewery to build infrastructure, install equipment and stock the production of beverages using local Agricultural products. This will provide market access to farmers, increase competition on the market for beverages and thus lead to consumer choices and preferences. The company will also train local Sierra Leoneans in the process and operations of equipment and also technology transfer. The expected benefit would include among other things:

- Nurturing indigenous entrepreneurs to provide services along the agricultural value chain.
- It will also enable Sierra Leoneans to have a peach in the sub-regional market as the product would be exported to other countries within the region.

On the whole, the benefits that would be derived from operations of this company far outweigh the cost which Government impose in granting the concessions. This company is poised to invest over \$10Mln in the company.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is on this note that I present to you this Agreement, 'be it resolved that this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of this House on Thursday, 21st October, 2021; An Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone (GoSL) represented by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Gold Brewery Sierra Leone Limited dated March, 2021.

[Question Proposed]

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with the special leave of the Chair of the Trade Committee, I wish to add my voice to a particular matter that has been raised by your good-self Mr Speaker. I have taken a closer look at the Agreement and I think it is good in the considerable respect, but I wish to draw the attention of the Minister to a burning issue in this nation. We are Members of Parliament elected by our people to represent them and their heartbeat should be our heartbeat. Mr Speaker, I wish to state at this point that it is no secret that the prices of goods in Sierra Leone are becoming uncontrollable *[Applause]*. Thank God the Minister is here, the citizens of this nation are crying, the situation has become pitiful. When you go to the market and ask for the cost of rice, essential goods is becoming a burning issue on our people. Mr Speaker, what is the Minister doing? The President cannot be everywhere at the same time, that is all the more reason why the President appointed the Minister to serve in that particular department and to cushion the effects in the Ministry; but I am curious to know today on behalf of the people of this nation what is happening? Mr Speaker, a writer once said that when something is happening in a community that is bad, let somebody say it. I have decided to say it today, it has been a secret all over or sometimes people go over the social media and make comments.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think the effect of the prices of goods has now become palpable and we can feel it and it is becoming unbearable. We do not want a situation where our people would decide to go to the street to protest. What is Mr Minister doing? Of course I know this Agreement is good, we will end up approving this particular Agreement, because we cannot stand in your way; but Mr Minister, tell us

something about the prices of goods and what is happening. The Minister has not taken upon himself the audacity to go to the radio stations to explain to the people what is happening. You have been placed as a Minister in that particular Ministry, go to the people and explain to them what is happening, but it seems the Minister and his entire Ministry are very quiet on this matter and as Members of Parliament elected by our people it is about time we begin to say it. Mr Speaker, our people cannot come to Parliament to express their feelings and their views on some of these issues, it behoves Members of Parliament to express the views on behalf of our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I know as a matter of fact, very soon we would invite the Minister for question time to tell us what is happening, but I thought it fits that I should mention this particular point and to inform the people of Sierra Leone that even Members of Parliament are not happy about the status quo *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the Honourable Member from Bonthe District, who doubles as the Deputy Speaker of this House. I really want to believe he speaks the mind of the entire House *[Applause]*. He speaks the mind of all of us on this particular burning issue. The sky rocketing prices of essential commodities including rice, cement, flour etc. I think it is in place that we give notice now to the Minister of our intention to invite him to a special session early next week to deliberate on this particular issue so he may as well regard what has just been said by the Deputy Speaker as a notice of intention of this House; to bring him back here for a fuller and more comprehensive explanation of what is going on in the market places. The people of this country are concerned; unless there is some abatement on this issue I am afraid for the consequences.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker...

THE SPEAKER: Let me recognise the Chairperson of the Committee on Trade before I come to you.

HON. VERONICA K. SESAY: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are here again this morning to ratify another document for the production

of needed items in this country, because talking about beverage, alcohol, some people do take alcohol and some do not. Mr Speaker, before I dwell on that I just want to say thank you to the Deputy Speaker, who took the responsibility to give the tip on what is going on in this country. We are being bashed at especially as the Chairperson for Trade and Industry, about the skyrocketing prices. We have been bashed at to the extent that even the Committee is now finding it very difficult to go on Oversight; because the people are thinking that we are not working, but of course we are working for the interest of this country. Mr Speaker, we are all users and we are representing our people especially the grassroots like Joe Vamboi and others in the villages, so if they sneeze it is the Honourable Members that would catch the cold. So I am very happy when you said, 'we are going to have time to ask the Minister', he might be in the best position to tell us because he is in charge and we are just overseers.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, our role in Parliament is to oversee, represent and make laws; but he would be in the best position to tell us and to chat the way forward. Mr Speaker, I just want to allay the fears of everybody here who has a concern of what is going on and the Minister will be in the best position pretty soon to tell us about what is going on because if it is not heard, if we do not say it or the Minister does not say it, those who voted us will frown at us. If they call us for their problems or the things they want such as cement, rice, etc., we have started the negotiation, we did it the last time, but everybody is thinking differently, so we want to nip in the bud so that everybody will enjoy. It is not easy because we are now talking about Corona and other things affecting us, maybe they would have their own advantages or disadvantages in what is going on, so please let us be rest assured that he would be here to answer to the questions that you people might want to ask.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, again we are here to ratify this Agreement. We are here to speak all sorts of English whether good or bad, you will then select the sense out of the nonsense. Mr Speaker, thank God the people are here and they have said everything in black and white that they are going to invest more than **\$10Mln**. They have asked the Government to give waivers [*Undertone*], as soon as we do some of

those things, no sooner they have started, then they start to diminish and shortages will occur. The last time we spent time here again to talk about waiving or add on imported goods, but the other people said they would produce and now people are saying there is shortage in Beer and Stout but when you ask them why they would tell you there is shortage of bottles and now you are saying let us give concession of duty waiver. The Government will give you the helping hand to start your work but as soon as you start, you will then come up with excuses about the weight of the container. This is why we are bringing up the issues and thank God you are here. Mr Speaker, as the Chairperson, I and my team will follow what you have written in this document; creating job facilities, we do not want you to bring your Indians to come and work because we already have our own people who are also capable of doing the job and we will also want them to be trained in other skills and for them to know also how to manufacture etc. We would follow you to go and see how many foreigners are working there, how many locals are working there because we are talking about job creation and we have our youth waiting there. It is not only about employment even though we want our people to be employed, but we will also follow up on the wages because our sisters and brothers will be doing all the work and at the end of the day they will be paid little and then you would call them casuals. Our women would be there languishing and at the end of the day you would give them **Le40, 000** per day etc. Again, we have a daily wage rate which we would follow in order to know if they are working with it because our eyes are now open, we have to follow the economy, there are so many things that have been said against this Government about the economy so all these things that we are passing here today and we have passed so many Agreements here, and they are more. Mr Speaker, this is not a bad Agreement, they are going to spend more than **\$10Mln** and they have said their main products would be non-alcoholic and alcoholic beer. Now Christmas is coming, we do not want to hear shortage of your products especially in cement. The last time that company came here, the Manager said I will make sure there will be no shortage of cement, we would have more cement and now there is shortage. We do not want to hear the problem of shortage; we will make sure we go there every day because at the end of the day some people would like to

take one pint to relax their brains. We do not want during Christmas season people go there to buy and you tell them that there is shortage of beer because of machines, make sure you bring better machines; we do not want to hear of breakdowns like Leocem where people will be standing in a queue because of problems with the machines. So my advice you should go and bring new machines when people have used to the products. If you know you cannot do it please do not deceive us by telling us that you can do it. So please make sure you bring quality machines, you bring good products and we do not want to have substandard products. If it is **5%** alcohol, **10%** alcohol let it be there, and if it is non-alcoholic please indicate it there.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, they said they would attract, coordinate and actualise Private Sector Investment. We want it again to be actualised, this time we want to see what the investors do and we want to see the promises that you have made in this document such as waivers. Mr Speaker, bringing investment is not a bad thing, but the problem is the implementation and that is what we want to see in your company; the training of the youth is also another. Mr Speaker, I heard the Minister saying that they have to train the youth and by training our people, it will bring in development and that is how Ghana has made it. They trained their own indigenes people, then at the end of the day the indigenes will grow and we do not want you to bring experts, because Sierra Leonean youth are educated and we have so many graduates that can do what is in this Agreement; so that our people can apply because we do not want you people to just go out and choose youth on the way and train them. We do not want secret training package, so please give us the entire training, all the expertise that can make the company grow so we too can have more industries in this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am going to lobby my colleagues to make sure we ratify this Agreement and that we will go after them. We will make sure we have the youth and the locals on board because our work is to go and oversee what they are doing, if all the promises that are made in this Agreement are being followed to the

latter. Mr Speaker, I want to say thank you to the Minister for bringing this Agreement and make sure you do your very best.

Mr Speaker, Honourable members, as the Chairperson, I will urge my team Members to do the needful before it ends. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for her contribution.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Thank you Mr Speaker, for giving me the Floor. I want to take the queue from what my colleague who is the Deputy Speaker from Bonthe said earlier on. The reason why I am referring to that is because several times we have called that we cannot deal with the issues of prices without making reference to our exchange rate. Mr Speaker, several times in this Well we have asked for the Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone to come to this Well to let us understand why our exchange rate is in the state which it is now, and like we normally say; you cannot talk about inflation or prices without talking about the exchange rate. So now talking about the Ministry of Trade without having the Governor to come to this House is like we are only getting one institution that is not to take all the blame for something they are all collectively responsible for. Mr Speaker, I think if the Deputy Speaker is saying let us call the Minister of Trade to come to this House, let us also include the Governor of the Bank to come to this House to let us understand why prices are where they are, because we know very well that we are operating at import oriented economy. We do not produce locally, we do not export much, but now when we talk about price changes we are talking about the Ministry of Trade, but we cannot talk about the Ministry of Trade devoid from the Bank Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone that has the monetary regulation, so let us do the needful. Mr Speaker, if we had only addressed that issue, probably we might have had the explanation now about what the situation is relating to why the prices are inflating.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me come to the issue of this Agreement. Mr Speaker, what we are saying now is something that the former Minister of Finance has told us in this Well severally. He said that we are not going to grant waivers, we are not going to allow this to happen, because it is attributing to a lot of revenue. Mr Speaker,

the Agreement that we have before us today if we look at it, the waivers are there. Mr Speaker, the former Minister of Finance now the Chief Minister said we are not going to grant waivers, because it is going to bring a lot of revenue and if you look at this for example; if you look at the exemption from corporation tax for ten years, not five years. We say **50%** of dividend paid during the qualifying period will be exempted from withholding taxes and it is in the Agreement, if you read it properly, but just in the event you have not read it; go through and you will know what I am talking about and if you did not read it, listen and learn.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is also saying that there will be no effect on the industry in the event of any alteration of Laws that might affect the company in the process of its operation. I am only bringing few lines of this so that we understand that when you talk about governance rhetorics, they are different from campaign rhetorics. When they were campaigning they were telling us we are going to remove all these waivers because that is where we lose money, now we are not losing money here but we are losing capital and these are the things that we need to look at. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in this Well we did talk about excessive protection given to Sierra Leone Brewery and the limited importation of beer and other things because though we are protecting a company, that is a Sierra Leonean owned. Mr Speaker, for the information of this House, Brewery is only **10%** Sierra Leonean owned and **90%** foreign owned, but yet still we are protecting it in the name of protecting Sierra Leonean company. How much Sierra Leonean interest do we have in Sierra Leone Brewery to be given that kind of protection? We are preventing other people from paying taxes because they import beer and now the Chairperson of the Trade Committee is talking about shortages in the market because Sierra Leone Brewery cannot service the need of the Sierra Leonean population; but yet they have been given all the protection that they have been getting through tax waiver etc. Mr Speaker, I have always said it and let me repeat it again; campaign rhetoric are always different from Government rhetoric, they must be different because when you are only campaigning you are not yet there; that is to say you do not know what you are going

to find where you are going, so why do you promise about it? Now we are back to square one by giving waiver, allowing this to happen. Mr Speaker, yes we need industries, but the bread and butter issue that we were promised have not been settled.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are talking about it globally because we are all part of the global village, but those were the things that we knew before getting to where we are now. When you talk about the prices of rice in Sierra Leone they will tell you that this is what they are paying in Congo, do you know what they are exporting? That is why Congo is paying what they are paying, Indonesia is paying what they are paying and we are paying less why now? Why now? We have been talking about the Bakery which is still not here, but we have approved it already, S.O. [2] 'd tapalapa' is still not here, but we have already approved it with all the huge concession we have given them; yet we are now going to 2022 and in the event you might have forgotten 2022 is going to be the period that we are going to start campaigning, because local elections will be held in 2022 and 2023. We are going to be re-elected again because some of us might want to come back to the House, but Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am in no way opposed to the idea of having new industry that will create jobs; but look at the concession, they are too much and the body of the Agreement is talking about these people bringing in the expatriates. Mr Speaker, let me ask a question, how many areas that we cannot get expatriates from in Sierra Leone that will do those jobs and why are they bringing their Accountants, Engineers etc.? And at the end of the day, the minimal jobs will be reserved for Sierra Leoneans S.O. [2] "Na wi dea get dea crouch, den get dea bread".

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, all of these things are interesting when it is on paper, now the Gold Brewery Sierra Leone will also be exempted from Goods and Services Tax [GST] on sale of its products in order to keep the products affordable. GST is exempted [Undertone], it is there I am not making it up. Just imagine losing GST and when it comes to time, we would tell you how much we have been gathering from GST alone. Now you are exempting a whole industry, by talking about investing **\$10Mln** from paying GST just because they are bringing **\$10Mln**. Withholding taxes are

exempted, GST exempted, so what are they bringing? In as much as we want investment, yet we want to believe that there is supposed to be a rethink, let us revisit this Agreement because it is not good for Sierra Leone [*Applause*]. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I differ from the recent speaker on his submission to the House [*Undertone*]. It is my opinion, because I was democratically elected by my people and I am here representing them and I have the right to my opinion; so therefore, I have to say what is right. When you talk about **\$10Mln** investment it is not like **Le10Mln**, you must need somebody to make sure that, that money is well protected. Mr Speaker, on that note the investor has all the right to bring in somebody that can handle or that can make sure the money is well protected, so Mr Speaker, I believe that the Honourable Member has the right to do what is good. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is right to say that the investor who has his money has come to Sierra Leone to invest his money, he is coming in just to bring a baggage to feel that he has come for investment, he wants to have a dividend of that investment and therefore he has to do everything possible so that the investment will yield a very good dividend.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my concern here on the Agreement is the access to market by local persons. Sometimes ago in this Parliament, I was invited to reside in Mile 91 in Constituency 048 which is my colleague's Constituency; we spent a considerable time and then we were promised that sorghum will be a very good thing for market in our society. I spent a considerable time here talking about it and Mr Speaker applauded me by saying to me that, 'it seems I am very interested in that one'; but to my dismay I dedicated my entire farming to sorghum and at the end of the day when the harvest was produced, I tried to find a market and the middle men involved in the local access to farmers were so ridiculous that you do not gain a single penny from it. **40%** of my salary in 2020 was dedicated for that farm. Mr Speaker, when I came to the market with the so called person who pronounced the price that the local will have access to the farmers; to my disappointment, all I gained from it was less than

Le2Mln after investing over **Le100Mln** in it, so it went to the middle men that were there. Even though I applauded the Agreement in the earlier submission, but that is my concern. I wish that the farmers have direct market to the consumers and not so many people, not so many bend ways into the market where you cannot reach to the right persons.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we talked about food chain shortages in our market, it is sad to note that if we spent a very little amount of time in our villages, in our farm lands where we have an uncultivated lands that we do not make use of and we want to have a miracle to have a lot of food in order for us to access it which is very difficult for us to attain that. We can only attain adequate food supply if we have cultivated lands. But what will be the miracle and it is something that is affecting the world, the entire world is suffering from food chain and not only Sierra Leone; I am sure many of us have seen that in our different places how the food supply chain is being disturbed in the world market.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe that we have an Agreement and therefore that Agreement like any other Agreements should be given the opportunity to try it in our market. They should be given the opportunity also to invest and to see because it has to be reviewed [*Undertone*]. I know your concerns and I am just pleading to colleague Honourable Members that they also will be given the opportunity to invest their resources.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to appeal to colleagues irrespective of the undertone that we give the opportunity to do that. Mr Speaker, this is my submission. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I am going to apply a certain yardsticks which I am not going to disclose in selecting speakers today. May be by the end of the sitting some people will be able to discern what that formula is. Let me recognise the Honourable Sama.

HON. SHIAKA M. SAMA: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. I have listened to various speakers that mentioned the economic benefit of this Agreement. Mr Speaker, I just want to caution the alcohol possesses, it has a lot of health hazards. Alcohol is killing more youth than Ebola and Covid-19 combined. Mr Speaker, while we are thinking about the economic benefits, we must not forget our responsibilities as Leaders to take care of the youth. Mr Speaker, there is a Sierra Leone Standard Bureau that is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that standards are set and met. There are certain alcoholic drinks that are sold in Africa that cannot be sold in certain countries in abroad because there are set standards. Mr Speaker, while we are inviting investors to come into our country, we must not forget to take care of the health of our citizens because some of these people produce drinks that they do not consume, because they know it is dangerous. Certain types of alcoholic drinks that are manufactured in our country are poisonous, so we must have a system whereby the content of the drinks should be monitored and even the alcoholic content should be set. Mr Speaker, these are my advice because I would not talk much about alcohol; I am one person that believes that I have no business dealing with alcohol because it is dangerous to our health, it has killed so many people and it is still killing people, but we need to monitor the companies to make sure that they do not produce poison.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me now come to the Minister. Mr Speaker, I felt sorry for the Minister because prices are increasing and there are so many factors responsible and there are so many stakeholders. Mr Speaker, in Parliament there is a Trade Committee that is responsible for overseeing the activities of the Ministry. If you just call the Minister to come here, what you expect the Minister to tell us only to give excuses. Mr Speaker, we need the Committee to do an investigation so the report we get from that investigation will inform this Parliament better. We should call the Minister after we have been informed on what is happening, we need to assign a joint Committee that should include the Committee on Trade and Committee and Finance. These Committees can then go into action to meet the business people, meet the National Revenue Authority [NRA], meet the Ministry of Trade and some other

stakeholders who will be able to come back to Parliament and inform us about their findings; so when we call the Minister, we will be in the position to argue *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, did you listen when the Chairperson of the Trade Committee spoke on the issue?

HON. SHIAKA M. SAMA: Mr Speaker, I listened very well.

THE SPEAKER: Are you sure you listened very well?

HON. SHIAKA M. SAMA: Yes, Mr Speaker, I listened, I might not have heard everything, but allow me to land, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I will allow you to land.

HON. SHIAKA M. SAMA: I might not have heard everything.

THE SPEAKER: But what you are suggesting, she told the House that she has done that already.

HON. SHIAKA M. SAMA: What was the result Mr Speaker? I am talking about producing results, where is the report? Where is the information that the Committee has given to Parliament? Mr Speaker, if we are asking the Minister that we want to know it means that we do not know and it means the investigation has not produced the result that we need. Mr Speaker, I am saying we need a joint Committee; it is not just about the Trade Committee, but we also need to involve others *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: That is the lead Committee and that Committee should lead on the matter like this.

HON. SHIAKA M. SAMA: I am talking about a joint Committee wherein we can operate together because there are certain issues which cut across. Mr Speaker, I am suggesting that not just about Trade, because there are certain other implications that we need to involve the Finance Committee, the Transparency Committee that will go out and come back with a report, it is not just about going to ask questions and do not report. What can show that there has been an investigation, Mr Speaker? It should be in the form of a report, but there is no outcome so we need to be informed. If we call

the Minister here, then we begin to ask him questions that will not be fair. What have we done as Parliament with a Committee that should oversee the Ministry to make sure that they are effective? What have we done to make sure it did not happen? Thank you very much, Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member, for his contribution. I still believe that it is very useful for the House to invite Mr Minister of Trade to come and give an explanation about the escalating prices of essential commodities, from that explanation we will be able to decide how to move forward. Thank you!

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA *[Leader of Government Business]*: Mr Speaker...

THE SPEAKER: Is it a Point of Order?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Yes Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Carry on.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, sorry for coming late, but of course I told you why I came late. I heard you mentioned something that has to do with the Minister coming to tell us about increased in prices especially with his Ministry. I discussed with the Deputy Minister few days ago, but he was not around, he was in Turkey so we temporarily agreed that we have to do that as soon as possible. So I just want to say the commitment is there and in fact, they are willing to come and explain to us why the escalation of prices.

THE SPEAKER: We have decided that earlier next week this House will invite him to come and offer some explanation.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: In fact, I was thinking if we have time we can do that this Friday, because we seem to be behind schedule.

THE SPEAKER: We have pre-legislative hearing on Friday.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Okay you have agreed on that?

THE SPEAKER: Yes! Let me recognise the Honourable Member, from Kono.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Thank you very, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, of course we do not need to politicise the issue of bread and butter and the sky rocketing of essential goods and services in this country. I think the Deputy Speaker is very much right, he is representing the people of this country that is why he made it very explicit that the issue of the sky rocketing of essential goods and services in this country is very much appalling and we are here representing Sierra Leone and the people. As Honourable Members of Parliament, at the end of the month, we receive salaries; but we are still going through tough times, what about those that are not receiving salaries in this country? Those that do not even expect **Le10** at the end of the month, what do you expect the state of that person will be and that was why when the Honourable Sama from Pujehun was also casting blame on the Committee of Trade. They must also be blame squarely for these issues, because as a Trade Committee in Parliament you are also a Member of Parliament, experiencing these issues *[Interruption]*.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order! I think what we have in front of us on the Order Paper is an Agreement *[Undertone]*. All of us are concerned about the prices so I do not know where you started with the trend of the debate. What we have in front of us is the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone represented by the Minister of Trade and Industry, so why the prices are coming up? Why can't we speak to the Agreement? He is talking about prices which we have agreed that next week we will have to have meeting with the Minister where you will ask some of these questions, so let us talk about the Agreement now.

THE SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of Government Business, you are registering the fact that you have come late.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Of course I said so, that is why I asked the question.

THE SPEAKER: I started the ball rolling followed by the Deputy Speaker of this House. You have arrived late bear with your colleagues and follow the debate *[Applause]*.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order! Mr Speaker, I am the Leader of Government Business, when I entered and stood on the Standing Order I told you that I came late and we spoke on the phone. I talked with the Leader of the Opposition and I asked my Deputy to act on my behalf, so I am not a careless leader that comes to the Chamber very late [*Undertone*]. Please respect me as you respect your Leader. Mr Speaker, first of all I want to tell them about the respect for leadership. They have to respect me, because I am the Leader of this House.

THE SPEAKER: I recognised you had valid reasons for coming late which you communicated to me.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you, very much Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Fine, but you were not here in the beginning. We are taking advantage of the presence of the Minister in the House to raise matters of hiking concern of the public [*Applause*]. We are not debating the details of it at this point, but we need to highlight the issues and to let him know that it is the desire of this House to summon him again on that specific issue of escalating prices of essential commodities; we have already communicated that to him.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, for proper procedure we have to do it formally.

THE SPEAKER: It will be done.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: I want to move that Motion now?

THE SPEAKER: If you were here I would have directed that particular issue to you.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: But my Deputy was acting on my behalf and he should have done that.

THE SPEAKER: Your Deputy was here and he heard very clearly.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: That is the reason why they are moving off from the particular item we have on the Order Paper talking about other things else. Mr Speaker,

I think we need to send notice of Motion which is the legal practice in this House, if he has not done it I will do that.

THE SPEAKER: It will be done so please let us allow him.

HON. DAINEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, it cannot be done by notice of Motion, it is a separate procedure.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: No it can be done.

THE SPEAKER: I do not want us to open a debate on that. The Honourable Member from Kono, you have the Floor.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think we need to give quality assurance to the people of this country, that we are representing them.

THE SPEAKER: Hold on, yes.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Mr Speaker, I have a concern because the Leader of Government Business was on his leg raising concern about the same issue before he came in. Mr Speaker, I heard our colleagues on the other side saying to our Leader to sit down, which is very wrong. Mr Speaker, this is the Leader of Government Business and you cannot tell him to sit down [*Undertone*]. No, it is wrong.

THE SPEAKER: It is not for them to tell the Leader of Government Business to sit down; that is my prerogative.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: But they said it, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Ignore them. Carry on please!

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Thank you, very much. Mr Speaker, as I was saying we need to give quality assurance to the people of this country that we are representing them.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order! When we started this Session, I talked about discipline in the House and we moved a Motion against a colleague on the other side, I had to plead and apologise on his behalf and you have

started. Shouting on a Leader when speaking is unacceptable and you know that very well, that he is right to say that *[Applause]*. I cannot do that to Honourable Chornor Maju Bah and you did it because I raised a Point of Order. I have the right to do so but Mr Speaker; I am done with it and thank you for addressing the House on that. Thank you very much, my brother. Mr Speaker, let us proceed!

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON. IBRAHIM B. KARGBO: I just want to assure the Leader that there is no intention from this side of the House to undermine his authority, he is the Leader and we respect him.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. The Honourable Member from Kono, you still have the Floor.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Just like what I was saying, we need to give quality assurance to the people of this country that the Parliament of Sierra Leone is representing them, if issues of great concern most especially which has to deal with food that is 'bread and butter', it has to be of a very great concern to this House, if the people that are watching us outside there through the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation *[SLBC]* or the Africa Young Voices *[AYV]*, will say people are compromising their own very life because of partisan issue and we should not politicise the issue of bread and butter. If you are saying it is a global phenomenon or global issue, we also need to take into account the joblessness of our youth in this country. We also need to take into account those that are not employed and if they are not employed, you that are receiving at least a salary at the end of the month and those that are not receiving salary; what are we going to do as a Parliament to ensure that the Trade Ministry actually take cognisance of those issues? I was part of the Transparency Committee last week, we invited the importers of essential goods here and made it explicitly clear that most of the products they are selling outside and also delivering them are sold of **Le235** per bag *[Interruption]*.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order, 32[6] and I will read the provision. Mr Speaker, I am expecting it, and that is why I asked for a Motion so that we can do away with this matter. We should be talking about substantive matter that we have in the Agreement so that people can understand why there is an Agreement, the citation in this Agreement. So I read from the Point of Order why I want my colleague on the other side to understand that I am not trying to intimidate him, but let him please give some edification to this House on the Agreement, what are the advantages and disadvantages, so I read S.O.32 [6].

THE SPEAKER: Are you sure that is the one you want to read? Are you sure is S.O. 32[6]

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: S.O.32 [5] sorry Sir; '***A Member must confine his observation to the subject under discussion and may not introduce matters irrelevant thereto.***' What we have here is principally this Agreement between the Ministry of Finance cum the Trade Ministry with that of the Gold Brewery Sierra Leone Limited. I have not heard him talking about any reciter in this Agreement, but we are talking about transparency. Mr Speaker, what is transparency going to do with this Agreement? I am not trying to derail the debate, but I am asking him to redirect us of what it entails in the Agreement. Thank you.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Mr Leader, if you can give me chance then it will be better.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker...

HON. PAUL S. SAM: It could be a good help to you as a Leader of Government Business.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: It cannot.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: It can.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Mr Speaker...

THE SPEAKER: Let me entertain the Motion from you.

[Suspension of S.O. 5[2]]

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Mr Leader, I cannot be intimidated because I know what I am saying [*Undertone*]. It is obvious because it is a mere intimidation; you are intimidating me and it is clear, but I cannot be intimidated.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Mr Speaker, Point of Order!

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Hold on!

HON. PAUL S. SAM: I cannot be intimidated.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order!

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member!

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the Leader of Government Business has intimidated you in any shape or form and what I want to also address is that please confine yourself to the issue before the House. We have already decided here that the Minister would be invited sometimes next week on the specific issue of escalating prices of essential commodities. So confine yourself to the Agreement that is before the House, please try to conclude.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Thank you, very much. Mr Speaker, this Agreement is not a very good Agreement, because when you look at the withholding tax explained by the Honourable Member from Tonkolili, even the GST when you calculate it, most of these amounts that are supposed to come to the purse of the Government, only **10%** of our people would benefit in terms of gaining employment. Mr Speaker, when you look at it, Sierra Leoneans own just **10%**, so it is not a very good Agreement. Mr Speaker, I stand here as a Member of Parliament for C4C, that this Agreement is not a very good one. Thank you, very much [*Applause*].

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I now recognise the Honourable Member from Kambia.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Deputy Speaker of this House for being a patriot, and for being a man I have known

ten years ago. He was a Liberator of the Liberals Club, and I doff my hat for that because today, he has exhibited what he taught us when we went to the General's Entity *[Applause]*. As Members of Parliament, if we fail to debate the welfare of the people when we have the opportunity, we must understand that our job is not just political, but morally, we would be judged by God and the God we serve will punish us for what we did that we ought not to have done. Mr Speaker, on that note, it is crystal clear that what we all discussed in this Well are matters that Committees of this Parliament have dealt with, and the Report are with our Chairmen and Clerks. But Mr Speaker, I want to encourage this House that we have said this over and again, when we go for Committee hearings, let us bring those Reports to this Well and debate them. When people say the prices are escalating in the market, the Minister and the Chairman of the Committee of Trade must have told this House that the business people in Sierra Leone have tried so much in the last years to uphold prices the way they were. Even when the prices of the foreign exchange was going up, we were still here pressing the Cement Factories in Sierra Leone, to maintain the prices as they were. Bring those Reports to this House so Members of Parliament will understand the role the business community has played in the last two years in holding the prices as they were.

Mr Speaker, when we called NRA to come to Parliament to explain to the Committee of Finance why taxation is on the increase, they gave us their reasons, we then called the Bank Governor and all those Reports are in this Parliament.

THE SPEAKER: That is a very important point you are making. Let me just ask the Chairperson whether she submitted the Report on behalf of her Committee as the others have done. Just address that specific point.

HON. VERONICA K. SESAY: Mr Speaker, we have laid that Report and I will assure you to bring the copy or to take the copy to you whenever we meet with the business partners.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member *[Undertone]*. No! The Reports were laid on the Table of the House and we all agreed that all those Reports will be debated at the appropriate time. Carry on please *[Undertone]*! That would be determined later.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Thank you. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, again just before the COVID-19 as the Honourable Whip was saying here, we called the Bank Governor to come and address us and he did not come and for the attention of Leader of Government Business, again there was a situation in which monies were meant to be given to importers up to **\$500Mln** that was meant to be distributed through Commercial Banks with less interest rate and the formula that was used in that entire scenario. It seems as if the money did not even go to the business community, it was circulated among few people and the effect of that one is also responsible for where we are. The Minister of Trade had no idea of where the money went, who were the beneficiaries and we are here saying we blame squarely the Minister of Trade. I am not defending him, but I am saying the cartel is far beyond the Minister of Trade.

Mr Leader of Government Business, there are many questions we need to ask and this same Parliament is investigating that matter. The Report is ready but that Report is not in this Well. So squarely, the problem we have around this trade Agreement is the adding price and changing price in businesses within this Parliament. This Parliament needs to operate in a situation that when we do findings, we will have Reports, and let us bring those Reports to this House. We debate them even before we call the Minister of Trade because, if we call him, very few Members of Parliament would ask him potential questions; because many Members of Parliament are not aware of what we found out in the Committee of Finance and one of the problems is that of the Finance Committee.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if no-one is going to vote against this Agreement, I will *[Applause]*! Mr Speaker, I have always said it in this House, that when the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone makes a statement, Members of Parliament need to guide that statement. Mr Speaker, we need to block the leakages, the task waivers, so that we can address the issue of the educational sector. But this document before us, the tax waivers that are embedded in it is appalling. Mr Speaker, sometimes I normally ask myself when these Agreements are being made and laid in this Well, whether senior Members of the ruling party have time to read them is something questionable, because

if they do, they would advise the Minister of Trade that certain things in this Agreement ought not to be there. It is saddened to note the number of tax waivers this Parliament has given out in all Agreements [*Undertone*]. When we were campaigning, we told the people that we would address the issue of tax waivers, and we are living in a country where the minimum wage is **Le600** and a bag of rice is **Le400** [*Undertone*] in my own area. The Honourable Kandeh Yumkella can justify that we are buying our local rice now at a very reasonable cost, comparing to the one you are eating.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you are paying people at **Le600** and a bag of rice is almost **Le570**, what are we doing about the suffering of our people? And for any attempt by any Member of Parliament to say we should not discuss the welfare of the people, we say a big 'NO' to that, because he who knows it feels it. Mr Speaker, we live with our people, we already know what they are going through. The transportation cost from Waterloo to Freetown is almost **Le25** and it is sad. Mr Speaker, our people are suffering. So it is not just a situation of saying let us call the Minister of Trade to come, but also the Bank Governor and the Minister of Finance should accompany him to tell us the status of our economy. Mr Speaker, our economy is failing and you cannot address the economy through propaganda, because the exchange rate would just expose everything.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to end by saying that let us as Members of Parliament understand the needs of our people. The cost of a bag of rice is **Le470**, and this Agreement that was meant to bring us the much needed revenue that should have addressed the needs of the ordinary people is also giving tax waivers; so we should vote against it. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker [*Applause*].

THE SPEAKER: I would take two more speakers and then we wind up the debate. Let me recognise a lady.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, at the back, we are disadvantaged.

THE SPEAKER: I will recognise a lady and to be followed by the Honourable from Kambia, Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella, and then I would end with the Paramount Chief.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, we are disadvantaged at the back.

THE SPEAKER: You stood up too late.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: No! Mr Speaker. I have been standing up since when Honourable Hassan Sesay took the Floor.

THE SPEAKER: The Honourable from Kailahun you have the Floor.

HON. EMILIA L. TONGI: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am completely against some of the debaters in this Parliament. Mr Speaker, when we are debating, we are here to solve problems and to give solutions to the debate, but we are castigating and also casting blames. I am completely against the last speakers saying, 'Our people are dying, hungry, and that the situation is bad in this country [*Undertone*]. If you heard me, you will understand that I completely disagreed.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Hold on! Mr Speaker, Point of Order! Mr Speaker, you need to control the Chamber. I also plead to the Leader of the Opposition to control his men. When you were speaking, people were very quiet listening, now you are pointing, gesticulating directly at the lady, that is complete assault by pointing at her. You cannot do that to a lady, and she is an Honourable Member of Parliament. Mr Speaker, control your Chamber please. We also on this side have the tenacity to do what he had been doing, but please let us respect ourselves.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of Government Business and I want to draw your attention to S.O [32]. Please read it and comport yourselves accordingly; S.O [32]B and 9 and many others. Carry on Madam!

HON. EMILIA L. TONGI: Thank you Mr Speaker and our Leader of Government Business. Mr Speaker, this Agreement is a very good one, and if we are to vote, trust me, I would vote in favour. Mr Speaker, I am saying this because investors are coming

into this country with Millions of Dollars to invest and help Sierra Leoneans. If we think or believe that this Agreement is not in the interest of us, let us read through, bring up solutions and cancel what we do not need. Mr Speaker, I completely disagreed that the Agreement is causing havoc in this country, as said by some of my colleagues. Secondly, as the Deputy Chairman of Transparency and Accountability, I visited CTC and what I actually forgot to tell Mr Hussein for him to come on Television so that people will hear it from the horse's mouth. He said it clearly that Government has no control over rice prices in this country. Sierra Leone as a whole, as far as rice price is concerned is inflected on us, whether we like it or not they do not care and the fact remains that the Government is not responsible for the price rising in this country *[Undertone]*. Yes! He told my Chairman and I *[Undertone]*.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Mr Speaker, let us encourage the Honourable Member to address you, it is better when she faces, it makes things easier. We are debating as a House and not as aside please.

HON. EMILIA L. TONGI: Thank you. We are going to call Mr Hussein so that he can come on televisions and speak directly to the people of this country. I told him that our people are ready to come in the street to demonstrate, because the blame is on the Government and the Government is not to be blamed. He told us that the prices are not even going to come down in the coming years, and that was very discouraging. Mr Speaker, as a Member of Parliament, I said to him how can I speak to my people about this. So if we are in this Well of Parliament blaming the Government for what is happening today in this country, it is appalling and I will like to actually advise that we seriously get involve ourselves in Agriculture. A lot of Members of Parliament here have spent Millions and Millions on agriculture, so let us introduce this in every Constituency and let us make sure each Member of Parliament has acres of land to produce rice and stop blaming external world for rice escalation. Let us bring up solutions, rather than keep on blaming the Government.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to advise the Minister that the Agreement should not only be kept in Freetown, because we have the provinces that have lands and electricity issues are becoming very affordable. So if we can divide this into two, take part of these industries into the provinces that will also help us to commercialise our products, more so that I am from the border and we can even export these products to Guinea, Liberia and Mali etc, because very soon we shall be having our international market in Koindu. Mr Speaker, this is my advice and I actually applaud the investors who are coming for these wonderful industries that are going to be planted in our country. I thank you, very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for her contribution. Now the Honourable Member from Kambia District, to be followed by the Honourable Paramount Chief and that would be the end, and we will wind up after that.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA [*Leader of NGC*]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. It seems we have two issues on the Floor. Firstly, it is the issue of the Agreement itself that is before us, and secondly, it is the issue introduced by the Honourable Speaker and Honourable Deputy Speaker of Parliament. On the first issue Mr Speaker, of this Agreement, I am very concerned that we have received several Agreements from this Ministry, I noticed a pattern where almost all of those Agreements are presented on the same day and approved on the same day, and I hear sometimes the same concerns raised by many people.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order! We have not done that Sir. For the credibility of the House it was laid last week and we have never done that; it used to be in the past, but this is a very new administration. We now laid documents, we wait and we corrected that one since the First Session of the Parliament. We agreed that for a document to be debated, we should give some time for Members to read the documents before they are debated. Thank you.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Mr Speaker, I will give you the recitation. The three [3] that I know are crucial, one of them for example is the one with the APP, you know my views on that day. The APP Agreement on petroleum products is another. I

took the modification two [2] months before the APP [1], that is what I meant. Mr Speaker, what I want to say here is that, there are a lot of concerns about waivers. It is important especially when we spoke about fiscal consolidation, that in fact these concerns [Interruption].

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order!

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Mr Speaker...

THE SPEAKER: Hold on!

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker...

THE SPEAKER: What is your Order?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, my Order is 12.

THE SPEAKER: Your Order is 12?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Yes, 12 on the Hansard?

THE SPEAKER: Okay!

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Yes, on the Hansard! I urged my colleagues and I am challenging us to go to the Hansard and see if that one happened two months ago. Mr Speaker, I am asking him to give the title of the Agreements, so we can go to the Hansard and get that record straight for the good of this House. Mr Speaker, we have to keep the credibility of this House straight; we do not need to circumvent it. So I stand on S.O. [12] for the Hansard.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Mr Speaker, I went to Christ the King College [CKC], and we were carefully trained by Reverend Fathers to be specific in how we speak the English Language. I said, again I repeat, that about two months before the APP, Agreements were brought here. I did not say two months ago.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Point of correction.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Diversion [Interruption].

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker...

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Mr Speaker...

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Point of Order! I said the title of the Agreement in question you are talking about *[Interruption]*.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: They gave it to you. You have called for the Hansard, let them go and check the Hansard; I am not a Parliamentary Clerk.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: No, but I need the title of the Agreement, that is why I stood on the Standing Order Sir.

HON. DR KANDEH YUMKELLA: You have done the right thing my Comrade; you have done the right thing by asking for the Hansard.

THE SPEAKER: Your Order is noted and the Hansard will be provided.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: We need the title of that. Thank you.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Mr Speaker, my colleague has done the right thing, I am not a Clerk. You have asked for the Hansard, so let the Clerks go and do their jobs.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it is okay. Proceed and make your point.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Do not worry, the Clerks would check my brother. Let me go to my main point. It is an advice to the Government S.O [2], 'nor to al tin na bad hat.' I am asking Mr Speaker with your good office Sir, our Committee on Trade and Industry to go back and look at the Agreements. We have approved for this Ministry for the establishment of new enterprises, do your homework. Look at how much we really have gathered. First point, are they similar, are we given waivers on a hard work basis? Is there a Constituency pattern when we are waiving cooperate taxes, GSTs, and so on? Secondly, discuss with Finance. Why do I say this? I was the Minister for twenty seven [27] years ago, sitting on that chair. I was faced with some of these same crises, and fortunately for us, you and I were Ministers then under NPRC *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Order! Allow the Honourable Member.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Mr Speaker, under NPRC, some people are still novice as Ministers. We were already Ministers twenty seven years ago. Mr Speaker, fortunately for us, I was under structural adjustment, so we controlled how we give waivers, because it does affect revenues, and that is why we are struggling with revenues. We are struggling with paying salaries sometimes. So my advice on this one is that, if we do not approve it today, we should send it to the Committee to examine these waivers and one of the things we emphasised on is attracting investments and investors. We should not give hard hock provisions to such companies only, they also want a level playing field; they know when they come, they have either five [5] years waiver. It should be consistent because when you do hard hock, others will be scared if there is no consistence. Mr Speaker, my advice on this Agreement is that, nobody would die today if we go back to examine this Agreement and look at these waivers properly, that is what I heard from colleagues even Honourable Shiaka Sama, and others are saying, S.O [2] "So nor to any bad tin ar tok". I just said study it, harmonise and be careful.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second point is as I said, you and I know that we face these kinds of crisis. We have issues here 94, 95, prices were going up, petroleum products, that was the purview om my Ministry. I know the head-ache, so I agreed with what Honourable Sengepoh Solomon Thomas said. We had to go out as a Ministry to discuss with the public when we had price hike. We had to go out as a Ministry to discuss shortages of petrol, introducing rations, because that was war time. Both the Finance Minister and I were pro-active in helping the citizens understand what are the supply challenges and the structural problems, so they knew we had a challenge. I advised the same here today, for us to exemplify something, like the exchange rate. Within two weeks we see the way it is moving, so I want to agree with what Honourable Speaker had recommended, that it is time the same thing we did for Covid-19, we called in those managing the economy to talk to us on what you proposed. It makes sense, I support it and there is good reason for that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, finally, on Agriculture, Honourable from Kailahun made a point about more production locally, it is important therefore that our Agriculture Committee looks keenly at the programmes that has come to build supply chain. Some of them have problems; some of those programmes for Agriculture had issues. Last week there was a video from Tormabom, the workers in this big project are complaining about no salaries for two months, there is complaint from my area that ploughing was done and the fertilisers did not arrived on time. So I am recommending to the Agriculture Committee since we are all advocating now for more domestic production of rice, to go back and take a close look at the Agricultural projects. Donors have funded us well, but as it is typical for all African countries implementation becomes the problem, because of some bottle necks. Mr Speaker, if Tormabum, Samu, Mabollo, are part of the agriculture programmes, we will all hope to move towards rice sufficiency.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, again, to solve the price issues is not a quick fix, there are structural challenges and so I do agree with you, that we should have a more in-depth discussion in which timing is attracted. Mr Speaker, maybe it is not in one Sitting, but a couple of Sittings, because it is more complicated than just one Ministry. Thank you, very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution and I now recognise the Honourable Paramount Chief from Tonkolili, to be followed by the Honourable Mustapha Sellu.

HON. P.C. BAI KURR KANAGBARO SANKA III: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the debate itself is very interesting and it shows some of you have not learnt well or you did not read the materials that are laid on the Table for us to debate. I want to tell this House that all the issues you have addressed are all in this Agreement. I was following the debate from Honourable Ibrahim Tawa Conteh. Mr Speaker, when you look at page four of this Agreement, I want everybody to listen including the Leadership of this House. I could read it, but may I get the attention of the front desk to look at page four, Article 9, whereas, "The Ministry of Trade and Industry *[MTI]* will further

review these proposals to establish its conformity with food and food safety requirement". So anybody here could talk about food in the Agreement, what will stop any Member of Parliament not to talk about food? Ministry of Trade and Industry will further review these proposals to establish its conformity with food and food safety requirements. I can debate on this paragraph for the whole day if I want to, so nobody can say I am out of bounds. I went to a Boarding school and I am within the bounds. I can talk about the Standards Bureau because it is there, standards and laboratory best practices are determined by the Sierra Leone's Standards Bureau. Mr Speaker, I feel very sorry for the Minister of Trade and Industry. The problem he is facing is the entire problem of Sierra Leone, such as our Agricultural policies and our eating habits. I am from the North and a Temne by tribe. Mr Speaker, permit me to say even if you give me cassava with chicken, with meat, at the end of the day I will say S.O. [2], "Tono paily e di ye coco" that is to say; " I have not eaten any food today", because there is no rice.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the debate started very well and it touched every human being in Sierra Leone, even for some of you who are rich enough to afford, but now you have to provide so much for others; that is why everybody now is on a tight budget, austerity measures, whether by the Government or individuals. Mr Speaker, food is the best Medicine for mankind. Mr Speaker, an Honourable Member from Sarh Malen mentioned that with all his Agricultural farming area, he was charged for murder, but still in Parliament, which makes him to be a very lucky guy [Laughter]. So Mr Speaker, the importers will tell you that the Dollar is increasing every day. Are we producing enough? When you talk of Economics, it is nothing other than production and productivity. We consume what we do not produce and we produce what we do not consume, and we cannot even utilise what we have. We get the Iron Ore, but we cannot even make a pin or a needle, we produce Rutile, Bauxite, but we cannot produce any steel in Sierra Leone. Where are we with all the intelligence, and the intellectualism we are boasting of? How many PhDs' we have produced in Sierra Leone? Where are the Factories? Now somebody is bringing a factory to produce beer that will

have no bearing for our health and when you go to the Doctors in the hospitals, they will advise you to avoid sugar, avoid too much salt, avoid alcohol, avoid cigarette, so we have to manufacture even zinc. Honourable Members, where are we as a nation? Where are we as black people? Whether you go to Ghana, Nigeria or Sierra Leone, we cannot produce anything of substance.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you cannot be a civilised nation when you cannot produce. Let us look at the beautiful handsome suits we put on here they are not made by our Tailors. Mr Speaker, when we go to England, America, Germany, on official trips, we buy the suits there. As a result, we are providing jobs for the white boys out there. We export the neck ties, because we do not produce even a neck tie in Sierra Leone. Look at them all, because the more neck ties you buy, the less food you can afford to bring. So Mr Speaker, believe me, I feel sorry for the Minister of Trade and Industry, because when you bring him here, we have to bring in the Minister of Agriculture and ask him, where is the food? Where is the rice? I have been in this Parliament and people are talking of oil, but we don't produce oil and believe me Mr Speaker, if you listen to the international radio B.B.C, you will be worried about what is going to happen to Africa on food shortage.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are deteriorating, stagnating, we are going backwards. Sierra Leone used to produce rice and export it. We used to produce palm kernel and export it. Today the youth are not in the farms, and when you go to the towns and villages, the young boys will not go to farm after 11, or 12 o'clock and they will leave by 3 o'clock. I know so many people here, who have planted and produced enough rice in the farm, but they don't have people to harvest; I know them they are my colleagues we are neighbours. So Mr Speaker, when you talk of the Standards Bureau in this Agreement, you go to the grocery stores that are being opened in Sierra Leone, you will find Spanish, Italian, Arabic, writings on them without English, so we buy food we don't even know what the contents are. I can challenge anyone to go and check, they are written in Arabic, Italian, French, sometimes even in German. Even some Medicines from Turkey are written in different languages that you cannot read. If

you go to any drug store and say, I want Tetracycline, they will give it to you with a different name and you will say, what is this? Then they will say it is Tetracycline or Ampicillin or Ampliclox from Turkey. So where is the Standards Bureau? For me, I feel sorry for this company that is here today, sorry that they came in because everybody is hungry, and now everyone is putting the blame on them. But we have been on that, so I will say, let us have a standard policy for new companies coming in.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you go to America you want to open up small business administration, the policy is there, that states that for five years you will not be taxed, they will give you all of those benefits. There are standards for anyone who wants to start Small Business Administration [SBA], so let us have that clear. Mr Speaker, for me I will appeal that even though the Agreement has been brought to us for approval, let us don't do it on a hard hock Committee, let us do it gradually. Government and Parliament should work together. Mr Speaker, when I was young I used to be troublesome in this Parliament but now I am old, so I need your attention. Mr Speaker, when I read through, it is almost about the same Agreement that we have ratified here, it is not only for today, it is not only for this Parliament, it is not only for this Government, but this has been our Debate. When you look at the Hansard, you will see that we need to change actually.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will say that let us go along and give the Investors the opportunity for them to listen and learn. We all know that Donald Trump is a very interesting person he says, 'Africans are saying they are poor, but when an European or American goes there, they become rich'. It is true that when an American or European comes here, by the time he leaves he is rich and we are still poor, what is wrong? I will say, at least this will add to the multiplier effect. It will increase the employment for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty people, NaSSIT and NRA will benefit out of it. But for us to have a policy that will be standard, so that any Agreement we sign by the Government of Sierra Leone that is brought to Parliament will carry the same trend. Mr Speaker that is what I think should be the issue, so that we will not say why you gave this waiver? Mr Speaker, when I say tuition waiver, I am thinking of the University right now, so I

will appeal to all of us to support the Minister of Trade and Industry so that we can work together to approve this Agreement. I think we have scrutinised this Agreement than any other Agreement we have had here, and I am sure that is why I read it to you Mr Minister, we should review these proposals to establish its conformity with food. Are they not going to use your local produce to produce? How are we going to sell corn, maize, sorghum, whilst we are dying? Are the people willing to use the maize for food, or are they going to use Bananas or Cassavas or Yams for food?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we need to address the eating patterns of Sierra Leone as a nation. We have concentrated so much on rice only, even though we need some Amino acid from other groups of food. Therefore, as the focal point in Africa for ending hunger S.D.G [2] by the United Nations Development Programme, I will give my support and appeal to all those who are angry to support this Agreement. I read every day about hunger and everything that I could find on the internet on how to fight hunger in Africa and in Sierra Leone particularly. Mr Speaker, everyone now here is concerned about hunger [*food*] and it is terrible because rice is going at Le 480,000 per bag. So Mr Leader of the House, you cannot stop me when I talk of food, because it is in the Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am appealing to all of us here to give chance to the Brewery, so that they will begin to think of what type of food or investment they will bring rather than Alcohol. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker for allowing me [*Applause*].

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Paramount Chief for his contribution, you have the Floor and then we will then wind up the Debate.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity. I want to thank My Paramount Chief for raising these critical issues of concern especially on the Factory issues in the country. As one of the longest serving Member of this House, I want to know what has been his contribution to change this particular dynamics ever in the history of this country. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think for the very first time in the history of this country we have launched

a Factory in this country to process Cocoa into finished products, I think that is a laudable venture.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want us to look at the good aspect of this particular Agreement, because Members on the other side have just been looking at the negative aspect of it. Mr Speaker, I want to take you to page 7, it says, the company shall develop a Corporate Social Responsibility Plan based on assessment of community needs, in consultation with EPA, MARVS, Local Government Authorities, Paramount Chiefs, Section Chiefs, representatives of land owning families and the communities themselves. I think this is very key and a laudable initiative by the company which is in Agreement before us here this afternoon and that is something we need to look at critically as well. The company shall develop a small holder or out grower scheme as per guidelines of the Government of Sierra Leone. The main aim of this scheme shall be to achieve food self-sufficiency and ultimately, develop security activities that would be included, but not limited to providing basic Agricultural inputs like cassava, sweet potato, and 10% material component in line with the local content policy. These are all good aspects of this particular Agreement that Members should be looking at, instead of just going for tax waivers. There are very good areas in this Agreement that we should be looking at, because it will benefit the local people where they are operating.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to set the record straight, I want to go to this much talked about topic on the waiver which is on page 20 of the Agreement Mr Speaker, talks on the dividend tax exemption. Members were saying that we should have 100% waiver. Let us set the record straight, especially for the Fourth Estate as well. It reads '50% of the dividend paid during the qualifying period will be exempted from withholding taxes; it is not a whole, it is only 50%'. However, contracts and supply shall be liable to 5 and 10% contract and supply. Mr Speaker, for the record however, contracts and supplies are emphasised and shall be liable to 5 and 10% withholding tax deduction, for local and foreign companies 5 to 10 % for supplies and contracts respectively. [e], exempting from sales, export 5% of total income derived from export sales with the exemption of corporate tax after the qualifying period, only 5%.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I refer you to page 20 of this Agreement. We want to set the record straight. Capital allowance, 'all fixed assets shall be subject to capital allowance up to 40% as provided for', the income tax 2000 as amended, this is in line with the Income Tax Act. Honourable Members, I want to set this record straight, because I heard someone on the other side talking about ten years, 'Importation of agricultural input, production and the importation of Agricultural inputs. Production of input and packaging materials shall attract import duty free concession for a period of five years'. Someone was talking about ten years; I don't know where the ten years was coming from, but as far as this Agreement is concerned, go to page 20 it is for a period of five years and not ten years. It is what I want to hammer home here for the record especially for the public, to note that it is not a 100% waiver as I have read through the Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Fourth Estate specifically needs to take this into account that this Agreement is not talking about 100% waiver throughout and that is what I have explained to you as per the Agreement before us. I am not going to talk outside of the Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I resume my seat, I want Honourable Members to look at the good aspect of this Agreement in terms of what the Agreement will be providing for the common man of Sierra Leone.

[a]. It will be providing jobs for the youth at managerial level not just at the middle level.

[b]. It is going to provide jobs for both middle and managerial sectors as well as enshrined in the Agreement, that it is something that is very key. Mr Speaker, some companies will come and they will only employ labourers and middle level staff, they don't have Management staff as Sierra Leoneans, but this Agreement here is talking about that they can even employ Sierra Leoneans at management level as well, and they will train them and pass over the expertise to them at the end of the day. I think that is a laudable venture, we have to applaud this particular Agreement, because for a company to come and train Sierra Leoneans to pass over this expertise to them, so that

they can take leadership of the operation of the company, I think that is something laudable we have to look at again.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I resume my seat, again let us look at their Corporate Social Responsibilities. It is this Agreement that has fleshed out the time frame and the methodology, strategy, and how they are going to handle that particular aspect about the corporate social responsibility in these communities. Honourable Members, just judge by you, in line with Local Government Authorities, in line with the community, land holding families, I think these are the issues we should be looking at, because this is exactly going directly to the people of this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I resume my seat I want to employ all of us on this side and the other side to speedily ratify this particular Agreement that is before us. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. We would now conclude this Debate, and I recognise the Leader of the Opposition.

HON. CHRENOR R. M. BAH: Mr Speaker, since I was not here when they laid the Agreement, I will hand over the winding up to my Deputy, but in a minute may I say that what has transpired since this morning is very serious, and as a Parliament it is not everything that we should politicise, if we are here to represent the ordinary man and woman in the street. When we talk about bread and butter, it should not be politicised. I am happy that you have directed us to follow the necessary procedures and the Standing Orders for us to get the Minister. But like others before me have said, we should not squarely put everything on the head or hands of the Minister. Mr Speaker, we have talked about the increase in prices of the imported rice, what is the Minister of Agriculture doing to reduce or minimise the importation of rice? So we should get all players involved, we should not just put the burden on one Minister. It is a team and the team has to deliver together, that is what I want to say for now and I will continue saying it *[Applause]*.

HON. IBRAHIM B. KARGBO: Mr Speaker thanks for giving me the Floor, and to state that today is a historic day when very important matters relating to the survival of our people are being discussed. Which means Mr Speaker, that for a man like me who have been here for years; I will not deviate from the Order Paper that states few more things after making reference to the substantive provision in the Order Paper. Mr Speaker the Minister of Trade and Industry is asking that we ratify an Agreement between his Ministry, the Sierra Leone Government, and a company that seeks to invest in this country. Mr Speaker, I do not believe that there is any controversy there for a country that is anxious to develop itself, like I would always say, we will embrace investors. So Mr Speaker I think without difficulties we will ratify it.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having stated that, we also want to remind Mr Minister and other interested members of Government that alcohol is not the best food for ordinary people; especially the children of this country. Mr Speaker, I was reading a book in which it was said that the easiest way to make a country backward like South Africa at the time is to introduce alcohol in the midst of the people. Alcohol was introduced in South Africa, and made the people forgot about independence for a while until they discovered that they needed to fight for independence and forget about alcohol. So Mr Speaker, introducing alcohol in our country is not the best form of developing our people, and therefore, I believe that we should caution the investors' precautions. The whole business of introducing alcohol in the midst of a country with millions of children must also be monitored and cautioned.

Mr Speaker, I see the Leader of Government Business watching this side very keenly, as usual. He is a man who wants to be very certain that he wins the Debate, but I also want to assure him that whatever position we take on this side, is in the national interest, because we want to be very certain that this country prospers. Mr Speaker, I have said this time and time again that when we take positions from this side of the Well, it is to make sure that Sierra Leone prospers. Honourable Members, this brings me to the point whereby everyone has been talking this morning about the sustenance of the ordinary citizens or people. One of my drivers advised me a few days ago that, if

I had any reason to sit in a 'Podapoda', please Sir don't introduce you as a Member of Parliament. I was anxious to know why I should not introduce myself as a Member of Parliament in a 'Podapoda', and he said, the public will pounce on you, they will hold all of you responsible for the difficulties now confronting the ordinary citizens. Mr Speaker, it is quite frank I do not know whether if Mr Speaker appears before the crowd and he introduces himself as the Speaker of this House, he will be allowed to go free. I am sure he will be allowed to go free, because you are a good man. So Mr Speaker, I have just said this because I also want us to accept one fact that, whether we like it or not things are difficult in this country. This point has been raised by quite a number of people including the Deputy Speaker of this Parliament. Mr Speaker, if we are honest and straight forward, you will not deviate from the fact that this is not the way it should be. We have tried over and over again Mr Speaker to caution our people, to tell people about what the problem is. Now apart from anything else Mr Speaker, we are buffeted by Corona, but I have never used Corona as a sole problem that has created difficulty in this country. The difficulty created in this country is bad governance and bad management.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, somebody mentioned this morning that the Bread Factory that was debated here many, many, months ago has still not started functioning. I want to assure the President, with such anxiety that the Speaker and I visited this same factory in Conakry; it is one of the best factories in West Africa. Mr Speaker, so how comes it worked in Guinea, but does not work in Sierra Leone? These are questions we should ask ourselves. Well the man in Guinea is a Fullah and the same Bakery here is also managed by a Fullah, and Fullahs are known to be very industrious people. They are industrious people but Mr Speaker let us say one thing and that is very, very clear that the Agreement itself is not controversial, we will handle it. But what is also important is that, I do not want our country to be reduced into a country of alcohol, a point which I have already raised. Mr Speaker, the Minister seated here has come here over and over again with Agreements, and in demonstration of the good will which this side has always exhibited, we have always passed all those

Agreements without questions, but today I am very certain that you should not have come with this Agreement today. He is facing very stiff Opposition from this House, not because of the poor Agreement but because it came at a time when everyone is angry in this country. I just gave an example of how the people feel in this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, they have come again today with this Agreement, it might not be controversial, but what is surrounding the Agreement is controversial. He has spoken quite a number of things of what he intends to do, but what we also want to do is to make sure that there is no lacuna here. If you look at [11] Mr Speaker, you will discover that you did mention that and I want clarification. Mr Speaker and will further review these proposals to establish it in conformity with food safety, fervent standards, and laboratory best practice, etc. etc. I want to be very certain whether what they are actually talking about is very important or whether it is in the Agreement or a proposal, because I should have read the proposed Agreement, but as I am reading here Mr Speaker, it is a proposal. We want you to clarify that if it is a proposal, then it seizes to be an Agreement. Please clarify that for us!

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, about the waivers, the question has been asked quite a number of times, if how do we determine these waivers? What yardstick have we utilised to determine the waivers. Mr Speaker, to us, it is important, because when this Government came to power, one of its strongest argument was to attempt to establish the fact that waivers caused havoc on the economy and now we continue to see waivers and waivers and waivers and waivers! Can you please explain to us how do we determine these waivers and to what benefit are these waivers to us and to the economy in general?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have asked those questions and also want you to understand one thing; we will continue to raise the issue on the general hardship, and I have already mentioned it again, but Mr Speaker it is a very important issue. One of my friends was also going to encourage me today to place the ball squarely on your legs, because he believes that as a Minister of Trade and Industry, you should be in charge

of making sure that there is food availability in this country; apart from the efforts of the Agriculture Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am not going to mention Agriculture anymore, but these are people who said they had program for Agriculture. They gave us a few tractors without fertilizers, and they told me to go to the village and collect the fertilizers. When I went to the village, but there was no fertilizer; they are all bunch of liars who I cannot treat very seriously. But since we have decided to treat you a little bit seriously, Mr Minister, you have to respond to the questions on the difficulties confronting our people. People are complaining, there is a lot of hardship in this country, and people also assume that the Minister in charge of trade should address some of these issues. Mr Speaker, whether he can address them today or not, I will not know, but they believe that you should be able to address these issues. I am very; very satisfied that Mr Speaker has formally invited you to come here to explain some of these difficulties to us, because like I said, I am going to be very, very fair with you. We cannot hold you totally and entirely responsible for what is happening in the country, but we do concede to the fact, that things are extremely difficult.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, just that when we were in power at one time, we were honest enough to come to this House to say things have gone out of hand, things are difficult, everyone shouted, our opponents shouted, but the fact is that sometimes when you run a State, things actually do get out of hands, and all you do is to make sure that you work very, very hard to correct the irregularities instead of pretending that nothing has happened. This is what we will never do on this side, if there are problems; we confront the problems and settle them squarely. Now we assume that, when you confront your mistakes Mr Minister, you will tell us the current factors for all these difficulties, you will also explain to us what the solutions are. We are not going to lose out tempers because bread has gone up today, but we are going to caution you that this is not the best way to run a State. Thank you Mr Speaker, thank you Mr Minister, thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I now invite the Leader of Government Business.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will give the Floor to my Deputy to do a solid wrap up. But before I do, let me say one or two words for the good of this House. I have heard passion in the House this morning, but one remarkable thing that I want us to realise and note in this House today, is that the Deputy Speaker of this House raised the issue about commodities going up, the hike in prices of commodities, that tells you that we are committed and we seek the interest of the people *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, we do not put anything under the carpet, so in line with that commitment, we are a very caring Government, we said the 'New Direction', and this Direction is peoples' centred, people who are suffering in this State. We do not want to make blame games, but we know things are not good as you are expecting based on the global trend. Mr Speaker, we are going to bring the Minister on a special Session, even when we took Government on 'austerity', we have not pronounced austerity. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have not given out any austerity measures, we are still moving on as a Government, so that we can solve the many left behind problems.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on a very serious note, next week as we have agreed, we are going to bring the Minister here and let us discuss with him that we are going to discuss issues pertaining the welfare of the people of this nation; so that he can explain to us the trend of things and explain the market fluctuation. So on that note Mr Speaker, I want to pass on the baton to my Deputy Leader, to go on with the wrapping up proper. Thank you for giving me the Floor, God bless *[Applause]*.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to begin by thanking my colleagues for contributing to this debate.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today I feel extremely very pleased because sometimes in 2016 in this Parliament when we passed the Finance Bill, we were very, very strong. We increased taxes on the importation of Beverages and Alcohol; we did

all of that because we wanted to empower Brewery. We were very strong as Parliament, we rejected the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill went to the former President for his signature, he refused to sign it. I still remembered vividly Honourable Chernor Maju Bah, was on this side, he was very, very strong, that we should not increase taxes on beverages and alcohol, he was very, very strong that we should not empower Brewery and we should not give them monopoly. Today, we are buying a pint of Mutzig for fifteen thousand Leones, at that point we were buying a pint of Mutzig for two thousand Leones and we wanted to empower Brewery so much, so that, we will buy a pint of Mutzig for one thousand Leones or one thousand five hundred Leones. We gave them all of the opportunities, but because of the demand, they cannot stand the pressure. Thank you very much, Mr Minister. Today we are seeing competition; we have another Brewery Company emerging in our time. We will see the competition and we do not have monopoly in which one Company will have the sole right to produce alcohol and other beverages. Thank you very much Mr Minister, for bringing this Agreement for us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have listened to our colleagues; and have recommended a lot of tax waivers to this company, and that is very, very correct. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as a country, if we want to encourage investors, taking into cognizance the current state of the world, investors are even afraid to come to our country. Mr Speaker, if we want to encourage them, we will have to give them some incentives; and the incentives should be tax waivers. Mr Speaker, today we have investors coming and we should encourage them, what we did in the previous regime was to tax in advance, that is why today we cannot boast of our Mineral Sector. In this nation, at a point in time Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, that we have ratified an Agreement in this Parliament for 99 years. These were Agreements that these companies did not even exist for more than 10 years. We have an Agreement that was ratified in this Parliament for 50 years, we did not do due diligence, because the institutions did not even last for more than 10 years *[Interruption]*.

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Mr Speaker, Point of Order!

THE SPEAKER: Yes!

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: The Leader knows that there are distinctions between Manufacturing Agreements and Mining Agreements. The scenario he is presenting is different, so let us be professional. Mr Speaker, at the Bintumani Conference Centre, we just ratified a 50 years Agreement, because it had to do with Mining in this Parliament, in the last Session, so I just want to make it clear *[Interruption]*.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, I know this Government is doing due diligence, we are not just giving tax waivers because we want to give tax waivers. Even when you go to Europe and America, there are incentives you give to investors, and if those incentives are given, it will encourage more investors to come *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one thing that is clear in this Agreement is that, we are going to provide job opportunities for the people of this country and this Agreement is going to bring an institution that will be spending the longest time, not as an institution that will be running for just 5 or 10 years. We are now going to change the young people and facilitate them for the start. It is very clear that if we do not have the capacity the investors will bring people to come and invest. But at the end of the day, if you read through the Agreement, they will train up our young people and they will take over the investment and the running of this company. Mr Speaker, I know my colleagues on the other side definitely will not be happy when institutions of this nature come.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Deputy Leader on the other side was talking about the Agreement on Bakery. I want to tell you Mr Deputy Leader that the construction is at advance stage and very soon the production will start and we will begin to see the 'Tapalapa' around in the street *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for the Cooperate Social Responsibility of this Company, they are not going to give monies to people, but they will be supporting farmers. If you go through the Agreements Mr Speaker, you will see that the investors will have to support farmers and these farmers in turn will have to sell to the investors.

It will create jobs, it will improve on the livelihood of the people, and it will make sure that Sierra Leoneans are gainfully employed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as it has been said by the Deputy Leader, this Agreement is not controversial and we should not for any reason try to politicalise Agreements that are not controversial. This Agreement is good for us, this Agreement is creating jobs, and this Agreement will definitely ease the tax burden and ease the unemployment burden on Government. What has happened in this country Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, is that 80% of the workforce is being employed by the Government of Sierra Leone *[Applause]*. We want to have situations that we will empower the Private Sector, and this is one of the means of empowering them. We are overburdened as a Government; we are overburdened in paying our salaries, because 80% of the workforce in this country is employed by Government. We want to have a situation Mr Minister, where you will look for more investors, empower the Private sector, so at the end of the day, we will have a Private sector taking the burden from Government, and Government will concentrate itself on doing tangible developments.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I employ all Members of Parliament, I know you have had your position, you have said your positions, we understand exactly and I encourage the Committee on Trade in this Parliament, to follow up on this Agreement. Please look at the Agreement, make sure you do your oversights, make sure what is in this Agreement is fully adhered to. I encourage all of us as colleague Members of Parliament, to accept the fact that we need this type of Agreement, because our people are in rush for development, our people want jobs, the young people want jobs, and we want to reduce the prices of not just alcohol but other beverages. We want to reduce monopoly, we want to have competition when we have companies of this nature, it creates competition. It will not just be Sierra Leone Brewery, but we will now have Golden Brewery and they will be competing, and that will reduce the prices of not just alcohol but even beverages. We have a policy which we give taxation, tax waivers for 5 years and we have not done anything extra ordinary, what the Minister has done is just to present to us that these tax payers are for a period in which these investors will

settle down and begin their business proper. Thank you very much, Honourable Members.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I encourage all of us to ratify this document. Let us keep our differences and think Sierra Leone, let us keep our differences as Political Parties and think as Parliament and think for the people. Of course, it is no secret that prices are skyrocketing, thankfully enough the Speaker and all Members of Parliament have agreed that we will summon the Minister here next week and we will ask him relevant questions. Let us reserve our questions for next week by which we will ask the Minister and not just the Minister of Trade. We even need to invite the Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor to come here and explain to us our current state of the economy as a country. Thank you very much, Honourable Members. Let us keep our differences and let us support the Minister, so that this Agreement will pass and we will have the investment starting. Thank you, very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution, over to you Mr Minister to answer the many concerns and questions that have been raised and to finally move.

DR EDWARD HINGA SANDY *[The Minister of Trade]*: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think this Agreement has presented an opportunity for us all to open our eyes to understand what is happening with commodities generally, at the global level and what is happening nationally.

Mr Speaker, let me first dive into the issues related to this Agreement, I am very happy that a good number of Honourable Members considered this Agreement as non-controversial and been in line with existing Finance Act or at least been similar to other Agreements protecting infant industries from the clutches of overseas manufacturers. I think it is the main trust for which this Agreement was done with Gold Brewery on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone. We realised that there is fairly good market access for farmers, because a number of these Agreements that we have gone into have created a space for our farmers to have value for their monies and for their products as well. I will reference the JOLAX Agreement that we passed in this House

which was intended or which actually refines good palm oil into vegetable oil. We now see that in Sierra Leone today, there is almost net importation of vegetable oil and because of that, our local farmers producing palm oil now have very, very good price for their products, and that is impacting their work. Mr Speaker, we are now seeing more and more people going into the cultivation of palm oil, so I will now like to dive into the prejudices that we have for certain commodities. Maybe alcohol, but I am sure that our preference for the consumption of different products varies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will like to mention the fact that in Sierra Leone we do not eat locust, but if you go to Uganda, locust is actually used as one of their very, very good meal. We may not eat other foods produced by other countries, but you will also have people that eat Cockroaches in China, because they believe it is medicinal. I am sure if cockroaches are put in anybody's plate here, you will definitely reject it; because of the prejudice we may have on what product we produce in this country. Mr Speaker, as the Minister of Trade, I want to refrain from taking part in that argument. I am very, very sure the Ministry of Health may stand as superior and now the Consumer Protection Commission that we have formed has enough provisions to be able to handle food safety issues.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also would like to state that on the basis of the argument and debate on this Agreement, this Agreement is definitely going to help to bring in competition particularly, in Brewery products. The Sierra Leone Brewery has been in operation for decades, and it continues to produce as the only Brewery in Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, for all the reasons that Members of Parliament have mentioned, I think it is about time we get more Breweries in Sierra Leone. This is only going to help healthy competition in the market and also going to increase our export value. 'The value of what we export'.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will like to inform this House that, with the introduction of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and also the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, if Sierra Leone does not fortify itself with industry development, this country is just going to be a dumping ground. The very tax

exemption we are granting to Companies wanting to come and invest in Sierra Leone, are the tax exemptions we are given to products under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme; and I am very sure is only going to make sense that we try to work very closely with our investors. Mr Speaker, I want you to understand that the competition is also thin, most other African countries are preparing better environment for investment and if we fail to engage our own investors to start producing lucrative jobs, increase our export, cut down on our importation, I think we will only be putting Sierra Leone in a more vulnerable situation. You may not drink alcohol, but there are thousands or more people drinking alcohol, and not wanting to support this Agreement because it produces alcohol, it is not going to stop the importation of alcohol anyway.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to state that we have found ourselves in a very difficult moment. We have a global crisis and one of the factors that are driving commodity prices currently is inflation, because the actual cost to bring products from other countries into our own country is saddened. I would like to mention a couple of these inflations, prior to Covid-19, bringing in a metric ton of cement which is about 20 bags of cement of 50 kilo was done for \$20 *[Interruption]*.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, point of order! I do not want to interrupt the Minister, but I think what he is explaining now must be kept for next week, because we have to bring him here so that he can explain it further, so do not go into depth for now, the details will come when we come to discuss the issues.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Mr Speaker, the Minister is giving highlights of what he is supposed to say to us here, so I think it is okay.

DR EDWARD HINGA SANDY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will not give you the details yet *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I think the same way that the House highlighted the issue of escalating prices, so it is reasonable to allow the Minister to highlight the key issues that have endangered the problems that we have raised.

DR EDWARD HINGA SANDY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, of course, I will be very, very pleased to come to this House to engage with details on some of the circumstances surrounding increase of prices of essential commodities. So prior to Covid-19, we were bringing the one metric ton of cement from Turkey at \$ 20, but today we are bringing the same for over \$70. Unfortunately, because we have been very complacent with support to industrial growth, LEOCEM alone which has been producing cement can no longer catch up with the increasing demand for cement. Mr Speaker, when LEOCEM came into operations, the demand for cement was relatively lowered compared to what it is now. Mr Speaker, my father who was relatively comfortable built his house with mud-bricks, but today everybody wants to build their houses with concretes and the demand for cement has really gone up. Today, LEOCEM alone cannot produce enough cement that we need in this country. Mr Speaker that is why the Ministry of Trade in his commitment saw that the industry policy that has been laid over 30 years without review, and I am sure that industry policy has been what it was the time the Honourable Kandeh Yumkella was Minister of Trade.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I therefore take no interest in comparing what the Ministry of Trade and Industry is doing now to what happened 27 years ago. The red cup shows clearly in the House that the Minister of Trade and Industry has brought a couple of industrial development Agreements that have been ratified, and I am truly grateful to this House for considering the Substance of those Agreements and Ratifications. So at the right time Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will definitely come to answer questions related to why prices of commodities are going up. The Ministry of Trade and Industry has engaged enough and will continue to do more. I have been going to radio discussion programs, Television programs to discuss some of these reasons why commodity prices are going up, and give you a broader understanding of what is happening in the Global market. I am very sure just like all Members here are sensitive to these issues, the Ministry of Trade and Industry also is so sensitive and we are working hard on it. I was with the Minister of information a couple of weeks ago; we went to Bombali, Kambia, Bo and Kenema having town hall

meetings, and radio discussions. But I am sure these are radio programs most Members do not listen to, and I am sure that is why the Deputy Speaker himself, may have said the Ministry of Trade and Industry has not done much to engage the public. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have been doing it and even working together with the Ministry of Local Government while they were doing their induction programs for newly elected Paramount Chiefs. We have engaged Paramount Chiefs on what is happening to commodities and to look at how we can inspire them to go back and organise their communities to start producing Agricultural products. Mr Speaker, if today Zambia is so attractive for Textiles, it does not just happened, it took time, so if Zambia needs to produce tiles and cloths in the country, then they need to produce the Raw Materials, like cottons that attract investors to come and establish Factories related to the raw materials that they are producing in the country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note, I am definitely going to come. I am sure it is going to be entertaining discussions on reasons why commodities' prices are going up.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved that this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following Agreements which were laid on the Table of the House on Thursday, 21st October, 2021. An Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, represented by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Finance and the Gold Brewery Company Limited. I thank you *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Minister for his explanation.

[Question Proposed Put, and Agreed to]

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, I repeat! We cannot oppose anything that is good for Sierra Leone, but Mr Speaker, let us do the needful. We were only asked for a re-visitation of this Agreement. So I therefore, I stand on S.O. 46 *[1]* so that collection of voices will not only be, but let us vote on this issue.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on that note and in conformity with the provision of S. O. 46 *[1]*, I will stand the House down for 10 minutes.

[Mr Speaker stood the House at 1:45 pm and the House was resumed at 2:00 pm]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I am now going to put the question for the second time.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, you have exhausted the 10 minutes.

[Question Proposed Put and Agreed to]

[Government Motion by the Minister of Trade and Industry has been ratified]

THE SPEAKER: The Minister is hereby excused. The House will now be adjourned for 1 hour, for lunch and we will resume at 3 o'clock.

[Mr Speaker stood down the House at 2:05 pm]

[The House resume at 3:05 pm]

V. BILL

THE SIERRA LEONE STUDENTS' LOAN SCHEME FUND ACT, 2021 INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING; THE MINISTER OF TECHNICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

PROF. ALPHA T. WURIE *[The Minister of Technical and Higher Education]:* Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme Fund Act, 2021; be read the first time.

[Question put and agreed to]

[The Bill entitled the Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme Fund Act 2021, has been read the first time. Second Reading]

PROF. ALPHA T. WURIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme Fund Act 2021, be read the second time.

Honourable Members, in July 2021 we were gracious enough to pass the University Act, 2021. In that presentation, which was made known for the Human Capital Development, we need to get a range of options that people will access at the Tertiary level. An example of such a change is manifested in looking at the numbers taking the WASSCE in 2018. 33,000 students took the WASSCE three years hence after His Excellency has announced free quality education support. In 2020, 151,000 attempted the WASSCE. Furthermore, our students are starting to get better, because before 2018, the pass rates were on 7 to 8 %, by 2020 pass rates increased to 20%, and University in Sierra Leone is talking about 5 credits with English at 2 sittings. Therefore, the number that potentially can access Tertiary Education continues to rise whilst you have helped us in promogating the University Act, of 2021.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are here today to talk to you about affordability, for those that could or could not pay to access Tertiary Education. I mean Sierra Leone has supported the vulnerable by using Grant-in-Aids to many. This year in particular, 6,125 applied for Grant-in-Aids and we were able to support 2,750, which is about 40% with this large number coming up. The Grant-in-Aid mood would be unsustainable for Government and therefore, consider that we should now think of how we go for another mood of funding for Tertiary Education and that is by providing the Students' Loan. The Students' Loan Scheme would allow Tertiary Institutions to get their resources at the start of every term. We are asked today that there are some unpaid Government Grant-in-Aids starting 2014, as we are in 2021 now. The Students' Loan Scheme will allow Students to pay before access; it will also trigger the quality assurance as it will empower the Students to take full responsibility for their Education as well. But the Scheme can only be done not as a Ministry only, but with interaction with others.

Mr Speaker, I just want Honourable Members of Parliament to know that the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education has collaborated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Immigration Department, the National Civil Registration Authority, NaSSIT, to develop a Framework that each and every Sierra Leonean would be in the position to

benefit from. The Scheme is for Students that are Sierra Leoneans. The Scheme is to access Public and Private Institutions, the Scheme will include people that are going for Trivet Education as well, not just people in University Education. The Scheme will be initially starting with the tuition support, but it will expand to Books, Research, Fieldtrips, Accommodation and loggings.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Scheme will have an interest rate which Government initially can waive totally. As at now, it has been calculated not to be above a 2% interest rate. However, the Act is saying that Government can access other resources from taxes in various other moods. One of the Members of Parliament even suggests that we look at extractive mineology and mines to see how resources can be supplied to support Students that will apply for Grants, but these Students must have a Guarantor and this Guarantor has to be a responsible individual and an employee with collateral that will stand for the Student. Mr Speaker, most of the provisions will be in the operations manual rather than in the Act itself. So the Scheme will disburse funds directly to Tertiary Institutions through their Banks, were as issues like allowances and books and everything will be given straight to the Students. The Scheme will have to rely on robust ICT network for institutional arrangements, where the employer has to stand as guarantor to pay back those that will go to work.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in conclusion therefore, we think that this mood will allow a larger number of people that were expecting to access Tertiary Education to benefit and not only those on Grant-in-Aids. We will note that the Government said that, the women and people with disabilities will be supported with Grant-in-Aids. The Grant-in-Aids Scheme is not starting with a Loan Scheme. The Loan Scheme will be complementary to the Grant-in-Aids Scheme.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, Sierra Leone now has to recognise that we have 7 million people, but the debate this morning is talking about difficulties generally, but if we have the young of which 75% of our population are under the age of 35, if we have the youth that are adequately trained then we will be in a position to

make our young employable or be in the position for them to be able to develop entrepreneur and skills to employ others.

QUESTION PROPOSED

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education. I would now like to recognise the Chairperson of the Committee [*Undertone*]. Are you a member of that Committee?

HON. CHRISTOPHA K. VANDY: Mr Speaker, in the absence of the Chairman, I think any other Honourable Member can stand.

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS [*Deputy Speaker of Parliament*]: Ok let me stand, that is very important. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Bill I strongly believe is non-contentious. Mr Speaker, before I go any further into matters relating to the Bill, I wish to state that both Ministers of Education have done this nation proud. When you wake up any day, you go on social media wanting to listen to what is happening over Radio news or Newspaper news; the both Ministries of Education are in the media for all the best things. Mr Speaker, I wish to state that as a Member of Parliament, I am extremely proud of them.

HON. MOSES A. EDWIN: Mr Speaker, I rise for the suspension of S. O. 5[2] for the business of the House to continue.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for your kind consideration, although you are a little bit late. Is there any Seconder to that Motion?

HON. ALICE J. KUMABEH: I so second the Motion.

Suspension of S. O. 5[2]

THE SPEAKER: You may continue.

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, year in year out politicians, even though there are other people that will face the brunt of what is happening in the Educational sector, particularly the need for University Education. Mr Speaker, it is us the politicians that bear the brunt of college fees, because majority of

the people of this nation are poor. So many children who should have been graduates today are out there in the street languishing not out of their making, but because of the fact that their parents could not squeeze out of their nothing to send them to Universities, and I think this particular policy is extremely good for this nation. Mr Speaker, no Member of Parliament, I can say that with authority. That no MP will stand in this Well to challenge this Bill, no Member of Parliament *[Applause]*. I know as Members of Parliament, sometimes we have issues here and there of various policies be it and so on, but I can say because I know my Members of Parliament I can say with authority that nobody is going to challenge it. Mr Speaker, any one that wants to be treated seriously by this nation will not challenge this Bill, because this Bill serves the interest of the very constituents we are here to represent *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you want to know what happens when it is time for University examinations? If you want to know of course, we the politicians can tell you. Students have to go all over the place for hand-outs to satisfy fees requirements. Mr Speaker, I think this is good for us, this particular Bill when passed in to Law, would not only help the University students, but our people and our children, and we the politicians.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me say proudly that I pay bills for University Education for over hundred students; I can say that with clarity in mind. Just imagine I am being paid a partly sum and I have to fill the bills for University students and every day when I go to my private office Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I meet students waiting to talk to me around issues of fees; this is going to help us and I will urge Members of Parliament to use their good conscience today. We can afford to pay for our children as Members of Parliament, but what about them? Thank you very much, Honourable Members, for passing this Bill into Law and for helping this nation *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I will refuse to be intimidated, but I know the Honourable Kalokoh is an Honourable man and my good friend. But on this occasion, I want to recognise the Honourable Lahai Marah.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity. Mr Speaker, I want to remind the Honourable Deputy Speaker that this Bill is not giving money to students, but rather it is an investment Bill; it is a loan.

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS: Point of Order, Mr Speaker! I did not mention money to be given to students, if you want to quote me, quote me correctly. I have not mentioned money.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, the students are expected to pay with interest and that is why we should not look at this Bill politically, we should not look at it thinking that it will add value to our Government, we should look at it in a form of an investment Bill, that at the end of it, all students will have to pay for it again. Mr Speaker of course, I want to commend the President, His Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio. Mr Speaker, when the former President took over governance he said, I will run this country like a business; little did we know he does not have much knowledge about doing business. He started giving out our monies freely, giving out subsidies for rice importation, subsidies for fuel importation, you cannot run a business S. O. [2] 'wit kombra hat, you nor go succeed', though at the end of the day, the prices for rice were very cheap, fuel was very cheap, but he did not have much money. Mr Speaker, now we have a President that is a real business man indeed. He is not saying that he will give out subsidies, he is not saying that he will pay for a bag of rice for our ordinary people, nor! And he is not saying let us invest our money and now he is giving 50 million Dollars to facilitate importation for necessities with interest; and hear again he has taken away SLG and we are introducing Loan payment with interest [*undertone*].

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, Point of Order! S. O. [34].

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, this is a misrepresentation of what the Minister submitted just now and it is not good for us as Members of Parliament and for the public, because the public would perceive us as people who do not have the capacity to comprehend and understand what is submitted to us in a short space of

time *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, it is wrong for him to state the Minister said that he is going to remove SLG. In fact, the Minister repeated that point twice, that this will complement the SLG because of the growing number of children taking public exams. So Mr Speaker, I would advise him to rephrase.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, now the Bill is just.

THE SPEAKER: No! No! You do not have to, what is clearly shown is that, you have the capacity to comprehend the Minister's statement, but he is still struggling to comprehend what the Minister has said.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: I accept I do not understand, but Mr Speaker that makes the Bill more controversial. How can you distinguish an SLG holder and as to who is to benefit from the Loan Scheme?

THE SPEAKER: Put it in a form of a question to the Minister and you will get the answer.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, then this particular Bill would create a division, we would give to some students that are favourable to us that are our party boys, will be given SLGs and others *[interruption]*.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Hold on, Point of Order!

THE SPEAKER: Yes!

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: We don't really want to obstruct you when you are talking, but for the record. We expect you to read the substance of the Bill, it is very clear that you cannot get SLG and other scholarships and the Students' Loan Scheme; it is clear in this Bill. We are saying it because we need clarity. This has to do with the future of our generation behind us.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Then you have a bigger question to answer, as to who is to benefit from the Loan Scheme and who is to benefit from the SLG?

THE SPEAKER: Pose the question, if you don't understand.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker that is the more reason why we should look at this Bill, critically not with a political lens.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order again! At this time because we want the public not to misconstrue and we have the Bill in front of us, I will refer the Honourable Member to legibility criteria in Clause 17 of the Bill and in fact, if you start from Clause 16. I read Clause 16 Sub-Clause [2], let me read, and the side note is disposal of Application *[Interruption]*.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker sorry Sir. Mr Leader, just keep cool. The point you are about to make is for your own good. You will have the last bite, so you don't need to go into all these things at this stage, if there is any bridge of procedure.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: It is not about procedure. This is very crucial; we have tried to give him some edification about the Bill *[Interruption]*.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: No! But he is saying, external Point of Order.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: The eligibility criteria are very clear in Clause 17; he must have read it for clarity purposes. Honourable Ibrahim Tawa Conteh has made it very clear that he is making clarification based on what he raised and misconstrued what the Deputy Speaker said. The Minister said he has misconstrued, what we are doing is for him to go to the Bill, look at the context I am referring to in Clauses 16 and 17. How can you make an appeal when you are rejected?

THE SPEAKER: Let me come in now, please take your seats. Let me be very clear. The Honourable Lahai Marah is perfectly entitled to his own opinion in interpreting the wordings and the terms of the Bill, but that does not mean that he is right. No! But let us allow him the free reign to have his peace. Those of you that have comprehended the import of the Bill will come later to correct and set the record straight on it. You see, 'Opinions are free; facts are scared'. What is written here is the fact it is scared, he cannot distort it, he cannot change it but he is entitled to his opinion and that I will let him have it. Go ahead.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I am not distorting any fact, I am just trying to bring out some controversial aspects as to why this particular Bill is a controversial Bill. Mr Speaker, I just brought out one. That is, who is to benefit from the Sierra Leone Grants-in-Aid, which money is given to students as a free donor, they don't have to pay, you pay for their fees. Mr Speaker, then you have something again given by the very Government to some students, is like Honourable Lahai Marah and Honourable Abubarkar are from Kenema. Whilst Honourable Abubarkar from Kenema will be benefitting from SLG, money given to him without him pays at the end of the day with no interest. They pay your fees, you enjoy it and then Honourable Lahai Marah would have to apply, because I am not benefiting from the SLG. I would have to apply for the Students' Loan Scheme. Mr Speaker mind you, it is an investment Scheme with an interest rate. Even the definition of Interest rate is not clear in the Bill, whether it will be at reducing balance method or whether it will be on a straight line method, it is not clear and at the end of the day, I will have to pay. Mr Speaker, we are all citizens of this country. Honourable Abubarkar is a citizen of this country who has benefitted from the consolidated fund without paying and now Honourable Lahai Marah, because I was deprived from the SLG and I have no option, I don't want to go to the Member of Parliament to start begging and I want to be educated, I will go for the Loan Scheme. But who is the disadvantage here, I will have to pay with interest, is that fair? *[Undertone]*

THE SPEAKER: Order! Order! One of the privileges you have and enjoy as Members of Parliament, is to stand in the Well of the House and speak, when you mislead the public you pay the consequences for it. Carry on.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, you are there today and sometimes we bring out facts and those facts are not taking into considerations because we are Members from the Opposition, and at the end of the day we will vote and you will be the judge. But with this typical example, I have just cited as a citizen Lahai Marah is deprived from the SLG and now I go for the Students' Loan Scheme and then another citizen enjoying the

SLG from the SLPP, and I am from the APC. Mr Speaker, if you are the judge, what would you say in respect of this?

THE SPEAKER: The question is rhetorical; it does not require an answer. Go ahead!

HON. LAHAI MARAH: And Mr Speaker let me also state; you see it is good for us to read the documents that are before us. Mr Speaker, the document does not answer anything about Loan Scheme; everything about this particular document is establishing another institution to manage a particular fund. An institution at the end of the day that will continue to create burden on the consolidated fund, I will term this particular document as another document that has been designed to create pressure on the pay roll. Mr Speaker, this particular Bill if we accept it in this House, will have Board members at the end of the day. It will be an established institution with a Chief Executive Officer, Internal Auditor, Human Resource Officer, Finance Officer; all will be set to manage the fund. Mr Speaker, we don't need an established institution to manage the Students' Loan Scheme, we have established institutions already. We have the Commercial Banks that we can simply design a policy by taking these monies to them and they will be giving out these monies to the eligible students. Why do we have to setup a whole system at the end of the day that will employ more than one hundred people that will create more burden on the pay roll as we have now?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, at the end of the day, the students will not be able to get the real fund and if you look at the document again as I said earlier, it has nothing to do with management of Loan Scheme. All this document is saying is how to establish an institution and in fact, the Chairman of the Board will be appointed by the President, but not approved by this Parliament and you have Chief Executive Officer that at the end of the day will be appointed by the President again and approved by this Parliament. So Mr Deputy Speaker, you see how controversial this document is *[Undertone]*? Mr Speaker, if you go through the document again, it is also called an investment document. At the end of the day, certain funds will be given to that particular institution to invest and that again is not clear, whether this particular institution that will be established is for the Students' Loan Scheme alone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, they were also given the mandate to invest funds and I will ask again why do we have the Sierra Leone Investment Trade Agencies, and what is the job of that Agencies? Or are we trying again skilfully, to create another Agency under the Ministry of Education that will be investing funds? Mr Speaker, honestly, there is no need for this Bill at this particular time. If we want our students to access funds just like the \$50Bln been given to importers of essential commodities by the Central Bank, we can treat this particular Loan Scheme the same way. Mr Speaker, the Banks are there, we have the Rokel Commercial Bank and thankfully now they are under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance, we also have the Commercial Bank, they have been given these monies for them to manage why do we have to go a whole lot again in a technical way to providing jobs for the boys? I don't think this particular Bill is necessary.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me add by saying this. I am not against students and what the previous Government did was to expand the given of Grants-in-Aids to Students 'Pro-bono' without saying you belong to this political party or neither you are from this region or neither you are from this tribe, each and every Sierra Leonean benefited. I do believe if we want to help our students; that is what we need at this particular stage. If we are going for the Loan Scheme Mr Speaker, let there be no SLG. But we cannot create SLG for certain students and allow certain students to go for the Loan Scheme that again all together is against the Constitution of Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: Alright you know the Honourable Member from Falaba has had a bite on the Bill; he has given us his own understanding, his own opinion of the Bill. Honourable Members, is now up to you to correct him in your own presentations. It is so simple or easy rather than interjecting and interrupting him whilst he is making his exposition. So who am I seeing there *[Undertone]* oh the Sheik? Sheik how comes you sitting over there?

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Because it was allocated to me.

THE SPEAKER: Really? Alright *[Undertone]* oh there are two Sheiks now?

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Yes this is the SLPP Sheik

THE SPEAKER: Yeah! I know the original Sheik, is this duplicate?

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: No! This is the original Sheik Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Let me then hear the original Sheik.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to follow the previous speakers to add my voice to the Bill that is before us. I also want to add that it is non-controversial and the importance of this Bill made me to be here, I drove from Pujehun this morning to attend this Sitting, because of the importance of this Bill [*Applause*]. Mr Speaker, as the Deputy Leader was saying, we are faced with circumstances wherein we are being pressured by our Constituents to pay for our brothers and sisters that are residing in or that are from our Constituencies. Mr Speaker, as far as I am concerned like I said, the Bill is a non-controversial and there is nothing a Government can do for our citizens than ensuring that Government empowers citizens of the country through Education. We have heard histories especially from the late President, from Tanzania Julius Nyerere, who once said that, 'Man is the object and subject of development, and that when you want to develop a society, develop the man because development is for man by man and of man'. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you want good roads just train a good Engineer, if you want a better Health System, just train a better Medical Personnel, if you want a better Banking System, just get a better Banker and that is exactly what this Government is doing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, that is why our President, in his wisdom thought it fit and said, that our budget should be Human Capital Development and there is no way you can help the country rather than empowering citizens of the country. Therefore, I drove specifically from Pujehun this morning accompanied by my brother the Honourable Sama Sandy who is my good neighbour to come and attend this sitting in order to add our voices to this Bill that is before us. It is important and it helps our people and there is no way we can be here without supporting such a Bill that we know

is in the interest of our people and the country in general. Mr Speaker, I therefore want to encourage my colleagues to support this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, somebody was mentioning Grant-in-Aid and that of Loan Scheme. We know that Grant-in-Aid and Loan Scheme cannot be the same; even the names are not the same, well possibly maybe my understanding and the other person's understanding can be different like what the Speaker just said, but then it is good that we are not on the same capacity in terms of understanding what we have understood *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, but I want to encourage my colleagues that this is in the interest of our people, this is non-political as far as I am concerned. This Bill is not political and it is in the interest of this country. If we want to move this country forward when we were campaigning, all political parties were given promises that we are coming to help this country, we are coming to ensure that we help our people and now it is time to demonstrate that. Let us put our political parties aside and ensure that we do what is in the best interest of our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I therefore want to call on my colleagues for us to support this Bill and help our brothers and sisters and help our poorer people who voted for us to be here. Let us be mindful that our people voted for us to be here and we are here to also help them in return. We can be judged one day as how we executed our Leadership. Let us be mindful that, we have to be judged by the Almighty Allah at the end of the day, not how we served our political parties but how we exercised our leadership that is very important *[Undertone]*. Mr Speaker, well you are to represent your people, and you are representing the people of Constituency 104 and you will be asked by God how you exercised your leadership at the time you were a Member of Parliament. So I want to draw the attention of this House that this Bill is Non-controversial and let us support this Bill to help our people. I thank you so much, Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I would now recognise the Honourable Member from Bombali District.

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker, if we are to be developed as a country... *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: He will be followed by the Honourable Paramount Chief.

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: And if we are serious to create a stage that will encourage the generation yet unborn and the younger ones coming behind us, I think this Bill is necessary *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, we took our time, our energy and participated fully during the Pre-legislation of this particular Bill. The input we made during the Pre-legislative, if the document would have been done and redistributed to all Members of Parliament based on our inputs at Room 1. Some of these issues raised would not have come up, because what the Minister has presented this afternoon here, he did the same in Room 1 and we gave our inputs. Mr Speaker, we also further gave inputs on identifying the threshold, the question of appointments which we approved would not have come if our inputs would have been inputted into this document redistributed based on what we have done in Room 1 on the soft document, you would have seen the difference, because most of these issues raised were dealt with.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this type of Scheme was long; long awaited by our students and I think this is not a controversial Bill and therefore, I want to ask our colleagues over there to put off political lens and let us be nationalistic in terms of discussing this all important document *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, our younger ones that came from Pujehun have a very long distance to learn, because they are yet inexperienced and the voice of the experienced people are over there.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the percentage asked by one of my colleagues was also dealt with and the Minister gave us the assurance for the percentage which I think nobody will frown at. Mr Speaker, for some of us who have been in the classroom for couple of years before we became politicians, we know the struggles of students. I can afford to pay for my children in any University in Sierra Leone and even children outside, like I am doing for my Constituents, but others will not be able to afford and the pressure is too much on us as politicians. The demand of school fees at our doors are so enormous that if a type of this Scheme is coming, I think the pressure will be

reduced from us and I believe also that this will minimise the drop out from Universities *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, most of our 'Okada' riders when they carry you as a passenger and you discuss with them briefly, some of them will tell you, 'I am a student, but I am riding this 'okada' to raise money to pay my fees'. Mr Speaker, with this Loan, I think that will be minimised *[Applause]*. Okada riding for our young generation ends with a lot of cold, Pneumonia and Tuberculosis.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think all we will ask is to ensure that what we proposed in Room 1, be reflected in this document and that is why I don't think we would conclude it today *[Undertone]*. No, Please I am serious; I have asked that we put off our political lens. We want to make a document that will count on our posterity, so we are not going to ignore this Bill but as I said, we do not want to see any ugly situation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, at Room 1, we proposed that for page 10, Clause 16 paragraph 2, we have an Appeal Committee that will deal with unforeseen issues that might come up, to lessen the pressure on the Minister. We also emphasised on the point that, the typographical error identified should be taken care of and also Clause 22 page 13. The Minister promised or assured us that it was an issue that will be taken care of because during that meeting, I asked them to expunge it. Mr Speaker, are you following up?

THE SPEAKER: I am with you!

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: I said Clause 22.

THE SPEAKER: I would have thought what you are now doing is more appropriate for the Committee stage.

HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH: Okay no problem. Mr Speaker, I want to ask that this Bill is given the serious attention it deserves by the whole House, by way of supporting it. I thank you *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. The Honourable Paramount Chief, you have the Floor to be followed by the Honourable from Bo District.

HON. P.C. BAI KURR KANAGBARO SANKA III: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to thank first of all the Government of Sierra Leone and the Minister for bringing in this very wonderful and great Bill to this nation. Mr Speaker, when the National Security and Trust Fund started, some of us here were very much sceptical in 2002; but today it is working. I am pretty sure that when we start this, it will have all the difficulties, but it is like you are starting to work as a child. You get up and fall, before you begin to run around. I am pretty sure that this one will bring in development in the long run, present time and in the future for Sierra Leone. The Minister had already covered a lot of precautions; I think we have to look at it in the holistic aspect. The Trustees do not have the time to scrutinize those who are going to ask for loan. Mr Speaker, what I see in other countries is that they have the Loan Awards Committee that will look at every details and give back to the Trustees to approve, but for the Trustees to look at it is not easy. Let us say 5 or 10,000 students apply, can the Trustees be able to look at each application? They cannot and believe you me Sir, in other countries they have this Loan Committee that can sit down and do the job, because they are full time employees. Like for Sierra Leone Mr Speaker, you will find out that the people who are going to use this Loan Scheme are the intellectuals, the educated ones, those who can afford even to pay, will use their friends and children to apply.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, even the SLG, you will find out that most of the people who are in Fourah Bay College and others are sons and daughters of rich and wealthy people who could afford to pay, but they are given SLG because they know those who are going to interview them. I have been lucky in this country to work with the Ministry of Education under this Minister sitting here and I was a member of the National Board of Education, and also a member of the Awards Scholarship Committee. We changed the narratives, because all the students were coming to Freetown and most of them were staying in the east side of Freetown and the Scholarship Awards Committee was meeting in June, July, August, so some of the students cannot even come to Freetown when it is raining; so you find out that all the scholarships were given to students from the Western Area. Mr Speaker, that was why we changed the

narratives, we now gave scholarships to Districts for students, so that we will give equal opportunity for every child to go for interview. We did that under the leadership of this present Minister. I was a member of the Task Force that set up the BECE and SSS. I was the Chairman of the University of Sierra Leone for the past ten years, so when we talk of Education, I have my leader there, and we were all members of the Board of the University Court, the Honourable Chernor Maju Bah and we served well. The IPAM building you are seeing now was built from school fees, no Government gave us a dime or a single cent, no NGO, and so I am proud to be part of that leadership. The BADEA project you see now was written in my dining parlour in Freetown, and we got **\$33 Mln** to build what you see today at Fourah Bay College.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Government of Sierra Leone was to put **\$3.6 Mln**, but up till now they have not paid it yet. They paid half which is equivalent to about \$200,000 to \$400,000 and the contractor is every day on my head, 'Chief go tok to the Minister, go tok to dem' S.O [2]. So when some of us stand to speak, we know what is going on. Mr Speaker, I have a lot of questions that I have to raise not bad ones, because I am supporting the idea and the notion that it is good, it is beneficial and we are moving with time to provide facilities for our children, for our future generations yet to come. I was thinking when I saw how funding could come from the appropriation Bill, that all will have to work together with the Ministry and the Education Committee here to see that there is enough money and the Minister said you have to put up a collateral. Mr Speaker, how many people in Masemgbi can put collateral for their children?

Mr Speaker, and to you Mr Minister when you look at section 19 you mentioned in your presentation that the interest rate is 2%, but in that they said the Board of Trustees will determine the interest rate. Your pronouncement said 2%, let me see section 19, may I read Mr Speaker? It says, 'The Board of Trustees shall decide subject to this Act, [A], interest to be charged on Loans, Fees and charges for the processing of application. Are the children going to pay to process their applications? Poor people what security or

guarantee is put in charge for a loan from a man from kroobola? Is his house worth 20 Mln Leones? So we have to look at the scenario.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the United States of America, they give loans to students whose parents can afford, but the children want to be independent to say, I paid my way through college those where the ones going for the Students' Loans. The poor people, black people, the displaced people, are given scholarships by the State, so the Scheme is different. Mr Speaker, because of your parents' income, they will deny you and they give scholarships to the disabled, disadvantaged, and the minority. Those are given scholarships automatically by the State and could you believe Mr Speaker, we who attended their Universities there, we the foreign students were paying 3 times or 4 times more than the State students. But if you get straight 'A's in your first year, be sure you are going to get a Tuition waiver. Mr Speaker, some of us used that one to educate ourselves. That means, I have to sleep less to keep my 'A's average for me to be in the Dean's list to be qualified for the Tuition waiver, that helped us a lot.

So Mr Minister, are you expecting the people you have named to be members of the Board of Trustees to determine the number of students to interview? You will have over 20,000 people for the first year, from the ones that I have looked through in the internet, have a Loan Board that looks at those who are qualified academically and those who are qualified in terms of having no money to pay, they scrutinize all of those. But if we say you have to put in a Guarantor, how many people in Masemgbi in Matotoka, Makalay, in Bumbuna and Bendugo, will have that amount of money or property? So you will find out that those whose parents have houses in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni will be the ones who will have Guarantors to pay for them, so we are going to still create problems.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the opportunity here for me again to bring to the attention and congratulate what I saw on Social Media, that the Minister of Higher Education has agreed through Government to pay for the Linkokwing students, have they started registering? I have over 20 in my house every day they are saying, S. O. [2]'A Chief watin the hapin now?' I said the Minister has said it, but I have not heard it

and they go there always, and somebody told me that 2.5 Bln has been paid. But I don't know whether you have worked out the modalities with the Administration of the College to start the registration. We would clap for you; we will raise you up, when we see that you have done a good job. You didn't start the University, but now the burden rests on you, because the function of a Government is continuity and the limits are from zero to infinity, so therefore, you carry that burden. I want you to address that issue here, because it is on education. We are happy that the Government said 'Free Quality Education'; we know they cannot meet all the requirements, but they are trying. The United States that are the most developed country in the world are trying every day, so what about us Sierra Leoneans we are trying. So I support this and I want the graduates to pay back their loans.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, Mr Minister this brings us to the most important issue after graduation, are we going to provide jobs for them to work and pay back? This is another thing, so that means we have to be creative, we have to have a National Agenda as Sierra Leoneans. Mr Speaker, all of us have to contribute, are we going to start some companies here as Members of Parliament, so that we will employ 10, 15, 20 people? Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I am proposing that we have a National Loans' Award Committee added to this, think about it. When I looked he said, ex-official members shall be appointed by His Excellency the President, how many? We did not put the figure. I showed it to the Leader of the House and he saw it, this is a very serious Trustee Board you are going to put up Sir. We need a Deputy, the President shall all join them together to appoint the Chairman and the Deputy and not when they want to meet and you said the quorum is 4. How many people when you say the quorum is 4, what is the total number? Are the ex-officio members going to be members? Do they have the voting right to vote as ex-officio members? Mr Speaker, I will propose that you take one from each Region to make them 5, added to the number. On the National Awards Loans' Committee, I think the Registrars and Deputy Registrars of the Universities should be there, because they will have had the population of the students and see those who are qualified and those who

are in dire need. So I think what you did before when you set up the National Board of Education to advise you on issues was fine, so do the same and they will be meeting on Thursdays and Fridays, which the late Professor Sahr Gbamanja was the Chairman. I saw you, you delivered a very nice genealogy about him and you said, we will pay your backlogs, and I signed that cheque. The people wanted to oppose, I said no you served the nation well and that you are on secondment, so we have to pay him back all his salary and now we paid him full time as a Professor. Today we are meeting again in this Well, and I rise to say that there are so many things we need to put here to make it workable, but it is for the interest of this nation to provide our students, our children, the future generation the right to go to colleges, the right to be educated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Nelson Mandela said, 'If you want to destroy a Nation, destroy its Educational institutions', you would succeed in making it a very backward nation and the late Lisbon Johnson said, 'It is in the field of ignorance that poverty is planted, it is in the field of ignorance that religious tribes are planted, it is in the field of ignorance that political thrives are planted', so we send the illiterate boys to go and abuse people, burn their houses, get them drunk, but we don't send our own children. It is sinful for some of us who are telling other people's children to go and destroy others and to be drunkards. They buy them 'Jamba', buy them Cocaine, you don't give that stuff to your children, why do you give it to other children just to go and misbehave and burn houses? Let us don't do that at all, so I say thank you Mr Speaker and let us build a better nation *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I will take 2 more speakers and then we will wind up.

HON. CHRISTOPHER K. VANDI: Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: You have the Floor.

HON. CHRISTOPHER K. VANDI: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Bill before us this afternoon is a very good Bill and Mr Speaker, it will interest you to know that somebody I don't know where that person is from just text me. Before I continue with the Bill, let me just read it out to you. He

said, 'Honourable, we are listening to your debate in the Well relating to the Students' Loan Scheme Bill, any MP that opposes that Bill will not be voted for any more'. This is the text, if you want it I can bring it for you to see. Thank you very, Mr Speaker.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order! For the integrity of the House, we don't question what you say, you have the right to say anything if you like just like you said, I can raise an objection, but you cannot take him on what he has said, that he cannot vote for you. Mr Speaker, that is completely his fundamental right as a Member of Parliament, this is a platform that you can say your views and people will not question you for that. Honourable Member, they cannot take you to Court for what you say in the Chamber. So I want my Honourable Member to refrain *[Undertone]*. No hold on! Hold on please! Sit down please! Please sit down, Honourable Lahai Marah. I am the Leader, Honourable Lahai Marah.

THE SPEAKER: I have not given you the Floor.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Honourable! Honourable!

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Lahai, I have not given you the Floor.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Honourable Lahai Marah, that is very unacceptable my brother, I kept saying it on your behalf, I am a selfless man. He is an MP, I know. Wait please! I stood on Point of Order; I am doing it because of you and for the integrity of the House, because it is your fundamental right. Mr Speaker, I think I wanted to make a case for the good of the House and that is the right of every MP, because our responsibility is to uphold your decision.

THE SPEAKER: And you do that with absolute impunity?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Impunity! It is in the Constitution. So I am not doing it for Honourable Lahai Marah alone, I am not telling you to appreciate me. I am doing it for the integrity of the House. Thank you, Sir.

THE SPEAKER: So when outsiders send you message of that nature, it is for your personal consumption. This House is not interested in it, because they are not entitled to impute with what people say in this House. Please go ahead!

HON. CHRISTOPHER K. VANDI: Mr Speaker, thank you so much. I suppose you have all the Laws of the land in your bosom Mr Speaker that is why I took permission of you before I read it, if you would have stopped me, I would not have done that. I did it with your order. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a very fine Bill, a very good one and the Minister before us today, I referred to him as a man of novelty, because we have heard from the experience of the Paramount Chief. Mr Speaker, when he was once a Minister, there were certain things he introduced in the Educational system in this country since independence. The Master's Program that is all over the places today was introduced in this country by him. He brought the Master's Program to everybody's door step in this country. The other thing also was the decentralisation of the Award of Scholarships and Grant-in-Aids. Mr Speaker, before that time, students used to come to Freetown for interview, but he decentralised that one, that was a very good one. Mr Speaker, I was not pleased when he was made Minister of Health, I did not admire that appointment, but the sooner he was transferred to the Ministry of Higher Education, I was the happiest on this planet. Mr Speaker, I must confess today, because I know he was going to do wonderful things in that Ministry to make sure that, that Ministry gains a better footing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the Tertiary Educational Sector, the Government is ready to do a lot of investment in that sector. There are certain things I want to bring out about the Ministry, but before I bring those things out, there are certain things you need to introduce. We have what we called 'STEM' Mr Speaker. STEM is, ***[Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths Students]***, they are now going to our Universities free of cost. The Direct Scholarship is another novelty introduced by this Government and the Minister.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one thing I want to say here is this, the Government is investing but there are certain things in the Tertiary Institutions that are lacking. The Minister knows very well. I was in charge of a school from Nursery to SSS 4. I used to suffer for teachers. I did not have Pure and Applied Science Teachers in the whole of Bo Mr Speaker, you only have one or two Physics Teachers, for Chemistry you don't have up to three Teachers, for Biology they are none. The Teachers that read Agriculture are those teaching Biology in the schools today. Mr Speaker, no matter how you look at it, if it continues like this, we would definitely continue to have bad results in our Public examinations. So the work of the Minister here today, I know he is more than that, let him take that one into consideration, that the Colleges or Universities that are to train Pure and Applied Science Teachers are not training them again. When you go to Njala University where people used to go and study Bio-Chemistry, Bio Physics with Education, today they are doing Environment Chemistry and Environment Physics without Education.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when you employ them in schools to go and teach Biology, Chemistry and Physics, they choose topics that they are well familiar with, the rest of the topics are left behind. I hired the service of a Teacher to teach Physics in my school Mr Speaker, he was only conversant with 3 topics in the whole Physics Syllabus. He used to shout when he is teaching; I told him the other day you cannot continue teaching Physics everyday theory, theory, without doing the practical. He told me ok Mr Vandy; I will introduce the practical next week, and we want to have some materials. And I reported to my Proprietess a very active woman, she sent me to Freetown to acquire materials and I took it to the school, over 2 months again no practical. The third month, I told the Bursar and it was a private school at that time, that get ready I am going to fire this man today and pay him let him go, and he was fired that day. So we have problem with Pure and Applied Science Teachers. How many students we have in Universities that are doing Geography these days? They are not there. But I thank God the Minister is here; we are giving him the maximum support. I think he will bring that under control, otherwise after 3 or 4 years, we would not boost of the sciences

again, because Environmental Chemistry and Environmental Physics Teachers cannot teach Pure and Applied Sciences in Secondary Schools Mr Speaker; that is the naked truth. I am telling you out of experience.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with this Bill before us today, I want to applaud the Minister. I have no doubt in him; I think all of us here don't have doubt in the Minister and his Deputy, we know they are competent to handle that Ministry effectively. We want to encourage him, he has all what it takes to excel to take that Ministry to another level, to take education to different level, and I know he is in good collaboration with the Basic Education Minister as well, because both of them have to work hand in gloves to make sure that the narrative of educational system in this country is changed for the better. Mr Speaker, you and I know that the problems are many, so on that note, I want to plead with Honourable Members to support this Bill. Of course we were talking of investment and loan, it is not an investment it is a loan. I studied management Mr Speaker, one of the sources of business revenue is loan. Some businesses start with loan; some acquire loans to pursue their higher education that they will pay you back in the future, so it is an investment Mr Speaker that is what business taught me. Mr Speaker, it is an investment and I am an authority in that field. So Mr Speaker, I want everybody to know here that, that is an investment and I want to tell you from my Higher Diploma to First Degree, Master's Degree, I read management, so that made me an authority.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave the indulgence of the House that this Bill is a very good one. If anyone has one or two issues you want to bring out for it to be corrected, we would accept that one, but I don't think there is anybody in this House even my dear friend, who don't want us to get this Bill out of this Well.

So on that note Mr Speaker, I want to crave the indulgence of Honourable Members to support this Bill, let us support the Minister and his team in the Tertiary Education, let us support their plans. You know Mr Speaker, it is very important when you put round pegs in a round hole is very fine. So a little support given to them will make them to

excel and that is what I am craving the indulgence of Honourable Members to do. Let us give them the support and let us take education from where it is to a better level.

On that note Mr Speaker, I want to thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to have a bite on this debate. Thank you very much Sir.

THE SPEAKER: You have the floor and the last speaker will be Honourable Kandeh Yumkella and then we will wind up.

HON. JAMES OZAN THOLLEY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Bill before us is very important, it is very historic and I think I know that it will benefit the generations yet unborn. Considering the fact that education in Sierra Leone is difficult to attain because of financial constraints, so many students have dropped out of colleges or Universities because they are not capacitated to meet the financial obligations. Mr Speaker, some are so clever, so hard working, but they cannot attain the required levels they want because of financial constraints. If we look at the system of education, we are thankful that Governments in and out always consider the fact that there are students who require assistance for education by offering Grant-in-Aids. That one is a very good one, but because the amount available for the award of the Grants cannot meet to the amount of people who require and need that kind of help, only few can benefit. Mr Speaker, a lot more are supposed to benefit, but because they cannot benefit will have to find ways to raise money in order to complete their courses. Mr Speaker, now if you go around the Universities, the Authorities will tell you the problems they have especially, with students awarded with Grants. Some have paid their fees for a year, but when awarded Grants; they cannot get the refunds from the University Administrators, because of backlog of Grant-in-Aid payments.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure some of these problems will be solved if we have this Bill passed into Law it will help especially, those of us in authority as Politicians. If I should share my experience Mr Speaker with your leave, last year, my daughter was enrolled in the IPAM University and I had to pay for her fees but when I got that money, so many appeals came from other quarters for assistance that I had to help them. On Friday I was in Bo, and my wife called me to ask when I will be

returning to Freetown? I said, I am on my way. Mr Speaker, as I was saying, she called to say that, 'Your daughter is here crying because you have not paid her fees in college and the matriculation is going to take place on Tuesday'. I then told her, 'Ok don't worry I am going to take care'. I was lucky because I had one official day to make the payment, and that was on a Monday. So when I returned on Monday, I went to the Bank and took advance salary and paid her fees. For me it was a bitter experience, to have deprived my daughter of her privilege or right to matriculate, because I want to help others. And I am sure because of this Loan Scheme, such problems will not encroach on me, because if I have 10 people to help and 5 are awarded Grants, I have only 5 to apply for the Loan Scheme, it will be less burdens on me.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure am not the only person affected, it is a problem affecting almost everyone. The previous speaker, the Right Honourable Chief Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III, stated that he has over 20 students in the Universities, I am sure if there is a Loan Scheme, he will be the happiest, because if 5 out of the 20 are awarded Grants, there is an opportunity for the 15 to apply for the Loan Scheme. It is possible maybe 10 of them will be given the Loan and will have only 5 to manage. So I think this Bill is very good and I want to support it, and I want to crave the indulgence of this House to support this Bill, it is very important.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, looking at the Bill, there are some areas we have to look at. The area of the recovery of the loan is very important. And if we look at Clause 23[1] Mr Speaker, with your leave I read, 'Where a borrower defaults in repaying a loan for 6 consecutive months, the Board of Trustees shall send notice of payment to the Borrower or Guarantor at their last known place by the Board or address and publish twice in a widely circulated daily Newspaper'. My problem here is that the 6 consecutive months is a very long period to wait for somebody to pay. I am sure as we discussed during the Pre-Legislative, something would have been done on this, because if you are to wait for six months, as a Guarantor, by the time you have been given notice that the person you signed for as a Guarantor has not paid for six months, it will be very difficult to contact and trace that individual. Maybe that individual would have gone beyond the

borders of Sierra Leone after six months, but if it is within two months, maybe there will be opportunity for that individual to be located.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when you look at Clause 25 [A & B], I have a fear with [A], and I need clarification in the area of 'Students withdrawer from the program'; Withdrawer can be voluntarily or involuntarily, maybe because you cannot perform well, the University will ask you to withdraw from the course. When you withdraw you cannot complete and you will not have a job, so how will that person pay the loan? The Guarantor will be at risk, so I want clarification to be made, so that if it is an involuntary withdrawer, it is not the making of the student and the student will not have the capacity to complete the course, what will happen in the area of payment? That needs to be clarified. Then if it is involuntary withdrawer, which is beyond the knowledge or the will of the student, something has to be done, because if a student is in college and gets the opportunity to go to Dubai, some of them will say let me drop from this program and go, that is a voluntary withdrawer. There is every reason for the student to be charged to pay if not, the Guarantor. So I want that clarification.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the [B] of Clause 25 is 'Dismissed from the Institution'. If you are dismissed, it is not your making, then what will happen? Yes maybe you want to continue with the program but there is a problem in the college, that maybe you are not even part of and unfortunately, you were forced and dismissed from the institution. Mr Speaker, what I want us to also consider in the case wherein a student who has been given the loan dies within the course of the period of study, that one also has to be considered. Mr Speaker, if it is a bad debt, let there be an indication so that the Guarantor will not be held to ransom, because of death. So I know the Minister has worked very hard with all engagements he has made in making available this document together with his abled Lieutenant the Deputy, who has always been with him. That shows the amount of seriousness this Ministry has in the Students' Loan Scheme.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I am saying, the Scheme will help this country to develop educationally, because even God stated in the Bible, in the book of Hosea 4:6

that, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because thou has rejected Knowledge, I will also reject thee that thou shall be no Priest to me. Since thou have forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children'. So you see a country that is not developed in education is a country that will perish and I am sure as we see the nature of education in Sierra Leone, there is hope that in the near future, we will rise up and education is the only aspect that will help us to rise up.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to give my support to this Bill and to ask my colleague MPs for all of us to individually and collectively give support to this Bill, because it is a Bill for generation yet unborn. Mr Speaker, some of us will say I don't have a child that is going to University any longer, but what about those who are coming? A lot of people begging in the streets today are not at fault to become beggars, but they did not make it up in high level because of lack of money.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note, I want to say thank you very much, Mr Speaker for giving me the opportunity and to crave the indulgence of this House to support this Bill. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you for your contribution, Honourable Member. I had actually decided that my last speaker was going to be the Honourable from Kambia District, but I am going to use my prerogative here, to give the Floor to the Honourable Paramount Chief from Pujehun before the Honourable from Kambia, you will be the last speaker.

HON. P. C. MATILDA YAYU LANSANA-MINAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand here to support this Bill, because I know what I have been going through. It has be very, very difficult for me to support other peoples' children, because my Chiefdom is not that much at that level even when I send letters to some of our Chiefs, they will go to the other village for somebody to read it. So that made me to create a learning institution for the children and I had to pay the Teachers for about 6 years, before I got recognition from the Ministry to pay the Teachers. This Bill being here today is an opportunity for all of us to support it *[Applause]*. It is a great opportunity for all of us to support it and thank the Honourable Minister who is here and also our President, Maada Bio for creating this avenue for our Children. It has been very, very difficult for some

children to continue their schooling, because their parents have not paid their fees. So I took the bull by the horn to open a Secondary school as I told you earlier, and I have to pay for it. I have to pay for children and the Teachers in that school. Mr Speaker, if anybody says he or she is not going to support this Bill, means that you don't love Sierra Leone *[Applause]*. It means you only want to get your own children to be developed and do something for you, and you don't think of others. There are some people who are very, very poor, they cannot even afford to pay Primary school fees, how much more Tertiary institutions?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let us think twice and think of the poor people who cannot afford. We are to support this Bill, so that everybody will have the opportunity to be educated in Sierra Leone. Education does not mean that when you go to school or you go to a Tertiary institution or to have a white collar job. Let us think of the others who are welders, carpenters and so on. You have to learn something, so that nobody will take it away from you. You have to support others, you have to teach others, when you learn something from Tertiary institutions, you bring up others at the same time; because they will not be left out sitting there begging. So I am begging all of us here, everybody to let us support this Bill, so that we have children who are not yet born to support them to make efforts that they will be opportune at the Tertiary institutions.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note, I am asking everybody please, to let us support this Bill. Thank you *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Paramount Chief from Pujehun for her contribution, the Honourable Member, from Samu Kambia District.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Let me say it outright that I support the Bill, and my interest here is to see how we make it better, just like some of us spent quality time on Cybercrime Bill. But I also draw on my experience spent 6 to 7 years dealing with Minority Affairs in the US, also helping students seek the Students' Loan Funds and so on. So, some of the questions for you Honourable Minister to consider. Mr Speaker, with all the good ideas, sometimes the challenge is with the implementation. Within two to three years, they will kill the good

idea of the Scheme. So some issues you and your team have to consider maybe in the Committee Stage are some of things we have to deal with. I believe it is very important that we educate the students and their parents what a Student Loan Scheme is, make clear distinction between a Loan and a Grant, otherwise we will have some problems similar to what we had in the Micro credits. There are some villages now when people go there to collect Micro credit loans, people will just disappear in some areas. I don't want to name the place, it is close to mine. So making people understand that this is not a Grant, and that they would have to pay.

Mr Speaker, secondly, I don't know if the Minister has done any scenario about how long it might take an average student to pay. I can tell you about some loans in the US. Mr speaker, even small loans take twelve years, because they make a payment so low for schools like Harvard, Medical schools, Business schools, some people take loans after 60, 70, \$80.000 and it takes them a long term but of course, their incomes are higher, so they can pay off. So we need to educate those who want to access this, that it is a loan and that you should begin to give an idea yourself, because the length of payment is important for some of the issues Honourable Lahai Marah raised about investment. In the document, your intention also is that as you recruit from the small interest, you have more money to give. So the average time to repay the loan matters, because indeed it is investing in people's future and when you start to pay after you graduate. I know people who ran into that problem in the US and they started dodging. Of course, in the US, wherever you go your Social Security will pop up and they can trace you and call back to say my friend, you have to pay your loan.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other challenge is, I heard a lot of people talking about the poor and poorer. In the US and other places, they try to balance access, equity, but also the ability to pay. So there are some Schemes if your family is incommensurate, you cannot apply for it, they leave it for the poor. So I don't know if in this Scheme there is going to be what they call 'A need step', it is very important and in US, they use that to make a good distinction, there are some people who just cannot pay a loan, so they have Grants for them.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I raised this because some people talked about Grants-in-Aid. If the Ministry considers and say look for the very needy, very poor, perhaps will help them more in the Grant-in-Aid, knowing that they may not have the ability to pay; nor with their Guarantors; but then for others because it is true there is a risk. The middle class and upper class can fill out those forms and have Guarantors and they end up accessing the Loan. So I think there needs to be some consideration of balancing Access, Equity and the ability to pay and maybe some aspect of Grants-in-Aid is for the real poor that needs it badly. In part 4 Page 7, you mentioned the administration of the loan. I wonder if you have an idea to give to Parliament an idea of what it will cost to run a Scheme to be sure that there is an office in Bo, and hopefully Ketchum, so people can apply from Ketchum than running to Freetown. So access matters and what will it cost to run and manage it?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, also on page 7, he mentioned the fund. Do you have an idea of how much you are going to need to launch it? And if you launch it of course, people need time before the first payments come in, what will be the budgetary requirements for the subsequent years till you have your first Graduates? Some people raised the question if when will they be employed? These are all important for planning and the scenario because you don't want a situation where when you come back to work in Parliament for a replenishment, then we will say we are not giving it to you. So it is important that even we in Parliament get the sense that you guys we are going to launch it with \$5 to 6 Million, but be ready that we will need support for at last four years thinking that the first graduate will come out in four years and maybe they have another year before they start to work in an ideal situation. But of course, that depends on how fast people are employed. I like the idea that Honourable Dr Mark Kalokoh mentioned of an Appeal's Board, because sometimes some people may skip over for whatever reasons they should have a recourse as to where they appeal to make their case.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Page 14. I like this idea of publishing the names of the defaulters and also the Guarantors, because in a Scheme that was also launched in

Nigeria for industry SMA, people borrowed the money with no intention of paying and after that S.O. [2] 'Den jus lay'. But then they went to another Bank to take another Loan, so I really like that idea on page 14, Clause 23 [2], that in fact there will be such a publication coming out so that people know that yes, there is a penalty but also is a name and shame issue. I saw something where you have the requirements, that confused me, and so we need some explanations. You said when people are going to apply for a job, they have to show evidence whether they took a loan or not, I am wondering how you are going to enforce that and how it will be implemented.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my last point I think Honourable Lahai Marah and someone else raised it. Knowing our context here in Sierra Leone, who we are and what we are, the question still arises that, don't you think Banks should be involved in the disbursement of the loan? Is it going to be the Secretariat or will you partner with Banks and say look, you might be prequalify, but we will not disburse. You know how to give loans and people know already 'nor to Govment moni wea you for go chop' S.O. [2]. We will approve you, but you and your Guarantors and family will go to the Commercial Banks. 'So no say nar loan' S.O. [2] from the beginning otherwise, people will borrow with no intention of paying and then they come back and say, Government is chasing us 'Den don do wi bad, en den dea run after wi S.O. [2]. So I gave you pointers and with the intention again to assure the House that we will like to work with you, how you make this even better, because indeed for all the reasons everybody has said, this is about helping people access to higher education which is badly needed. Thank you, Sir [Applause].

THE SPEAKER: I would like to thank the Honourable Member, for his very brilliant contribution. As the Honourable Member spoke, something just crossed my mind. I remember only too well in the UK the experience we had, the Loan Scheme was introduced during the tenure of Mrs Margaret Thatcher and it was initially very controversial, but people got adjusted to it. There is one point that has crossed my mind, and I think it has been touched upon fluently by some of the speakers.

Honourable Members, for this Scheme to succeed we need deliberately to take Politics out of its operations [*Applause*]. We must see it in the national context, it is a national Scheme and it is not a political Scheme. Honourable Members, and for that, let me exercise the prerogative of my office to suggest through the Minister to consider making a clear definition of the criteria of a legibility for a Loan and for a Grant, so that why applicants go forward they are assessed on the merit of their application not on the appendix that they carry [*Applause*].

Honourable Members, let me now invite the Leader of the Opposition to start the winding up of this Debate.

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. But instead of starting the winding up, I will begin the winding up, because listening to all colleagues whilst appreciating the work done so far by the Minister and his team, we have all agreed including your good self, that there is still work to be done. We are happy that they have informed us on the progress they have made, after the Pre-legislative hearing. When we get access to facts, it will help us like we did for the Cyber Bill. We should be doing something similar for many Bills; Mr Speaker because these laws are not to be passed just for them to be changed overnight, it is better for laws to be passed that will stand the test of time. We talked about collaterals definitely; we have all agreed that the Bill is a relevant one. We have all agreed on that, but the products that leave this Chamber should be the best. I am sure the Minister is an individual who is always patient, we will not do anything deliberate to delay the passage of the Bill, but we will take the required time ensuring that we do justices to the Bill itself and all of us will participate. I am a Member of the Legislative Committee, so all the issues that have been raised by colleagues and those that will be coming from outside of this Chamber. There are ideas out of the Chamber, because people always consult with us Parliamentarians, and we will bring them on board when the Committee is meeting.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure the Minister and his Deputy and the experts will be around, and in addition we will be looking forward to getting officials from the Ministry of Finance, because they will be providing the required funds. We

don't want to talk about money and they are not there. So Honourable Minister, with authority I can call you Honourable, based on the Speaker's ruling. I am encouraging you to get officials in the Ministry of Finance to be involved when the Legislative Committee will be sitting.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, of recent the Legislative Committee has attracted many Members of Parliament out of the Committee itself, and we assured the Chairman that moving forward that is going to be the pattern. Because we fight in Chamber but we also should do the good work out of the Chamber. So on that note, believing in what we have agreed on earlier, I will not belabour the point or waste the time of this House, because I will be looking forward to our participation in the Legislative Committee.

Mr Speaker, so on that note, I want to thank the Minister and colleague Members of Parliament who has contributed before me and I assure you again that we will do justice to this Bill. Thank you, very much [*Applause*].

THE SPEAKER: The Leader of Government Business.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you very much, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Colleague Members, for your contributions. This is the beauty of the debate to look at the pros and cons of it, and we will try to dot the 'i's and cross the 't's, so we can get our job well done. These are like proposals Mr Speaker, so we have the opportunity and the rights as enshrined in the Constitution to do what we feel like doing. It is good for us to have such a Bill in front of us. I could remember when I was in class with a very brilliant child by the name of Sellu Vandy, Mr Speaker, he used to give us tough time, he was always within the grades of 80, 90, but he was not able to continue with his education after the first year in college, because of lack of financial support. Today, he is a drop out. I just want to buttress what one Honourable Member from the APC side said, if you enquire from the 'Okada' and move along with them, you can realise that a lot of them had the inspiration to take higher education, but they did not get the support.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, so the spirit of this Bill is Education; we are talking about Free Quality Education which is the key pillar for this Government. As I have said earlier, it is not a slogan, it is not a political speech, we are talking about real issues affecting our people and we can only transform this nation by opening the space for Education. We are talking about Free Education for Junior Secondary Schools, so we are creating a clean slate where you can get into the Tertiary Education if you have all the qualifications, that is why it is not limited to only first Degree, Certificate and Diploma, they are all going to benefit from this Scheme. So what we have done cleverly is that they will be able to define what is a Scheme and Scholarship. They categorised Scholarship in different forms as Glossary, Grants etc. But for the Scheme, to allay the fears of my colleagues who raised the points about the loans, he defined Scheme in the interpretation. Mr Speaker, with your leave I read, 'Scheme means Sierra Leone Students' Loan to Finance loans to Students for personal Expenses under Sub-Section [2], of Section [2]', and I will read Section [2], that gives us the insight of the Bill. The real spirit of the Bill, as I said is not a slogan and is not a political speech. We are looking for a platform where we can change the life of people, where Honourable Kandeh Yumkella is talking about CKC and he worked at the United Nations in his life. In fact, when he contested people admired him, because he came with projects for Ketchum, and that is the reality.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when I was in the first year in college, I had the opportunity to be lectured by this wonderful man sitting here today, the Minister, Professor Alpha Tejan Wurie. The time he was about to celebrate his 40th birthday he said, he is going to give us a test. He came to the room, putting on brasses with a hand band and a white shirt and said to the class, 'I am going to prospanne the test, because today is my 40th birthday, excuse me let me take some nicotine' and he went out bluffing. Do you know why? Because we looked at him as a carefully decent educated person, so we admired him everywhere he went. What we are saying is creating a picture that the only way we can talk about this educational system, is talking about the

sustainability aspect of it, the actualisation of it, are some of the structures we must put in place.

Mr speaker, Honourable Members, that is why the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said, some of these issues that we have raised, we will like to see them and follow them from the Legislative Committee and we will bring it to the Chamber for proper scrutiny to be inserted into the Bill, that is the formula. It has to be the Policy that will drive our people to a better system. What is the better system? Education! It is only by education that we can change the narrative of our problems. Mr Speaker, whatever language you explain people cannot understand, because they don't know the dynamics of it, so is a very serious business. So I can read so that we can understand, I have no malice against Honourable Lahai Marah for bringing out his views, that is his views, but he needs to be protected when hearing his views and needs to be directed, because his opinions can be subjected to criticism and that is what we have done. But you can benefit also from your own point of view from different perspectives. So Mr Speaker, let me just read part [2], establishment of the Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme Fund. I read!

[2], 'There is hereby establish the Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme Fund which shall be used to Finance loans to students for personal expenses including feeding'. Why I have decided to read it, is because it is given us specifics, Mr Minister. Mr Speaker, including fees, cost of Boarding or lodging is important, students drop out of Fourah Bay College because when they came from the provinces it was difficult for them to get lodging, so they went back. Some of them went to Milton Margai, because Milton Margai had a better place for accommodation than Fourah Bay College. So such thing happens to our colleagues they were not able to continue, so if you look at this, taking the spirit of this Bill, they said cost of Boarding or lodging, Books, Equipment and other purposes that may be necessary for students under Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme. They have not decided to abolish the scholarship, in fact, when you look at the scholarship it is defined and re-defined what it means and what they want to do.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think in the interest of better quality of education, to take care of those who are coming from SSS level to enter into the University to do whatever course they want to. My colleagues here just talked about STEM. Under the STEM category, they benefit from the Scholarship. So, if you are part of the category of STEM, you will benefit from the scholarship. Mr Speaker that is why they have decided to have the two angles, the Students' Loan Scheme and those who are going to benefit from the Scheme that we have put in place for the STEM. The other aspect that they have done as highlighted by Honourable Kandeh Yumkella, is the sustainability aspect of Clause [22]. We know people have already designed their minds to take the money and run away with it after you have benefited from the Tertiary Education and you have been gainfully employed, this Clause will come into play that is what we called the sustainability of the Scheme.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we will emphasise the right to the employer, so that you will not be employed. They will go after you to wherever you are to ensure that whosoever is going to employ you will make sure you pay that money. And they have given the span of payment. How do you go about it and how do you solve the problem of those who think they can just run away after they have benefited from the Scheme? The other aspect that is very critical that we have to look at is that, there are two aspects of this Bill. Mr Speaker, what we have in front of us here is the legal frame work, and we are working with it now. There is going to be an Administrative aspect of it that has to do with the Banking system that was what Honourable Lahai Marah was trying to explain. He explained about why don't we use the Bank? Mr Speaker, you have to create a statutory structure that can ensure that when you talk about the Banking Scheme, it fits into this one squarely. So if you go to the back the miscellaneous, it is clear that in the miscellaneous section, I will read to take care of Honourable Lahai Marah's worries that 'The Minister may after consultation with the Board of Trustees by Statutory Instrument, make regulations he considers as necessary to expedite for given effect to this Act'. So we are aware that you want us to use the Banks, but you have to provide the legal frame work for giving out the Students' Loan

Scheme. So they have given us some aspect to identify, so that you can be able to apply. The NIN number is the reason we are encouraging all of us to register.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when you go to Clause [20], it is very clear, the name of the individual who is going to take the Loan, the resident and the postal address of the individual, work place and address, Telephone number, Email address, national identification number, health insurance number and National Social Security Insurance Trust number or any other organised National Pension Scheme Number, are some of the things that they have put in place. He talked about the maximum percentage in terms of the interest. The Honourable Paramount Chief mentioned that when we talk about interest in Clause [19], it is very important. Can I also question the charges? But when you are dealing with them, because they have the insight of dealing with the Banks and when Banks are processing loans, there will be more charges, it is not going to be free. So because of the inspiration and what they have already experienced from other operations, Banking transactions have given an insight of the transactions to us. So he said it cannot be more than 2%, but the Board of Trustees are charged with the responsibility to discuss interests to be charged on Loans. Mr Speaker, the Board of Trustees shall decide subject to this Act, if we want to do some interest, but the guide should not be more than 2%, because they cannot cater for everyone. If 6,000 people applied for the SLG and they were able to give only 2,000 plus, so the remaining which they cannot give, can apply for the Students' Loan Scheme.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, he also mentioned that after eligibility, because they want to make it apolitical, for me the framework is narrow. Let us say if you are rejected, how can you re-apply? Mr Minister, I hope the Committee will take care of that. We will give a chance to the students to re-apply to the Board again and thereafter, the Minister should be the last resort. So from all what is said from my colleagues and my very self, looking at the reasonability aspect of it, the interest rate we have questioned, which we want to see in the spirit of the Bill, that will inspire students to come to the University without struggle. As he has said, in fact that can trigger the quality aspect of the education. When you are going for lectures with a free

mind that I have food, I have a place to lodge, I don't have problem with fees, I have money to solve my personal problems, and I want to be independent, it triggers quality education. We can have good Teachers and good graduates with Masters in different fields, so the issue of us struggling to have students studying Chemistry, Physics, Petroleum Engineer, will not happen anymore, because they will have relaxed minds. They will now be getting all the facilities like those who are living in America or elsewhere. So Mr Minister, it is in the interest of this country that we said, education should be the corner stone of our Government. Education is the pillar of any democratic institution. Education is what all of us should rely on as the Honourable Paramount Chief said, 'If you want to destroy a nation ensure that you don't give them education, by so doing, you realise that you put the country into a crises, even when you want to give them things that are free for them, they will demonstrate against it'. Mr Speaker, when your citizens are well informed, there will be perfect decorum in the administration, but when they are not informed problems keep coming, they can only be convinced to take arms as we had during the war.

Mr Minister, thank you very much for bringing such a Bill to this House. Thank you very much, Leader of the Opposition for ensuring that we do the right thing when it comes to the Legislative Committee, so that issues raised will be addressed; and when we come to the Plenary, we enact them for the good of the Bill and for the good of Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, thank you for your time, thank you for arbitrating us, it is a very difficult time for us with all the issues around the Chamber, starting from the Trade ratification and coming to this Bill is not easy, you have to bear with us because this is what we should sacrifice for us to have a better proceedings and I have the conviction that is good for the nation. Thank you very much, God bless you Sir *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you for thanking me, but let us recognise that this is a democratic institution. Mr Minister over to you to respond now to as many of the questions and concerns raised as you possibly can.

PROF. ALPHA T. WURIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I feel gratified that indeed Sierra Leone is going to be transformed within a very short period of time. I feel the general positive response coming from Members of Parliament, you know for too long we do not have up to 2% of our people accessing Tertiary Education. Yes, if you take a look at students that will start from the first level at primary school, less than 2% access Tertiary Education. It is practically impossible for us to get a dynamic change in this country, without mass of the people accessing Tertiary Education. Mr Speaker, for us to be in a position to move on, and for there be a Human Capital Development, we have to go above the critical mass of people that we require to move for Technical Education, Nursing field, Technical University and University Education. This is the essence of this Bill and I am so pleased that the generality of the House reflects that this is what we want. All what I heard is, how do we get added value to this document?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, a lot was put into this document in the Pre-legislative stage. In the Pre-legislative stage, we already have a seven page and about 21 points that already addressed nearly all the issues we have raised. However, at the Legislative stage itself, there will be other issues to add. Let me make reference to one or two comments. This Bill has the interest of the very Constituency we represent. The Deputy Speaker and the SLPP Honourable Member said, the Bill is non-political, and the Paramount Chief has already expressed that, 10 to 15 years ago, we opened our Grant-in-Aid support to become a District representative one. This very year, it was done again during the abridged year, that every award was done per District to ensure that this is a non-political issue. Mr Speaker, look at what is going on with the 'Free Quality Education Support', when we say we pay for WASSCE nobody looks at the colour of the person, we paid thousands in 2018. This Government paid WASSCE for 151 thousand pupils in 2020. Every input so far has shown that we are looking at everyone as one people, in one country. I will really like you to believe that the Scheme we called Scholarships, for now is focused on women.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is focusing on people with disabilities, hearing problems, visions, Albinos, they have been characterised as a major disabilities, these are assured of scholarships. We will extend it a bit further to people that have taught for over 10 years as school Teachers, their children would be supported with Grant-in-Aids. This year, we supported 92 children of Teachers and the definition for scholarship will be expanded, but the loan is for everyone defined as a Sierra Leonean that has been accepted in the Tertiary educational institutions, be it a Technical institute in Polytechnic, a Technical University or a University. The loan has also expressed that we are dealing with different grades of people. There are people that have dropped out from Geology for example, not having enough money to go on a field trip, so they ended up moving from Honours to General Degree, because they cannot go on the prerequisite of an Honours Degree under field trip. Mr Speaker, so what we are saying here is that, there is no one in this country that does not have the right to access Tertiary institution that their capacity can get them, because whatever gaps they hide in the document, it will help us close that gaps. That is why I feel encouraged with the contribution made by Honourable Kandeh Yumkella saying, can we do estimation on the cost of the Scheme, or what would be the cost per year? I must say we have worked with the Ministry of Finance and we have an Economist that will be the Secretary until the Scheme starts. It is not the Secretary that will take this one, because it is a major financial institution of which we have already been discussing with the Banks.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, what we are saying here is that, we do know that this is not a Ministry of Education Scheme; this is a Government of Sierra Leone Scheme which is pioneered by the Ministry of Education. Indeed, there may be an independent institution that looks at it, of which the Board of Trustees would be the people that would create the loan awards Committee. Mr Speaker, because the Board of Trustees would not be the one to look at it clause by clause, but in the operation manual they will be the ones to create the Awards Committee. Mr Speaker, may I also express that the first payment had been made to the Limkokwing and tomorrow Wednesday, they will make a public announcement for students to go and register

[Applause]. Mr Speaker, may I also indicate that in the Pre-Legislative hearings, we got suggestions that Sierra Leone really has to create a desk for Jumps, blending Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education. We send people out to Serbia, Cuba, China for six to 12 months, after their returns, they are without jobs; this is like wasted resources apart from those that we would be supporting with loans. It is clear we have to get the system for apprenticeship and a system for job placements.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, remember in the 2004 Education Act, that is when we put in the Youth Scheme, although it became operationalised just a couple of years ago, but provision was made for that in the 2004 Education Act. Mr Speaker, even for the Tertiary Education Commission, the Teaching Service Commission, provisions were made in the 2004 Education Act; although it became implemented after the Act itself for TSC was created in 2011. So what we are putting down is futuristic, not all of it will be in place today, but the legal provisions would allow the regulations to be modified as we go along to ensure that we tighten it, and tighten it well.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I therefore want to say that we are all contributors to this historic day. We are really contributing to a generational change and I will like to thank those that contributed, especially Honourable Dr Mark Kalokoh from Bombali, the Honourable right here next to me the religious man and the Lawyer combined. Honourable Daniel Koroma, I have your notepad and I can go through that in fact, I was allowed to do so. We have taken note of that and we have addressed all of that, but we would not change the document. The document that has come to Parliament has to stay so, until after the full Legislative Committee stage.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme Fund Act, 2021, be read the second time *[Applause]*.

[Question Proposed Put and Agreed to]

[The Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme Fund Act, 2021, been an Act to establish the Sierra Leone Students' Loan Scheme Fund to provide financial assistance to students of Tertiary institutions in Sierra Leone, as a means of facilitating increase enrolment into Higher Education and promoting the rights to

education for all Sierra Leoneans, and to provide for other related matters has been read the second time].

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O 51[1] to move that we commit the Bill to the Legislative Committee.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Is there any Seconder to this Motion?

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed Put and Agreed to]

[The Motion by the Leader of Government Business has been carried].

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, you may go. Thank you.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, let me have just one minute Sir, to stand on S.O [23].

THE SPEAKER: Before that there is an announcement.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O [23] to report a very serious situation in my Constituency, that deals with Agriculture, and the timeliness. I have forwarded the video in your phone and with your permission I will do so even in the Parliamentary forum. There is a very prominent farmer in my Constituency a woman for that matter, she has 250 acres of rice farm, but as I speak to you, due to lack of machines to harvest, 50 acres is now wasted and she is pleading to this Government to provide tractors that will enable her to harvest her farms and I believe that will even cushion the hardship that we are going through now. But Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if provision is not made for even those small machine harvesters, 200 Acres of rice farm will be wasted absolutely. Her name is Nimima Kamara the chairlady of the APC centre in Constituency 046.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I just want to relay that message and that plead on behalf of the Farmers' Association to the Government. Mr Speaker, one of the reasons why she was able to establish such a huge content of farm is because of the tartarisation that was provided with by this Government. But unfortunately, there is no

harvester to complete the project and in the absence of that harvester, you will agree with me 200 Acres of farm cannot be harvested with hands, so I am using this medium with your permission Sir, to please plead with the Government and even the Agriculture Committee, that this is not just for that single individual, but to be concerned with the timeliness now for harvesting.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, who is the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee? We would therefore charge him on behalf of the entire House to approach the Minister of Agriculture and engage him on this particular matter.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Very short one, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you did very well today when you informed the Minister of Trade by giving him prior notice, but I also want to remind Mr Speaker and the Clerks here that there are many other questions to Ministers with the Office of the Clerk which you yourself have approved. Those questions are yet to see the light of day.

THE SPEAKER: I agreed.

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: From Dr Mark Kalakoh and many other people, so those questions should come to the Floor. I am also doing one now.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Senior Clerk here?

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: I am doing a question now.

THE SPEAKER: You please engage the Clerk after we rise that those questions must see the light of day before, it's too long, because they are far overdue.

HON. IBRAHIM B. KARGBO: Mr Speaker, I am pleading for the matter relating to the impounded properties of Mr Sandy Sesay is looked into, and you did say after adjournment because you did not preside over that matter. I was assured here that if we have presented our case simply without any difficulties, the likelihood is that the Parliament will look at it, just as they looked at some other cases earlier on. I want to give notice Mr Speaker, that by next week sitting, we would come to this House with a document pleading with the Government.

THE SPEAKER: Please come with a petition.

HON. IBRAHIM BEN KORGBO: Thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you! S. O [23], yes Paramount Chief Member.

HON. P.C. ALHAJI KANDEH PARLIA KAWALLEH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, on my own issue that I presented here the last time, the name changing of my Chiefdom is getting things worst. Last week I went to Kambia District for a meeting with the Paramount Chief of Banti of Maracay Chiefdom. Fortunately, when both of us went for our DSA, they only attended to one person, and that is one thing that affected us, and it is a very serious issue. Mr Speaker, I was totally humiliated because they told me that only one person is responsible, I tried to explain myself in the presence of the Local Government Minister, Mr Speaker. So I want to plead to this House, that you please talk to the Minister of Local Government for him to speedily take this issue serious.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry I missed the main point.

HON. P.C. ALHAJI KANDEH PARLA KAWALLEH: The main point is the issue of changing the name of my Chiefdom from Banti Chiefdom to Sanda Bonkor Chiefdom.

THE SPEAKER: Do kindly come to my Chamber tomorrow, so that I can take it up directly with the Minister.

HON. P.C. ALHAJI KANDEH PARLA KAWALLEH: Okay, thank you very much Sir.

THE SPEAKER: With that?

HON. ABDUL K. KARGBO: Mr Speaker, most times when people rise on S.O [23] and you commit those matters to the Chairmen, they do not come back to report to this House, neither do they do investigations. This is principally so because three [3] or four [4] months ago, I raised the issue for the ranking of the Police force, that the I.G was intended to reverse the Police ranking to where it is now.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Point of Order! Mr Speaker, S.O [23] should not introduce controversial matters.

HON. ABDUL K. KARGBO: No! I am not introducing the matter; I am bringing it to the knowledge of the Speaker.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: There are provisions you will use for those set of things and not S.O [23].

HON. ABDUL K. KARGBO: Can I land Sir? This will also help your Leadership, but if you want us to keep quiet, we will keep neither quiet, nor it will.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: No it will not.

HON. ABDUL K. KARGBO: It will.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Okay.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

HON. ABDUL K. KARGBO: My interest.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I prefer that to come to this House in the form of a question.

HON. ABDUL K. KARGBO: No, it is not a question. My concern is for Chairmen of Committees, that when they deal with matters referred to them, let them come back to this Well and report, that is what I am saying.

THE SPEAKER: I agree with you.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House rose at 6:45 p.m. and was adjourned to Thursday, 28th October, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.]