

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

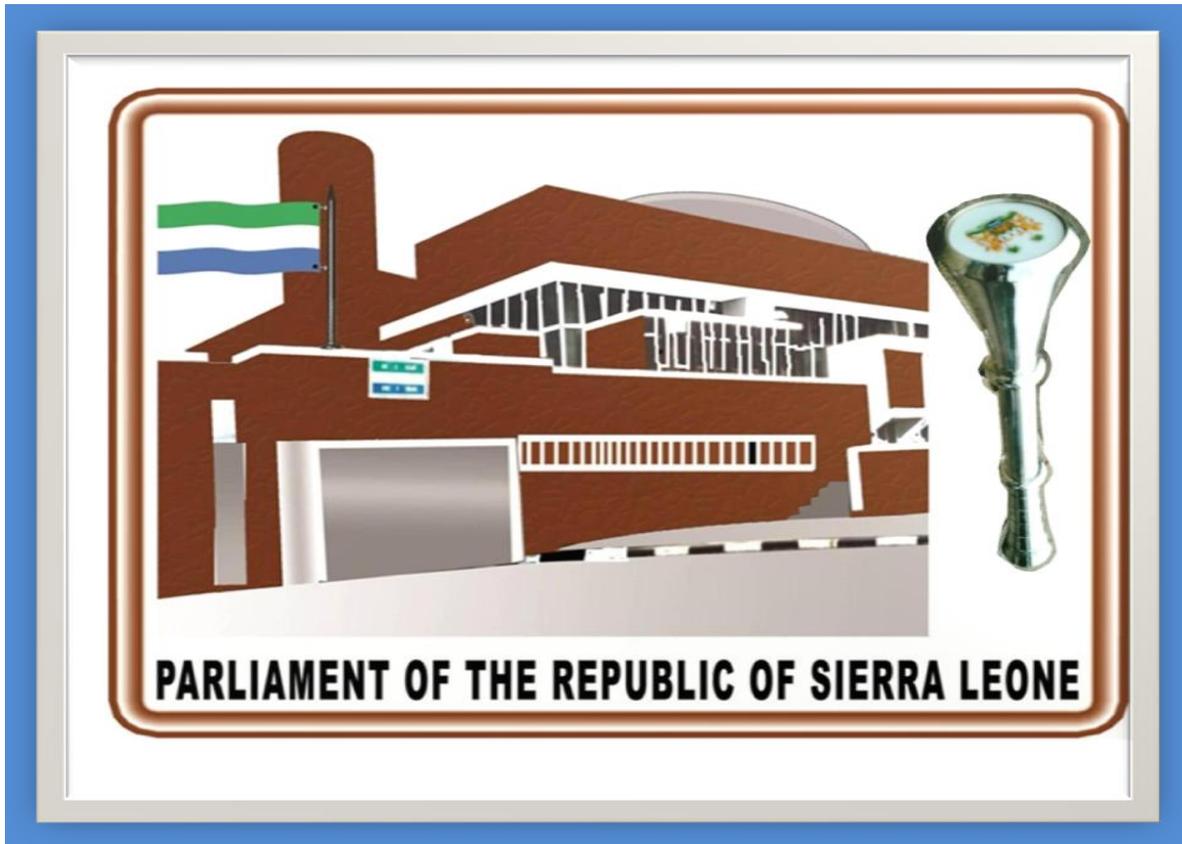
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIFTH SESSION –FIRST MEETING

THURSDAY, 30TH JUNE, 2022

SESSION – 2022/2023



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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Thursday, 30th March, 2022.

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THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

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

Thursday, 30th JUNE, 2021.

I. PRAYERS

[The Table Clerk, Mrs Fatmata Bintu Weston, Read the Prayers]

[The House met at 10:40a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown.]

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

The House was called to Order

II. THE RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR WEDNESDAY 29TH JUNE, 2022.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please take your seats. We shall consider the Votes and Proceedings on the 17th Sitting of Parliament, held on the 29th of June 2022, starting from Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8 and Page 9? Can someone please move for the Votes and Proceedings of Wednesday the 29th of June 2022, to be adopted?

HON. HABIB KEIFA FABBAH: I so move, Mr Speaker.

HON. MAADA HAFIJU KANJA: I so second Mr Speaker

Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To.

[The Record of Votes and Proceedings for Wednesday 29th June, 2022 has been adopted].

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, today I have no new announcement to make but just as by way of a reminder, we are receiving two important guests today; the first guest I suspect is going to be the Honourable Vice President of the Republic of Liberia, who doubles as the President of the Senate of the Republic of Liberia to be visiting us on the shores of this morning proceedings and in the afternoon, we will be receiving another guest in the person of the UN Assistant Secretary-General. You would recall that I had already notified the House of both visits previously; so I am only saying it by way of a reminder to all of us. Thank you. Whiles we await for that to happen, let us get on with the day's business.

BILL:

The Public Elections Act, 2022.

TABLE CLERK: Second Reading, Committee Stage and Third Reading;

The Attorney-General and Minister of Justice:

[Continued debate]

THE SPEAKER: I understand that we are at the second reading page, the Minister has made his presentation and the House had actually commenced with the debate on the second reading; and with that, we shall now continue.

HON. ALPHA A. BAH: Mr Speaker Sir,

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON. ALPHA A. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we would recall that during the commencement of the debate on this Bill, we have made laws that we should read the new Bill properly before we participate in the debate. Having perused the Bill, and having listened to the submission from Honourable Members from the other side Mr Speaker, it is my observation that there are so many provisions contained in this Bill that tend to alter or amend the National Constitution *[Applause]*; one among the provisions relate to the dual citizenship which touches and concerns Section 76[a] of our National Constitution.

The second, also concerns the provision in this Bill, which allows for 30% quota for women; it also touches and concerns Section [74] of the National Constitution and there is also another provision which touches and that is Section [41] of our National Constitution amongst the rest.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is my view that before we address this Bill, it is important that it comes here by means of Constitutional Instrument. I want to submit that the Bill is not properly before us, and the process by which the Attorney-General is approaching this House is not proper because, if we are here to amend certain parts of the Constitution; I am afraid, we might have to go Section by Section in order to get a two-thirds majority. So I want to submit and suggest that, we set aside the debate on

this Bill for it to come by was of the Constitutional Instrument that will actually address all these provisions of the Constitution; Mr Speaker, that is my view *[Applause]*.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you very much my colleague on the other side. We are also concerned about Constitutional amendments but with this Bill, it is a process; we have the first reading, second reading, third reading and we started it because it was not yet a law; but if you want to conduct an election today, you can still make use of the present Act we have – the Parent Act. This is just a proposal for the amendment, we are fully aware of the Constitutional amendment for which we need a two-thirds majority of every Clause that has to do with Section [180] of the Constitution, which we are going to follow carefully. In that light, we would allow the debate to proceed; but we have the second and third readings before enacting any law.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I assure you that as against next week Tuesday, we would lay the Instrument, that has to do with Constitutional amendment *[Applause]*.

I would also want my colleagues on the other side, to tell me the provision contained in the Constitutional Instrument if we are to discuss it viz-a-viz the Bill; but I would want us to discuss the Constitutional Instrument before the Bill because that is the procedure. Because, we would definitely get on to the third reading to be passed into law; let us continue with the debate whiles we await the Instrument. Mr Speaker, I would want us to deal with the Instrument first and thereafter, we enact the Bill into law; but we must make sure that we first of all deal with the Constitutional Instrument that is the assurance I will give you. We must make sure we deal with the Constitutional provision first, they are done in tandem – first, is the amendment of the Constitution before we can touch the Bill which takes time because of the process involved. Let me also tell you that the Constitutional Instrument will be coming in the form of a Bill too; so we are going to lay them, discuss them, whiles the Public Election Bill will also be discussed either in the Committee Stage, or Committee of the Whole House. Let me assure you again that, we have not missed any of the stages in this process; because we are going to deal with them exactly. For us on this side, the very first day we started we meant business, and the election has to do with much of what we are doing in our present day practice in politics. We would have to look at the

Election Laws carefully, make them very robust by strengthening the Institutions; that is the reason we are also concerned about bringing the Constitutional Instrument because it was not properly brought before this House so I had to send it back. By Tuesday next week, it will be here for a proper debate having being laid; I thank you Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

HON. ALPHA A. BAH: Mr Speaker, what Mr Leader is seeking to do is, putting the cart before the horse; and with respect, this is the House of procedure and records; and by my training, I believe we should go according to procedures. I kept saying that the process by which the Attorney-General had approached this House is improper and not a correct way of doing it. I wonder why the rush, when he had already intimated this House that they intend addressing provisions that touches and concerns the Constitution. So Mr Speaker, if you have that intention, it is but fitting and proper in the interest of procedure *[Applause]*, that we put the steps procedurally, sequentially, as they are supposed to be Mr Speaker. I still believe if they are actually genuine, and that we are ready to legislate procedurally, let us address the things systematically; thank you very much *[Applause]*.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, I don't know what my colleague from the other side was talking about; I have said a Bill is a process - you have first reading, second reading then the Committee Stage and finally, third reading *[Undertone]*. I am coming this is a proposal in front of us, that was why I said as against next week, we will start to deal with the Constitutional Instruments; so nothing is going to change, nothing absolutely. Again, for a Bill *[Undertone]*; how can you say we have a hidden agenda? Public Provision – it is clear in the Constitution that if you read a forth provision in Section [108] of the Constitution, there is no way you can amend every bit of the Constitution without a two-thirds majority, for every Clause or Section you may want to amend; it is also a process we have to vote here for every Clause or Section of the Constitution. We would not only come here to say; because we have a proposal in front of us for the Elections Act to be amended, we can just go ahead to amend it. First, you have to get the Constitutional Instrument in the form of a Bill which we are going to deal with before the final enactment of the Public Elections Act, and there are

stages to that. Let me make this very clear; this is the second reading, we are now debating as a Committee of the Whole House, we have the third reading and for it to be passed into Law.

Mr Speaker, we have not missed the stage, we are on track; and we have thought it wise that we are going to do it, that is why these are some of the issues we need to raise up in the debate and that is the reason why we are having debates; that there is need to do the Constitutional amendment before the final enactment. Mr Speaker, we are not going to pass the Bill into law today, because it is a process so I wonder why my colleagues on the other side are jittery; we are going to give almost robust structures to the Institution we call National Electoral Commission [NEC], so that they can perform their duty. This is all the more reason we are discussing it, and we are hopeful for a better amendment to the Bill; we are not going to enclosed ourselves thinking we are taking sides no, we are not, so all what we are doing is for the interest of this Nation.

Mr Speaker, what they did the last time, was for the amendment of the North-West Commissioner; they did redistricting, which gave birth to the North-West but there was no Commissioner. Section [32][ii], talks about four Commissioners only and in addition, the Chairman makes a total of five. Today, in the Proposal we have in front of us as part of the Constitutional Instrument, we need one additional Commissioner for the North-West, so that there would be proper scrutiny in our election system, for it to be transparent; so we are not going to skew anything, everything is going to be tabled for us to discuss.

Firstly, we are going to discuss all the issues; these are some of the issues we are going to raise and I want to assure this House that, on Tuesday next week, we are going to lay a Constitutional Instrument, for it to be discussed and passed into Law if need be or we reject them if there is no need before we can finally enact the Elections Act; thank you.

HON. DAINEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in response to the submission of the Leader of Government Business, I want to first of all refer you to the

very Section [108] of which he earlier on made reference to, for it to be read holistically. Section [108], Sub-section [2] read as follows: A Bill or an Act of Parliament under this Section, shall not be passed by Parliament unless A: now, mark these words; 'Before the first reading of the Bill in Parliament, the next gazette of the Bill is published in at least two issues of the gazette. The proviso - provided that, not less than nine days shall elapse between the first publication of the Bill in the gazette and the second publication. The Bill is supported on the second and third readings by the votes of not less than two-thirds of the Members of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me cite a good precedent done by the learned Attorney-General, which is commendable and it is the correct procedure. I want to refer you to Clause [57] of this Bill, which is now in question; the side notes of Clause [57] reads: Forms of General Elections that is the title. See now how it is being phrased and how the authority that emanated from this Provision was being denied; and that is the correct procedure. I am not saying that the idea was correct, I am only concerned about procedures; Mr Speaker with your leave, let me now read Clause [57] of this Bill; it reads with your permission: "A general election of Members of Parliament other than Paramount Chiefs Members of Parliament shall be by [A]:The One Member Constituency System under Sub-section [2] of Section [38] of the Constitution - so you can now see mother and child relationship; before a child is born, there has to be a mother so the child *[Interruption]* just listen to me now, either or still applies *[Interruption]* okay let me read, before I make my point; or [B]: The District Block Representation System in accordance with Section 38[a] of the Constitution as set out in the Twelfth schedule". In both of these Subsidiary Legislations, it takes authority; it takes legitimacy from the grand norm so the question here is that; if someone ask you a question as to where you got your authority, breaching the provision as a subsidiary legislation. Replying you will say; I got my authority from my mother *[Applause]*, in the absence of your mother how did you come into being? So this is a mother-child relationship. Mr Speaker in this case, we are trying to deliver a baby who is motherless; is it possible *[Undertone]*? It is not possible, so what we are saying is that, we are not averse to amending those Constitutional Provisions; it is after amending the Constitution, that the Subsidiary

Legislation can now take authority from that Constitutional amendment *[Applause]* pursuant to such and such Constitutional amendment, we are now bringing this Law; but how are you going to start the process in the first place? When I was in Forms 4 to 5, I sat to Government and I got three okay; preliminary ideas, for your information my Government teacher is here; Mr John Anthony, he taught me Government and I got three *[Applause]*, he taught me the process of a Bill becoming a Law. I was not objecting to the pre-legislative hearing because, that is not part of the process as to how a Bill becomes a Law; it starts from first reading and as far as I am concerned, in the absence of the Constitutional Provision that gives legitimacy to any subsidiary enactment, any procedure from start is void *[Applause]*, because it is part of a process as to how a Bill becomes a Law; it is a non-starter in the first place. Mr Speaker, we are not trying to sabotage a process; we are in for a better electoral law, but not in the manner wherein the cart will be put before the horse.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note, we are submitting that we start from where we ought to start because, going through the first reading in the first place is void, it is part of the law making process; and the Act says here that according to the National Constitution, before a first reading and then you have the conditions as enlisted in A and B of Section [108] Sub-section [2]. So I want to support my colleague from the Western Area that this process is void from the start, it is void and therefore, we cannot continue with it in this way *[Applause]*; let us come with the Constitutional Provisions and amend them. For most of these Provisions, let us not be scared of two-thirds majority we will get it, do not get scared of it just come with it so that we can go through it; that is my submission Sir, thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, I would want to make my final submission. He was talking about, before a Bill is read and passed into law. I have told you that this is a project; it is not yet a law *[Undertone]* can you please allow me with some decorum and respect please *[Undertone]*? If you continue to say it, I will also continue to repeat it. Mr Speaker, it is a process and the Bill is a proposal; we have not yet passed it into a

law, and before it is passed into a law [*Undertone*], this is English Language not rocket science but a straight, direct and forward sentence; we are trying to correct the anomalies of the past administration of the elections, that is exactly what we seek to do, it is a proposal put forward to us and we are not seeking to enact it today. Unlike what my colleague on the other side was saying; that before you pass..., we have said we will proceed with the debate on Wednesday and before it is passed into law, we would have come with the provision as spelt out in the Constitutional Instrument. When you refuse to listen and understand at the end of the day, you would just be following the crowd as if you are part of the duck's ride; I am not that type because I always like to analyse issues and argue them out. This is a House of debates, a House of laws and procedures too, that is why we have first, second, third readings for enactment into law - we do our amendments at the Committee Stage; and in the debate, we raise the issues which are fundamental. I had reminded you that, for every Clause for a Constitutional Amendment, we need a two-thirds majority but we are not afraid of that as was in the previous Parliament, where we go by voice acclamation to amend the Constitution no, far from that; this Parliament will not do that. For every Clause we are going to amend, we would take the centre stage to vote two-thirds which Mr Speaker would preside over. Let me assure you again that this is a process, we have started the first reading; it means you are at fault. If you really want to show that you are very sincere, you should have done this from the very first day to have stopped Mr Speaker; if you are really sincere and had wanted us to do the right thing procedurally as you are citing now, you should have done that from the very first day we started the debate, but you kept quiet saying you are not going to debate [*Undertone*]. Alright! when you are done I will continue. If you have respect for your Leader of the Opposition, you should have that same respect for me too [*undertone*] no, this business of obstruction needs to stop; Section [98] of the Constitution is very clear, our behaviour in and out of Parliament. I am a Leader, so you listen when I speak as by so doing, I would try to convince people because I am coming from a very serious level; Mr Speaker, if I am sincere in doing the right thing for the very first day, I would have objected to the malpractice or mal-procedures, if I know they are not right in the Chamber I would

have challenged it; rather than for me to wait and bring up issues just to obstruct the Sitting of the day for us but they did not, and he was saying for the first reading. But my argument was that, a Bill has a process, and it is a proposal put forward to us, it is not yet an Act of Parliament; so all what you are saying is because you are debating, these are issues that would be raised before enacting - A, we should amend the Constitution and so we need a Constitutional Instrument.

Mr Speaker, they came with it to parliament, but there were some flaws and I had to send them back. Secondly, for the previous administration, they revisited it which gave birth to the 'North-West Region'. We had seen it all, and we have said that we want to do Constitutional amendment; but before we pass this Bill of course, the Public Elections Bill into law, we must make sure that we first take the Constitutional Instrument into consideration; this is not an enactment, Section [108] of the Constitution talks about enactment, I am talking about procedures, gazetting, if you want to publish the first reading, you would have to first of all gazette it; and it is talking about details as you have stated, so that it can be laid in Parliament for a debate. But Mr Speaker, except my colleagues on the other side may want to obstruct the Sitting but I think, you have not yet passed it into law; so let me make my point that, we should have agreed from the very start of the debate by raising an objection, if really they were sincere to themselves. Thank you Mr Speaker, for giving me the floor
[Applause].

THE SPEAKER: I think at this point... that is okay, that is very good; because I was going to invite the Leader of the Opposition.

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker

THE SPEAKER: For you to make an observational statement before I can come in?

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have been in this House for quite a long time and you know for a start, that there is no law without a foundation to the Constitution no law whatsoever, whether it in Fisheries, Forestry or Security; every law gets its authority and source from the Constitution, that is very clear Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, as the

Leader of Government Business said during the last Sitting - not the last Sitting in the House but the last Sitting when we discussed this document, we made it very clear to the Speaker, that we were not going to participate in the debate on that date because, we were yet to read and comprehend the document; we made it very clear *[Undertone]* that was sincere but we did not, we made it very clear in this Chamber that we wanted to read and understand the document so the debate started and they did all the talking, and we kept very quiet and listened. After we left, we went back to look at the document and at the Pre-Legislative hearing, the learned Attorney-General was there with some of the other supporting staff. The words that were used by the Honourable Member from wellington, I used them in the Pre-legislative hearing to say that: 'putting the cart before the horse' will not be good. The Leader of Government Business has informed this House that they are working on the Constitutional Amendment, which is very good; but Mr Speaker, some of those amendments will affect this very document they want us to debate. To debate this document without getting the foundation, this House would not be doing justice to law-making *[Applause]*. As he says, even though we want to give the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone more foot and more effect, but we should do it as per the Constitution. If we debate this document now, we would be debating areas that might, or might not come into fruition; and this House should not debate that Mr Speaker. So I would join my colleagues by calling on you Mr Speaker, as the Presiding Officer to use your wise judgment and experience as before, in ensuring that we do not debate a document which is not completely proper before the House; it is very important Mr Speaker. As he said on Tuesday, we should be expecting the document to be brought to this House for us to look into; so it is better we get the Constitution correct before moving to the next step otherwise, we would be wasting time Mr Speaker and I am sure none of us would want to waste the time of this House. On that note Mr Speaker, I would want to join my colleagues by calling on the Leader of Government Business, to kindly see reasons in allowing the amendments of the Constitution to come; finish with them, and then go to where the document would derive their foundation from. I thank you very much *[Applause]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I would want to believe that I am on record for being a great respecter of the sacrosanctity of the Constitution; I am on record for that I have been, and will always be. And under my watch, I want to assure all of you that; I would not superintend any process in this House that would seek to debar or violate as much of the Constitution of this country, without due process. I have listened to both sides of the aisle, and I want to assure you that up to this point, it is my humble opinion that we have not yet reached any stage that can be described as a violation of the Constitution; we have not yet reached that stage and I can assure this House that we would never reach that stage. Unlike what the Honourable Member from Koinadugu said, I would invite him to read very carefully Section [108] Sub-sections [2] very carefully, and he would very quickly realise that the submission he made earlier, is untenable and cannot seat well with the provisions of Section [108] Sub-sections [2]. Having said that, what I see us doing right now is to engage in the second reading of a Bill - for a repeal and replacement of the Public Elections Act of 2012. Yes it is true, that there are aspects of that Bill that do touches and concerns part of the Constitution; no question about that. And most certainly, I want to assure this House that the process we have started in considering this Bill, will never be completed until the foundation upon which it should be based, is well established; and that foundation is: 'a consideration and passing of the required Constitutional provisions'. I hope I have made myself clear? *[Undertone]* I am not confusing you, well let me elucidate further; I am not here to muddle your mind, or to obfuscate your thinking *[Applause]*. We are engaged in the second reading of a Bill, that which you have observed that touches and concerns certain important provisions of the Constitution *[Undertone]*. I hope you are paying attention? Thank you. There is nothing wrong for us to proceed with the second reading of this Bill and at some point, come to a stop; and as the Leader of Government has assured the House that by Tuesday next, the relevant Constitutional Instrument may come to the House. We cannot then, proceed further beyond the second reading let alone the third reading, to even the Committee Stage without first considering those Constitutional Instruments; you will be heard in due course. So I want to propose to both sides for your consideration that we proceed with consideration of the second

reading of the Bill, and stop until further notice; and on Tuesday, we would have the opportunity of the House being presented with the Constitutional Instrument, and we would then considered them to finality before reverting, considering and completing the Bill that is presently before us. That is what I would like to recommend at this stage, you have the floor.

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: Thank you very much Mr speaker. Mr Speaker, one thing you have known me for from the start is that, I have always been very rational. Going back to the point I made earlier, I may want to know whether you have a copy of the Bill with you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: It is right in front of me

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: If you go to the second to last page, page 140 - Memorandum of Object and Reason; Mr Speaker maybe this will help to clear our position. Mr Speaker, it is very, very clear in the first paragraph; may I read with your permission Mr Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: I can read it myself; but read it for the edification of the public, no problem.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: As you so desire Mr Speaker

THE SPEAKER: Go ahead

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Thank you sir. "The object of the Bill, is to repeal and replace the Public Elections Act 2012, [Act No.6 of 1991]; to provide for Supplementary provisions to Sections [32] and [33] of the Constitution of Sierra Leone. It is very, very clear Mr Speaker. How can we talk on a Bill debating it extensively to conclusion when we would still have to talk about Sections [32] and [33]? It is like what the Honourable Member said...

THE SPEAKER: I did not say completely

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: No, what I meant to conclusion, it's on the debate and not the passage of the Bill; that is what I meant Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, it is like we cannot roof before doing the foundation of the building because, even if you are roofing

there are going to be pillars to carry the roof. The foundation has to be there and the foundation in this case is getting the constitution right, if we do not get it right we would be debating fate accomplice; it would be a fate accomplice Sir.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think you and I had a cross purposes on this one, except for a very minor area. What I am trying to say to you is that, debating and completing the second reading does not in any way undermine the argument you are making.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: My point is Mr Speaker, it does because the moment we conclude the debate and second reading is closed, we cannot go back to second reading; that is my position Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, but there are still other areas including Committee Stage, equally as important as to where the Bill would have to be considered line by line, page by page.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, as per this Constitution, the relevance of Second Reading is separate and distinct from the Committee Stage so that is it Sir; what you bring out during second reading is not what you would bring out during Committee Stage, they are different.

THE SPEAKER: I agree with you, I agree with you; but yet still, it does not in any way alter the overall.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Thank you Sir. Mr Speaker, we are pleading with you in the interest of expediency, since we would be finishing the Constitutional Amendment before going proper to this document, let us shelve it, finish with the Constitutional Instrument, and then come back; it is simple Mr speaker, we are not asking for anything much. I will agree with you, and we understand your position but considering the fact that, it would make it more fluid so it is better that we finish the Constitutional Amendment so that when we debate this document, we would be debating it in light of an amendment we would have made to the Constitution.

THE SPEAKER: And I am sure you would lose absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, I would tell you that we will.

THE SPEAKER: If you allowed the second reading to proceed...

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker we will, that is what I am saying; we will.

THE SPEAKER: I can see it

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: But that is the point

THE SPEAKER: I do not see it that way

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: We are not seeing it from the same lens

THE SPEAKER: I don't see it that way

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Yours is heavier than mine Mr Speaker, and that is why I am kindly calling on you, pleading with you and the Leader of Government Business for us to see reasons in finishing with the Constitutional amendment, before going to the Bill proper, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Well maybe, you need to elaborate further for me to see the source and the rationale for your hesitance in proceeding with the second reading *[Undertone]*. No, no, no Honourable Members, *[Undertone]* no, no, I am coming; advise your Members that if they do not have anything to add, please allow the debate to take place. We are informing and learning from each other; if you had come here with a set-idea or a set-mind to be obstructive, please say goodbye to that mind-set today. This is a very, very, serious national issue that we are discussing in this Parliament, and I do not want anybody to reduce this discussion to levity; it is very, very important. If you do not understand, then listen and learn. Carry on.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, thank you very much Sir. Mr Speaker, as I have said that our lenses are not the same, we would want you to please go over what you have just said.

THE SPEAKER: I would want you also to come back, and elaborate further on the rationale; because you seem to be hesitant.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: I agree with you Mr Speaker.

THE SPAKER: Thank you.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: It is not as easy as I would think, but it is very simple. Mr Speaker, if we debate this Bill as it is, we would be debating in piece-meal and incomplete document; I will tell you why? We are expecting amendment to the Constitution, which are also relevant to the eventual passage of this Bill. We do not know what would be the outcome of those amendments, so how can we debate this extensively and taken to conclusion? What if something else changes tomorrow, Mr Speaker? Today, one plus one is two and tomorrow, one plus one might be three; and then the debate would change all over.

THE SPEAKER: You will have absolute facility in that argument, if you were to process this particular Bill to finality because you cannot revert to it.

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: No, Mr Speaker; that is what I am saying.

THE SPEAKER: But you are not

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: No Mr Speaker, this is where I believe we are getting it wrong. Mr Speaker during the second reading, our intention and role in this House, is to convince each other across the aisle; that is what the second reading does Mr Speaker and after second reading, you would no longer have that luxury Mr speaker.

THE SPEAKER: No, I do not see it that way; the second reading is predicated mostly on the Minister elaborating on the policy and informing Members of Parliament and guiding the Government.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Which Mr Minister has done already, it is now for us to come back to debate his statement as against the Bill. But Mr Speaker, the Bill is still not complete; it is not *[Laughter]*.

THE SPEAKER: Well now, I am confused; the Minister has already made the policy statement on behalf of the Government, which informs the Government to come forward with this Bill, okay?

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Yes sir

THE SPEAKER: And the process of considering the Bill has started with the first reading, going on to the second reading

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: That was the point I made to you, but you took a position on the last date; and we have gone ahead in reading the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: I was not here for the first reading

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: I meant the Presiding Officer for that day

THE SPEAKER: Alright.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: So there is no vacancy

THE SPEAKER: Because if I were here, maybe I would have taken things differently

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: That is it

THE SPEAKER: But you allowed it to go through the first reading

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: We did not, we did not; first reading yes, and it had to be in the custody of the House before we could comment. That was what we did with the Political Parties Registration Commission [PPRC] yesterday; we did the first reading and now, it is within our domain.

THE SPEAKER: And you also allowed the second reading to commence

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: But we objected, that is what we are saying

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Mr Speaker, may I clarify the point that he is saying; they did not allow it.

THE SPEAKER: Where you here then?

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Yes Mr Speaker, I was here and I am a Member of Parliament.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Hold on. Mr Speaker, let me say this; you have said in your ruling, to advice Members that used to listen and engage in any civilized discussion. Anytime Honourable Gevao wants to talk, they would just make objections unseemly and you need to respect him; he is a Member of Parliament and a seasoned Lawyer too.

THE SPEAKER: I have already advised against unseemly interruptions but they still continue

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: I will not allow my MPs to do that to you, so I will not accept that one; let us be civil, what is this?

THE SPEAKER: I will again have to appeal through the Leadership of the respective Parties here in Parliament, to convey to their Members the seriousness of the discourse that is taking place; and not to make unseemly interruptions please. If you continue, the heavy hand of my legal powers will fall on you and I would not want that to happen. I do not use the heavy hand lightly; I have had tolerance to a very large extent, although it is not limitless. Carry on please.

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Mr Speaker, my colleague from the other side will agree with me that, the first reading of this Bill had commenced and the second reading had also commenced; we have started debating this Bill. My colleague on the other side including the Leader of the Opposition did not object to the commencement of the second reading; Members have debated extensively, and it is out there to the public...

THE SPEAKER: And it is on-going.

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: It is on-going; we adjourned for the debate to continue. To say we cannot debate when the second reading had already commenced Mr Speaker, I think we would be contravening the process of this particular House. Mr Speaker secondly, if I listened to his argument he says: 'unless and until, the Constitutional Instrument is brought to this House, for those areas to be amended as mentioned in the Bill that has to do with the Constitution, we cannot continue. I take the view that, he is suggesting that they have already conceded that those areas mentioned, were going to be approved which is not the case; that is why he is suggesting that, the Constitutional Instrument comes first and be dealt with, then the provisions as mentioned in the Bill for both of them to be debated. He is suggesting that we would have to approve those provisions first, and such approval can only be considered at Committee Stage. Whether or not a Constitutional Instrument comes, if we get to the Committee Stage, a Member can say no, I do not agree with this

particular portion of the Bill and hence, let us omit it because of such reasons; but we have not got to that stage, the stage at which we are in is that, the second reading had commenced, we have started the debate, and it is out there in public domain; so we are to proceed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my colleague will agree with me that in law, for you to actually prevent a process from going on, there is what we call 'Preliminary Objection'; the author had objected before the commencement of the second reading *[Applause]*. He was here, he did not object and Members on either side, Members from C4C and Members from this end; we debated extensively, I debated and the public heard what I said in relation to the Bill, other Members have debated, why does he wants to stifle our own rights as Members of Parliament, because of his own interest? If he had wanted that interest, he would have objected right from the commencement of the second reading which he did not *[Applause]*. You cannot sleep on your right and then have it; he who comes with equity, must come with clean hands. He has neglected his right of objection, for the commencement of the second reading. Mr Speaker, I beseech you for us to proceed with the second reading as we have already commenced thus *[Applause]*.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, I would not waste too many words; I will be very brief. Firstly, I still want to reemphasise that we objected; secondly, his perception on the way I feel is not correct. I am not anticipating that the amendments could be passed, that is wrong; and thirdly perhaps, and the most important; fortunately, he is a Lawyer, he is talking about preliminary objections, and the non-Lawyers are happy. As a lawyer he knows that, when it comes to jurisdiction at any time, you can take jurisdictional objections; and that is exactly what I am doing *[Applause]*. *[Undertone]*

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you. Mr Speaker, they are talking about taking preliminary objections; whiles we are talking about procedures. Mr Speaker when I started my argument I did say, that we are taking our reference from Section [108] of the Constitution. We are Law-makers, we are not trying to interpret the law; but we look at them directly as we read it, and interpret it in our ways in terms of legislations.

Mr Speaker, the main instance in the Bill and I will repeat myself – proposal, which is on Section [76] and other provisions that even have to do with Chapter [3] of the Constitution, the Fundamental Human Rights. But we have been passing around Section [108] freely; for the edification of the public, I will take them one after the other to read so that people can understand where we are coming from; but they did not say the objective and procedure, they said they are going to read the document because they were not au-fait with the Clauses in the Proposal that was what they submitted and we agreed. Even yesterday, when we were about to discuss the PPRC Bill, they said they needed the soft copy which has not been fully circulated; and we are coming with it. So we had the first reading, and I made the pronouncement through your Speakership that, we can continue when we have the full circulation of the soft copy; and the soft copy is now in full circulation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other is, for the Public Elections Bill; we said we want the announcement to be made to the public, and that was re-echoed too in this Chamber; that we are going to inform the public, so we did not agree on procedures, *[Honourable Ibrahim Ben-Kargbo, please allow me, I am making my point please; I have tremendous respect for you Sir, which I have always maintained]*. This is a House of procedure and Law-making by the Rule of Law, we are not in the jungle, even there, they have some amount of 'rule of Law'. I would want to read Section [108] of the Constitution line by line so that we can understand; they said they cannot debate because they do not have the Instrument, but they have been given an insight of the Clause and Sections in the Constitution that would be amended - the Bill has given an insight of that. Let me read Section [108] of course, I will not border myself to read Section [108], [2c] [ii]: 'A Bill to an Act of Parliament that is, [108] under this Section, shall not be passed by Parliament unless':

A. Before the first reading of the Bill in Parliament, the text of the Bill is published in at least two issues of the Gazette provided, that not less than nine days shall elapse between the first publication of the Bill and in the Gazette, and in the second publication.

And let me now come with the interesting one.

B. the Bill is supported on the second... [Mr Speaker, there are processes]; the Bill is supported on the second and third readings by the votes of not less than two-thirds of Members of Parliament [*Applause*]. Mr Speaker, they have created a scenario to the people as if, they are about passing this Bill into Law; that is their perception, which we would not accept. They have not talked about the process involved if you want to amend the Constitution, or in discussing a Bill; that you should first of all do the Constitutional Amendment no, we have the second reading and we are still on the second reading and we are now going for a third reading. Mr Speaker, let me land; the truth, is the only remedy that can save us so let us not skew our mind because of political belongings. Mr Speaker, we have said that for every Clause at the Committee Stage, for every Clause that we debate; and mind you, the Constitutional Instrument is not just going to be laid, we are also going to amend it before coming in the form of a Bill - it has to go through due processes. We are not completing the debate today, it is going through processes of Section [108] [2B] to be specific. So our colleagues on the other side on that very faithful day, they did not stop us not to continue with the debate because of procedural issues, what they said was that they were not au-fait with the system; which they re-echoed to us. We are now saying that the issue for today is vital, which has to do with elections and the State is very concerned about it, the people you are representing are very concerned; what we need to do, if you have now been au-fait with the document you are telling us that we should authenticate or approve this Constitutional Instrument before finally enacting the Bill into Law? We would accept, but you cannot stop us not to continue with the debate because we do not have the Constitutional Instrument, it is not stated anywhere. I want to assure our colleagues on the other side that for the sake of sincerity of purpose, for the sake of strengthening our electoral system, we have said, let us complete with the Elections Act only and deal with the Constitutional Instrument later.

Finally Sir, I want to re-echo that, we are trying to correct the Mal-Administration; Section [32][ii], you did the re-visiting and we conducted the elections which you have challenged, and you have never accepted, you created a Region but failed to provide an

Electoral Commissioner to represent that region; what you did was, you just provided a Chairman to be added to the other four Commissioners. As a responsible Government, we are now trying to correct your mal-administration; so please, do not stand in our way, allow us to do it *[Applause]* in the interest of the State, you are now telling us to stop the discussion because you do not have the Constitutional Instrument; please tell us if there is any Instrument in your possession, where it is stated that we should stop discussion because you do not have the Constitutional Instrument to be amended? Let us be sincere to our people Sir, let us stop politicizing our ideas for the interest of this nation; it is wrong, let us stop it. Thank you Mr Speaker, I believe you are on track *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Okay.

HON. CHERNOR RM. BAH: Mr Speaker,

THE SPEAKER: Hold on, before I give you the floor, I think I have listened to two submissions here; which seems to confuse the issue. First, was the submission made by the Honourable Member from Koinadugu and I regret to say the second, was the submission just made by the Leader of Government Business; you both referred the House to Section [108], but I cannot see being alive, the relevance of that section in this particular debate for now *[Undertone]*. I am coming, I am coming; are we dealing with a Bill for the alteration of the Constitution? That is what Section [108] addresses;

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Yes, we are dealing with a Bill.

THE SPEAKER: For the alteration of the Constitution?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Of course

THE SPEAKER: I am afraid, no.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Okay, I will show you how.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, if you cannot... let me tell you something please, it is absolutely unacceptable, untenable, to amend the Constitution indirectly.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: Exactly.

THE SPEAKER: You have to do it directly [*Applause*],

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Exactly,

THE SPEAKER: I am coming; therefore, I am coming,

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, can you please use SO [32] to tell Honourable Daniel Koroma to sit down. Whenever the Speaker is speaking, Honourable Daniel Koroma stands up; you people, sit down.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: He referred to me

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, I rise to SO [41] and I read: Mr Speaker, please allow us; you are a senior Member let me read so that you can understand for you to respect the Chair or the Speaker: "Whenever Mr Speaker, or the Chairman, intervenes during the debate, any Member then speaking, or offering to speak, must resume his or her seat, and the House or Committee is to be silent, so that Mr Speaker or the Chairman, may be heard without interruption". Honourable Daniel Koroma, you are a very senior Member of Parliament and I have a tremendous respect for you so respect the Speaker please, this is not good for us, and it will not be sending a good message for both of us, and this Parliament; we have to be disciplined in this House, thank you Mr Speaker. I must raise emphasis to Members to understand, we on this side are disciplined and so we have respect for the Chair; but you are not.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, let us...

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: Mr Speaker, we are also disciplined on this side.

THE SPEAKER: Alright, fine; you are both professing discipline, and I hope you will live up to your professions. Now, let us come back to the issue, I have heard mentioned being made of Section [108]; and it specifically addresses the manner in which the Constitution can be altered. I had asked whether the Bill before us, addresses alteration of the Constitution.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Chairman yes, it has.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Honourable Daniel Koroma, you have not been given the floor.

THE SPEAKER: I have not yet given you the floor,

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member from Pujehun has been taking your role since morning.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: And you and the Honourable Daniel Koroma have been doing the same.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: No, no, Mr Speaker, look at what he is doing as a very senior Member; you have asked a specific question to the Honourable Member.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Honourable Daniel Koroma and I came here together; we came in the same year, so he is also a senior Member.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: Mr Speaker, you threw a question to the Honourable Member for him to respond; in attempting to respond... *[Interruption]*

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: He did not, the question was not directed to him; he needs to wait, please wait.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: So to who was the question directed?

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: It was a general question; it was not directed to him.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: From the Speaker? So he is interpreting it for the Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Alright! Have you finished *[Laughter]*

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: Mr Speaker, I wonder what's the relationship is like between you and the Chief Whip, because he is always fighting for you?

THE SPEAKER: Have you finished now? Alright! Honourable Member from Koinadugu, will you want to respond?

Suspension of SO [5][2]

THE SPEAKER: No, no, I have been interrupted by the procedures of the House, not by somebody *[Laughing]*. Now, this is an interesting debate, is a very interesting one; I think in this Fifth Parliament, this is by far the most interesting debate I have

encountered. Let me now then specifically, asks the Honourable Member from Koinadugu; in your opinion, this Bill that is presently before us namely; the Public Elections Act, is it a Bill that intends to alter the Constitution? I want your honest opinion about this.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Very well Mr Speaker, clearly; this Bill has abundant provisions that amounts to an attempt in altering the Constitution, and I will show you few of the following, few of such attempts to alter the Constitution. Mr Speaker, Section [32][viii] of the Constitution, talks about the misbehaviour of the Electoral Commissioner being reasons for his removal. One of the reasons for removal of the Electoral Commissioner, Section [32] challenges that through [viii]; it says: for misbehaviour, you can be removed.

This Bill is now trying to alter that provision in Clause [5][1A]; it is saying, let it be gross misconduct rather than misbehaviour as a reason for removal as espoused by Act No. 6 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

In [76][1A], for the qualification to be Member of Parliament: [1A] clearly states that you need not be a dual citizen; a dual citizen cannot be qualified to be a Member of Parliament...

THE SPEAKER: No, no, you need not debate while answering a question.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I am answering the question; the Constitution says, a dual citizen is not qualified to be a Member of Parliament. Clause [44][i] of the Bill is now saying that, it is no longer necessary; in other words, if Clause [44][i] should pass then Dual Citizens would have no more conflict with the Law, in becoming Members of Parliament.

THE SPEAKER: Clause [44][i].

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Clause [44][i] of the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: He is talking about this Bill.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Yes Sir, he is not there.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Well, listen to me now; I will tell you.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: But you are interpreting it, it is not there.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I will tell you the reason for the absence; I will tell you okay, why it is not there, and that is exactly the point I am making as it has been coined. For the edification of the public, let us all read Clause [44][i].

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Mr Speaker, Clause [44][i] speaks about the nomination of a Presidential candidate in the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: I am sure, you meant another provision.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Yes, [43][ii] sorry.

THE SPEAKER: Please, allow him.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: [43][ii], the provisions are listed there as those qualified to be Members of Parliament. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when you read this provision,

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Let him read.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I am reading, now I will read: Mr Speaker, you have now seen the gross violation of the concerns raised by the Leader of Government Business *[Interruptions]...*

HON. ABDUL KARGBO: Mr Speaker, Point of Order Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON. ABDUL KARGBO: Mr Speaker, you have cautioned the comportment of Members of Parliament and I am sure your warning was apt but it is so unfortunate that even after you warning, Members of Parliament are unprocedurally, using the microphones to give undertones which is unparliamentary; similarly, I want... yes, couple of seconds ago, the Leader of Government Business did say his side over there are very discipline as comparative to us. I want to state it to you very clearly that, no Member on this aisle has ever used these microphones since the beginning of this sitting; so it is very unparliamentary *[Undertones]* yes, no Member on this side has ever

used the microphone to give an undertone; so to me Mr Speaker, you should be able to talk to the dog as well as the bone.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you. Mr Speaker, I still reckon with the provisions in the Standing Orders; but I did not say the other side is not disciplined, I did not. What I said was that, we on this side are disciplined and the Honourable Chernor Maju Bah, Leader of the Opposition, said we on this side we are disciplined too which I said was good. But Mr Speaker, for us to come to conclusion comfortably, we have not seen anywhere in the Bill that is directly telling us to amend the Constitution, the provision is not stated, it is not there; these are speculations that you are dealing with, you are directly saying, we want to amend [76][A], [76][i] it is not there [*Undertone*] let me land. Mr Speaker with your presiding skills, because I have seen where they are coming from, they do not want us to proceed; but as for us here, we have the people at heart. Mr Speaker, the Order Paper we have in front of us is dealing directly with amendments of the Public Elections Act 2012, that is what we have; we do not have in front of this House today, anything that is talking about amendment of the Constitution so we have deviated from the agenda we have before us, we have completely deviated from that so Mr Speaker, please bring us to speed, bring us to Order.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, thank you. Now, please let us maintain decorum and then try to bring this discussion to a close, I plead with all sides of the aisle. My reason for asking the question was that I am sure some of you would understand; it was deliberate and was meant to be listened and responded to, in order to guide my own thinking. Maybe, I am not seeing what you have seen; but one thing I do know for sure is that, the Constitution cannot be amended indirectly - there has to be a Bill, whose purport is specifically to amend the Constitution, and for that the Leader of Government Business has assured the House that come Tuesday next, there would be an Instrument that will be laid in this House for that purpose [*Undertone*], I am coming. Let me come back to the Leader of the Opposition because, there is just a slight area of difference between us [*Undertone*]. Which one? He was endeavouring to answer?

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: I will just tell you simply, but the Attorney-General will confirm it to you.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, go ahead.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: In this Bill Mr Speaker, they are attempting to reduce the time to resign to be a Member of Parliament from 12 months to 6 months, it is in here Mr Speaker...

THE SPEAKER: Sorry, say that again?

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: Section [76] of the Constitution gives the qualifications to be a Member of Parliament and when to resign to contest.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, I know.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: And this Bill is attempting to reduce the 12 month's qualification to 6 months, which is constitutional in this document all of us knows that NEC did their submission and they are trying to justify it; it is in this document, the 2-sim is here dual nationality it is in the Bill, it is in here *[Undertone]*. They are aware of that and the Attorney-General is a man of his words, he has integrity. He is a Lawyer and a senior one too; in fact, he is the Titular head of the Bar.

THE SPEAKER: Let me hear from the AG - the learned Attorney-General, can you comment on the last point made by the Leader of the Opposition?

MOHAMED LAMIN TARAWALLY [ATTORNEY-GENERAL]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have listened to the arguments from both sides of the aisle; Mr Speaker, one thing I would say for sure and for certain is that, the Bill that is before the House which I am piloting is in the progressive stage, it is a process. The issues which they have raised as constitutional amendment for such provisions, we are very much aware of that and as the Leader of Government Business said, it is our view, our intention, to table those by next week Tuesday. Mr Speaker, we started the process by debating the Public Elections Bill which if everything goes on well, will become an Act; but Mr Speaker, up to that stage we are not attempting to change, or alter, or interfere, with any provision of the Constitution without going through the due process *[Applause]*.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: The Titular head of the Bar, so this is not about Junior and Senior he is head of the Bar; even I myself, I am under his tutelage. Mr Speaker, you have asked a specific question, and it needs to be answered.

THE SPEAKER: Would you kindly now draw the attention of the House to that specific Provision.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: Mr Speaker, I just want him to be aware that this Bill is attempting to reduce the time to resign from Government Service to become a Member of Parliament from 12 months to 6 months; that is it.

THE SPEAKER: The period for resignation?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: No Mr Speaker, I beg; I have asked a question saying that we really want to see the direct change because, I have read the Order Paper wherein we are talking about the 2022 Bill for Public Elections, and we are about to amend that of 2012, which is still in existence; so they are saying they have concerns for direct amendment by reducing the 12 months to 6 month.

THE SPEAKER: No, there is a very fundamental issue – which is, that the Constitution cannot be amended say by direct means and not indirect means; and what the Leader of the Opposition has said is that, there is an attempt in this Bill to amend Section [76][i] and I want confirmation as to whether that is so or not.

MOHAMED LAMIN TARAWALLY: Mr Speaker, I may want to continue.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please.

MOHAMED LAMIN TARAWALLY: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in answering to the Leader of the Opposition Honourable Chernor Bah; from the Bill that he has before him, and that which is before you Mr Speaker, there is no expressed provision in that Bill saying that the requirement for Parliamentarians is from 12 months to 6 months *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker,

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, it is not there; it is not in the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: Let us allow the learned Attorney to land, please.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, with your leave Sir; I now know that they are confusing themselves based on the explanation they heard from NEC, that is what they are referring to. We are now talking about the Bill in question...

THE SPEAKER: I have directed the question to the AG.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, we know that...

THE SPEAKER: Wait for him to answer.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: But you were not there at the Committee Stage, that is why we are explaining to you; they are using this presentation SO [2] 'gee am mek e see am', we want them to understand that.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, I am not going to look at it; my question was specific, show me in this Bill the provision that attempted to amend the Constitution.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, both of us started this together; but let us please go through it now step by step, and I will show you both in the Bill and in the Constitution, I think that will solve it.

THE SPEAKER: No, but you started quoting Section [44] and so on, referring me to [44] which has nothing to do with this; let me listen to your Leader because, your Leader came more specifically on that point, the point about... *[Interruption]* I have not given you the floor, do not get me confused.

HON. ABDUL S. MARRAY CONTEH: Mr Speaker, just a minute; now that we have thought of what and what's not in the Bill, what is and what is not in the presentation; one of the ways that we can bring this to a smooth conclusion is when we proceed with what we have before us the second reading, bring it to its conclusion and then, move forward; but we are now stock along the way.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, wait a minute; you are Chairman of the Legislative Committee okay? The Leader of the Opposition has made a specific reference to Section [76][i]; is there any provision in this Bill that attempts to amend that provision?

HON. ABDUL S. MARRAY CONTEH: No, Mr Speaker; the document we have in front of us is the Bill, and what they are talking about is the proposal which is in the presentation, so the presentation is not what is in front of us in this Well.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON. CHERNOR R M. BAH: I will just make mention of one, but I will go back to the bases; we have now been told in this House that the presentation they did is contradicting the Bill they have submitted to the House, that is very serious; this is their presentation done during the pre-Legislative hearing, this is the information they have passed on to Members of Parliament including myself, so your presentation must be consistence with the document you have brought to the House *[Interruption]*; No, no, Mr Speaker, let me finish.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Honourable colleagues on this other side, I do not want to hear from any of you; please, let us give him chance.

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: But Mr Leader, they are my friends; do not get worried about them.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Go ahead.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, if they are now saying that their presentation to the Committee which is in this document stating clearly under bullet point 6, of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone section 76][1B]; '12 month's period for the resignation of Civil Servants and Public Officers, receiving salaries from the Consolidated Fund and who wish, to contest for both the Presidential and Parliamentary election is too long'.

THE SPEAKER: Are you reading from the Bill?

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: No, no, I am reading from the angle...

THE SPEAKER: Thank you; that answers my question.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: I am bridging them together; Mr Speaker, let me now take you to the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, take me to the Bill.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Presume you have the Bill Mr Speaker. Clause [42][iv] now we know NEC was confusing us; there are many others in this Bill, you have read it Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Clause [42][iv], what is it telling you?

THE SPEAKER: but wait a minute, before we continue, this deals with a separate and different issue.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: No, no, what I am saying is there are many others.

THE SPEAKER: I would want to first of all get confirmation.

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

THE SPEAKER: As to whether [76][i] to which you made reference to, is in the Bill.

HON. CHERONR R.M. BAH: Thank you very much. Mr Speaker, let me simply tell you; what I did was as a result of what NEC submitted to us.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: I referred to their power point presentation and made my submission.

THE SPEAKER: Ignore the power point, because that is not before me.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: I agree Mr Speaker, now that I know they have misinformed us, I am simply withdrawing that. I will now take you to Clause [42][iv], as I referenced just now. Mr Speaker, I am waiting for him [*Undertone*], Clause [42][iv] in the Bill; no, he says he wants the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: Fine; on this 44?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, before I left impromptu, I posed a question to my colleagues on the other side, for them to show me in the Bill where exactly we are altering the Constitution.

THE SPEAKER: No, they have withdrawn Section [76]

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: I am coming, let me land.

THE SPEAKER: He has withdrawn Section [76]

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: There were two presentations made; one, the proposed Constitutional Amendment which I said I will lay next week, that has to do with the first Clause in the presentation done at Committee Room 1; Section [32][ii] is not here, it is in the Constitutional Instrument, Clause [42][iv] is not anywhere in this presentation. What we have done inter alia, we have laid the basis using the Bill to amend the Constitution; that is what we have done but we have not done any direct amendment because we cannot amend the Constitution directly. We have not done any Constitutional amendment directly using this presentation; saying we are going to amend Section 76[i], or we are going to amend Section 32[ii] we have not done that one. I beg to differ, and I challenged the question that they have posed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when I started the argument, I teased them that as against next week, I will be laying the Constitutional Instrument; I have pleaded with them for us to continue with the debate, we have not used this Bill to amend any portion in the Constitution [*Applause*]. Mr Speaker, for the sake of sincerity of purpose, for the good of this nation, let them allow us to continue with the debate to the second reading; I beg of them through your Leadership because it is not indicated anywhere for them to hold us to ransom, thank you.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker, we would not hold this House to ransom. The Leader himself has confirmed that they are not in a hurry because, this document will not take effect until we deal with the Constitutional Amendment. I have just referred that to you please calm down, relax, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I am extremely relaxed [*Laughter*]! I am just concerned about you.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: No, no, no, I am very relaxed; I have just referred you to one of the Clauses but I would not want us to go away from that, is that clause not attempting to amend the Constitution [*Undertone*]? No, no, no, the Constitution is very clear that it is the President that will fix the date; it is very specific, not as stated here.

Mr Speaker, you would also want to go to Sub-clause 2[b]; the number of Electoral Commissioners. As of now, it is fixed in the Constitution...

THE SPEAKER: Which Clause?

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Clause [2] Sub-clause 2[b]; as of now, in the Constitution it is fixed [*Undertone*] I agree yes, that is what we are saying; thank you very much Honourable Member. Mr Leader, do not get yourself worried, we would finish at the right time. Mr Speaker, have you seen it?

THE SPEAKER: I have seen Clause 42[iv]

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: No, no, when you see Clause 42[iv]; now go to Clause [2], Sub-clause [2b].

THE SPEAKER: Is it another one?

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Yes Sir; they had not wanted to give us time to read the document [*Undertone*]. It is not enough.

THE SPEAKER: Please, I am addressing the question to your Leader

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: No, it is for the rest of your membership.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: I am re-echoing your voice, so it goes to the back.

THE SPEAKER: Does he need it? I think your voice is loud enough and there is no need for any amplification

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Honourable Hassan Sesay does not need it but I need it Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Which Clause again?

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Clause [2], Sub-clause [2b] [Undertone]. Take your time and read; SO[2] "na savis-man role dis" *[Laughing]*: the Attorney-General, the Leader of Government Business, the Deputy Minister of Justice... no, no, no. Have you seen it Mr Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: Yes, I have.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: That is also attempting to amend the Constitution. And I would want you to go back to what you have started off with; keep to it Mr Speaker. S.O [2] 'Savis man nor for amend di Constitution'. *[Interruptions]*

THE SPEAKER: Please allow me, as I want to address one last question. Let me come back to you, Leader of the Opposition; I really want to satisfy myself about an issue which is still lingering. Do you think that proceeding with this Bill will in any way prejudice the position of your side? And frankly *[Interruption]*,

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Mr Speaker trust me, I am genuinely making that submission

THE SPEAKER: Because I will not allow any side to be prejudiced in their position by any consideration of any Bill before this House. I would please want you to let this House know, of the extent to which you feel your position will be prejudiced by continuing with the Second Reading of this Bill.

HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, since this issue is subjective and would be difficult to quantify, I will tell you. Mr Speaker, for us on this side, I would tell you that in making our debate effective is by convincing colleagues right across the aisle to be in support of some of our positions eventually, which we would want them to support. At this stage, if we attempt to do that, it would not help in making our debate effective.

THE SPEAKER: So, it is a question of effectiveness of the debate on your side?

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

THE SPEAKER: Can I have both the Leaders to come forward to me please?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, I would want please to make a final presentation before I could go up to you Sir; I will start with it one after the other. He said, we are about to do Constitutional Amendment using the Bill, by altering the Constitution indirectly.

THE SPEAKER: instead of that, he said by way of an Instrument to which you made reference to.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: yes, exactly.

THE SPEAKER: And that is untenable, you must accept it.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Yes Sir, untenable; we cannot dispute that. They have made claims that, we are using the Bill to amend the Constitution; to which I said there must be a basis for creating that platform, but to say a 'direct amendment' using the Constitutional Instrument citing those provisions: [76], 32[ii] as stated is not there. For me, there is need for us to continue with the debate, it is quite in place; I have made series of references because I had read the provisions one after the other – [108] of them, but by doing so tactically, we have also been skilfully debating; so I really do not know what he is talking about because we have not abrogated any provision whatsoever. They have only decided to put a spanner into the work of the Commission, the Monster that is not helping us in anyway; if it has been directly stated that Section [76] is going to be altered from 12 months to 6 months, and if it is found in there I would have then withdrew all of those documents for us to have waited until we get them finished, I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I want to address the question to you, the same question that I had addressed to the Leader of the Opposition. The question is: whether his position will be prejudiced in any way, if we were to continue with the second reading to finality. Let me also ask you in like manner, as to whether your Opposition would be prejudiced in any way if we discontinue the discussion on the second reading?

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Yes Sir; we have the E.C.O.W.A.S Protocol which says: six months towards election, you should not do any major changes to the Electoral Laws, you should not [*Applause*] so calculate the time - you should do registration of

voters in September and this is June. So Mr Speaker, how is it possible for us to use two weeks in enacting this Law? We will be going for recess towards the end on July which is part of our mandate for us to resume at the end of August; so we should not do any major changes within a six month's period towards Election [*Undertones in interruptions*].

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I am standing down the House for 10 minutes and I would invite the Leaders: that of the Opposition, Government Business, C4C and NGC, to my Chambers right away.

The House stood down at 12:35p.m.

The House resumed at 12:55p.m.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the House will continue with the debate on the second reading, but we will not conclude the second reading today; so who ever wishes to take the floor is at liberty to catch my eye and participate in the debate. Yes, the Honourable Member from Kono.

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

THE SPEAKER: Let me just caution all of you; if you know that you have already taken the floor under SO [32][xii], so you are free to participate in the debate subject to that Standing Order. The Honourable Member. Mind you, I will be guided by the Clerks for any violation of SO [32][xii].

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Bill before us - The Electoral Bill 2012 which is to be amended. We would want to look at some few issues; because Sierra Leone is a practicing 'Democratic State' which the definition is simply referred to as: 'Democracy is the Government of the People, by the People and for the People' that means; the people themselves, are the electorates who are electing us to come to this Parliament to represent them and hence, the issue of Proportional Representation is not a good suggestion. In 2001, somebody who has served at the United Nations for over ten years, he became our President; and that is the late Ahmed Tejan-Kabbah of blessed memories. He looked at the accessibility, the data; I am first

of all talking about the 2002 Proportional Representation [*Undertone*], it was also a national election which was a District Block system that was used in 2002; but the amendment was done in 2001. In 1996, it was not a District Block but a Proportional Representation and that is what I am referring to; because the President thought that the country was not accessible by individual Constituencies, they brought in the District Blocked System into play as the data was not correct, some of the villages were not accessible because of the rebel war, though 2002 was declared as end of the rebel war. In its widest imagination looking at our democracy, he brought back the Constituency Systems in 2007; because best practice in democracy has to be done by election of People from different Constituencies to vote in for their candidates to represent them. If the 2002 election was a fine democratic principle which was the District Blocked System, he would have also conducted the 2007 elections in that direction; but because he knew that the people themselves are part of the electioneering process, the governance system, that is why he allowed the Constituency System in 2007. Consistently in 2012, we also conducted the elections at Constituency level as well as in 2018; but the Bill before us because of the amendment of Section [38], which is saying that we should go back to the Distract Blocked System - just for that simple reason.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, point of order! Do we have any amendment of Section [38]? Can you allow me; I am talking to the Speaker? Sit down for now, you cannot be allowed to stupid us; Mr Speaker,

THE SPEAKER: Order, order.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: He is referring us to the amendment of Section [38] in Clause [57], let me now educate him; there is no amendment in that Bill, but Clause [57] made reference to the two Sections in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone Act No.6 as amended in 2001 and the 1996 for the two elections to be conducted either at Constituency Based Level or by District Block System which did not seek any provision to be amended in this Bill; so that is the correction for your edification.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: The Leader is misconstruing my statement; I had said that the amendment which was done in 2001 of Section [38], is what you are now using again for a District Block System; that is the fact, it is true.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, point of order again; we who have read, let us educate him: he has not exhaustively read Section [38] that is why the grumbling, because there are provisions in that Section of the Constitution before talking about Section [38][A] as amended in 2001. When you shall have exhausted Section [38], you would now come to Section 38[A] as provided for; there should first be that need for such circumstance to prevail in bringing up a District Block System, there should be that need if not, there is no way you can just take the District block systems because it has to be first introduced; you have to first of all exhaust Section [38] before going to Section [38] [A], I rest my case; that is your edification my brother *[Applause]*.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Mr Leader, where then is the proposal by the National Electoral Commission [N.E.C] in the Bill?

THE SPEAKER: Ok let us be clear; Honourable Member, what is abundantly clear here is that Clause [57] does not seek to introduce anything new but rather, simply affirming two existing situations: that contained in Section [38][ii] and the District Block Representation System, contained in the Section [38][A]; it is affirming an existing situation and not introducing a new situation please.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Very well understood Mr Speaker; I knew it has not been introduced for the very first time but my concern is for international best practice and democracy which should reflect the views of the Nation. In comparison with these two electoral processes – that of the Constituencies Systems and the District Block System, the fate of a Member of Parliament. Looking at this Fifth Parliament, Members do not visit their Constituencies and interface with their Constituents, they themselves knew very well that they can hold to account those representing them in Parliament but with the District Block System, they could no longer be held accountable to the people as such, we cannot refer to this system as a better democratic process; that is my bone of contention, and also the proposal is looking at the 30 per cent quota for women.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Point of Order Mr Speaker! Before we went for break, you made your position clear on this issue that we are not discussing the proposal but rather, the Bill which is before us; so please, let us concentrate on it *[Undertone]*.

THE SPEAKER: But it is the Bill

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Yes, but he is talking about proposal; which is not in front of us, so let us talk about the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: What proposal?

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Sorry, the Presentation *[Undertone]*.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, that is not before us; what is before Parliament is the Bill, ignore that presentation, treat it as if it never existed.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Mr Speaker, the presentation of the Attorney-General in this House, spoke about all those things and that is the Bill that is before us.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, what you say in this House is more reliable than what the Anthony-General says; so let us concentrate on the Bill you have instructed us to focus on, and not the presentation.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Honourable Member from Pujehun, the Attorney-General before us is representing the State, and he is the piloter of this particular Bill; so if he is before and did his presentation, we are debating what the Attorney-General presented to us.

HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of Government Business stood up on an objection and you ruled because it was him. The Honourable Member, that is making his submission now you have also ruled by referring this House to Clause [57], and you reaffirmed it; so I do not know why we are now talking of Proposals and the Bill when you yourself have confirmed that his reference is contained in the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: I have referred the Honourable Member owing to the fact that what is contained in Clause [57] is not new, it is a re-affirmation of an existing situation; the first part of [57], is already contained in Section [38], Sub-section [2] of the Constitution. The second part is contained in Section [38][A], that was enacted in 2001; so Honourable Member, please confine your remarks to those provisions.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: And Section [38] which you have spoken about, has bearing with the District Block System; not so?

THE SPEAKER: yes, it does.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: And in Section [73][iii] of the Constitution states that: 'Parliament may make laws for peace, Security, order and good government of Sierra Leone'; so whatsoever that is contentious, that has security threats, chaos, that would also disenfranchise our electorate we need to actually deviate from that Mr Speaker, because the people themselves that voted for us in 2008 before coming here are out there, for which thorough sensitisations were done across Constituencies but we were told that the District Block System will not favour them; and if that system will not be favourable for them, then I, as a Representative of Constituency 025, wants to submit to this House that, they are against the District Block System of Parliament. Again...

THE SPEAKER: Please allow the Honourable Member to make his position known.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Honourable Members let me tell you that I cannot be intimidated; Section [27][iii] of the Constitution states that, there should not be any segregation. Talking about the 30 percent quota system wherein any one member out of the three should be a female from the District, which seems to be very discriminatory and my people of Constituency 025 did not also agree with that; but it can also be coined...

THE SPEAKER: Are you sure?

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Yes, Mr Speaker; that was what my people told me to pass on to this House.

THE SPEAKER: Are you sure that the women in your Constituency would not like to see an increase in Women's' Representation in this House?

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Mr Speaker, I am specifically talking about Constituency 025 and not just Women; and that is why we have ways that women can be incorporated. For instance the Gender Bill, wherein it was vetted in Committee Room One; for every District to submit a single woman to represent them in Parliament [*Undertones*], and if they are sixteen in number just as with the fourteen Districts; if we have females from

across the sixteen Districts, they can represent their Colleagues in Parliament while the remaining Constituencies be voted for, be you male or female so we have to be very much careful when enacting laws in this House. Mr Speaker, we know very well that you were one of the best Members of Parliament; and of your age, you can best advice His Excellency the President and even the Executive, about certain laws which should not just favour an individual because posterity will tell, for it not to hunt you in future.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me now go to the dual-citizenship which was presented by the Attorney-General [*Undertones*]. In the last debate by the Deputy Leader, he spoke about Dual-Citizenship, so for a dual-citizen to leave America or Europe to come to Sierra Leone as a citizen of another country to also contest for a Member of Parliament, is not good for us as a nation; and the discriminatory aspect of it is that you can contest for a Member of Parliament but cannot be qualified for the Presidency. So what qualifies somebody to be a Member of Parliament should also qualify that candidate to become a President; and how can these two statements be synergised as was said by the Attorney-General? We have to be mindful of what we do as a nation, because we are representing our people; democracy has to be governmentally favourable as well as for the people themselves who voted us to this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, going back to the District Block System; that if there is a Constituency in a district wherein somebody will not be representing his or her people because the onus lies with the Party Leaders who have the right to make list of people eligible for submission to NEC and if a candidate is not favoured by him or her, then that Constituency will be left out; which is not good for us as a nation because, the list is going to be prepared discriminatorily as well as with smaller parties as a way of eliminating them because looking at the percentage that is going to be designed by NEC, smaller parties could not be represented and the people from that particular Constituency had their own son to represent them well in Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, take a look at Kono District for instance, with nine Constituencies; because of the love for that particular person in that party, they would

vote for that party even though the candidate may be number nine on the list; such a decision has to be taken by the party leaders. For heaven's sake, that will create a kind of pandemonium within the system of those political parties.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when you listen to the presentation being made by the Attorney-General; Section [27][iii] spoke about discrimination of women. According to the Gender Bill, Paramount Chiefs and Civil Society Organisations [CSOs], have the right to identify Constituencies to be allocated to those women; which is very much discriminatory. What if the CSOs or the Paramount Chiefs there, will just sit in his or her small corner to select Constituency candidates to be allocated to those women and that besides Mr Speaker, when you also look at the representation that women are going to be part of a particular Constituency, they would come to Parliament only once; so we are talking of a huge turn-over after every five years for those women that would be allocated to that particular seat...

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker point of order! We are Law-makers and presumed you have participated a lot in the Gender Bill discussions; we have had so much discussion on the Bill which seeks to address Gender Parity. But we have a Bill before us wherein female can be represented, CSOs can also come in; he attended the pre-legislative briefing and he is fully aware, women are the highest number of our population - 52% of the population. We are not saying that we are going to give them on a pro-bono basis, but they made their presentation to Parliament in the Bill for which there was a pre-legislative briefing; so we are trying to encourage them to look at other parameters to ensure that a proper Bill is done. For you to say that women would just be coming and going; I am kindly asking you to please refer us to what you have cited even though, with all of such edification given to us at the pre- legislative briefing.

HON. PAUL S. SAM: Honourable Leader, you were in that pre-leg when the presentation was made.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: You started and then made reference, so refer us please

HON. PAUL S. SAM: I do not have the document with me but everybody was informed that the Paramount Chiefs, the CSOs, are going to look at a particular Constituency and identify a particular candidate to be allocated.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, point of order. Mr Speaker, for the progress of this House, we on this side, beg to differ from what he has said; we have the Bill here, and there is nothing like that in it so women must be respected, if we want gender parity, we must be serious about it; let us not cry them down but look out for ways and means as to how we can help our policies not to discriminate against them so let be very careful with the way we deal with women in this country 52% of our population is women so we need to take care of them. Let us not skew our policies in order to disadvantage them, so I rest my case; I beg my colleague from the other side, to refrain from that for the good of the women of this country, I thank you Mr Speaker.

HON. PAUL A. SAM: Mr Leader in my submission, I told you of Constituency 025; that was where we had an engagement with them. Yesterday, there was a town hall meeting wherein the people of Kono said that they would not be part of all those things. I have made mention of them here - the District Block System and the 30% Quota for women and also the dual citizenship.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, point of order again; I beg. You have said that you were doing consultation, for which a pronouncement was made by me and Mr Speaker you endorsed and that you were encouraging the public to tender their opinions or contributions towards the Public Elections Bill via-a-viz, other Bills we have; we did the same for the Gender Bill and that is why we are still waiting for the public to come up with those contributions. If you now have such documents in your possession, I am expecting you to tender it right away otherwise, let him hold his peace and not talk about it any longer; he needs to tender it here.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Leader, the way I understood the Honourable Member is simply that, he is conveying to us what his Constituents have told him to be brought to the attention of the House which he is entitled to do; we may agree or disagree with him

but is doing his duty as a Member of Parliament, representing that particular constituency. Proceed.

HON. PAUL A. SAM: Thank you very much Mr Speaker; and that is why, there is fear with the District Block System; when the system would come into play and there are Bills or difficult issues to be discussed, you would not have a Constituency wherein you can go and discuss with your people because it is the Party Leadership that would go to them to hold discussions except, when it is being discussed in the Well here. Talking about best practice, when there is critical issues within a country; and in this House, there are Bills that we need to discuss as we would need to take those Bills to our Constituents for them to look at them very closely and explain to them but Mr Speaker with the District Block System, that will not be the case. Because of that, we prefer by the mandate of my people of Constituency 025 that: they are opposing to the dual citizenship, the gender Bill – the 30% Quota and that is what I am presenting to the House. I thank you very much Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution to the debate; I would now recognise the Honourable Member from Pujehun.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we must be seen doing justice to ourselves and to this country. The Bill before us, has some positive aspects of it; but people are only dwelling on what as far as they are concerned, that would disadvantage them politically. I do believe that we must commend the Attorney-General and his team, for putting some positive initiatives in the Bill that is before us; for example, one of those areas as far as I am concerned is the fact that, they are proposing for us to have a specified date for election in this country for me, that is good [*Applause*]. When once a specified date is given for elections; that will even guide us as Politicians, as Political Parties, as to how we can better prepare ourselves to face such elections. But then, most speakers are only dwelling on either Dual-Citizenship or the 30% Quota etcetera. Like the last speaker said -the Honourable Member from Kono, that he is in support of women but his

Constituents have told him that they should not support the District Block System. Let me refer you to Section 59[ii] of the Bill before us and it reads Mr Speaker:...

THE SPEAKER: And can you decide on this please?

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Section 59[ii] of the Public Elections Act *[Applause]*; you can read it for yourself. Mr Speaker with your leave, it reads: for every three candidates nominated under Sub-section [1] of them, shall be a female. He was telling us that his people said, they should not be in support of the District Block System; but as far as this Bill is concerned, it is more advantageous for women than any of us here because, it clearly gives the advantage to women than in the selection of candidates to be represented here that, in every two nominations of candidates by a Political Party, the number three has to be a women; there is nothing good than that if you are really in support of women. Therefore, we must be seen doing justice to our people and I don't think if any woman in anybody's Constituency, can go against such proposal *[Applause]* and for anyone claiming that he must have been told by his or her Constituents that he should go against such proposal meaning, the person might not be doing justice to himself. Being on records, let us be mindful of our people as they are following-up such conversations here, and we cannot lie to them because they trusted us and that was why they elected us to represent them so we cannot tell lies on their behalf; let us be mindful about that please.

HON. PAUL A. SAM: Mr Speaker, this is unparliamentarily he has to withdraw this statement; that is a statement made by my Constituents which I presented to this House, so let him withdraw it Mr Speaker.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: What? It was a general statement that I made.

HON. PAUL A. SAM: I am not a liar, and that was what was submitted to me on behalf of my Constituents; so Mr Speaker, he should withdraw that statement because it is unparliamentarily.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: The Presiding Officer here, is the Speaker

HON. PAUL A. SAM: Mr Speaker, he has to withdraw that statement

THE SPEAKER: the use of the word lying, is unparliamentarily.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: I withdraw the word 'lie' Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: But we must be seen doing justice to our people, we must be seen telling the truth to our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like I said, there are much more positive aspects of the Bill before us; such advantage has been given to women for them to represent the others because when you look at both sides of the aisle, you can see that men do dominate the Well and therefore, there is nothing good as far as I am concerned than giving them that advantage *[Applause]*. Also, if you conduct an election in my Constituency today, I am going to win.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like I initially said, let us dwell on the positive aspects of the Bill that is before us. In my view we said, people were raising the issue of six month's resignation and the Leader of Government Business said that the Bill before us, made no mention of that; so as far as I am concerned, let us focus on what is before us and leave out what we thought were supposed to be in the Bill. To me also, on the aspect of the District Block System, there is an amended Act already which does not fall within our domain; so there is no need discussing anything around it because, it is an amended document way ahead before our coming here to Parliament. As far as I am concerned, I do believe that it has got nothing to do with what we are discussing. On that note Mr Speaker, I had just wanted to clarify most of the dishonesty possibly, some Members may want to claim saying that, they have been sent by their people to communicate such messages *[Applause]*. My advice to Honourable Members is that, let us be seen doing justice to the nation and to our people.

HON. PAUL A. SAM: Mr Speaker, point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Yes

HON. PAUL A. SAM: Mr Speaker, I stand on S.O [34]. If the Honourable Member is dishonest, I am not, if he is a liar, I am not; so he has to be mindful of that. Thank you very much.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker few moments ago, Honourable Kemokai used the word 'lie' and you told him to withdraw, which he did; so you should similarly ask the Honourable Member to withdraw that word 'lie'.

HON. PAUL A. SAM: I did not say he is a liar; I said 'if', understand the language; if he is a liar, I am not a liar.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, I am sure I have the floor; he said if he is a liar [*Undertones*] that is the point I am making, the word 'liar' is unparliamentary; so I am asking him to withdraw those words: 'if he is a liar'.

HON. ABU KEMOKAI: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it was a caution to Members that we must be seen to be honest to our people; I did not say that the Honourable Member is dishonest to his people. If you are dishonest, that is not my concern I was just giving a piece of advice that we must be seen doing justice and be honest to our people. On that note Honourable Members, like I said in my personal view as an elected Member of this House, I do believe that the proposal for the six month's resignation, is not reasonable and it is not before us as we have dealt with that. On that note Honourable Members, I want to caution all of us that in our submission, let us be sincere, let us be honest to our people. I thank you so much Mr Speaker [*Applause*].

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution to the debate; is this the first time you are asking for the floor on this Bill? I am just checking my records; you have the floor.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Thank you very much Mr Speaker,
Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to take this opportunity to thank the...

THE SPEAKER: Hold on, hold on; I am watching out for something [*Undertone*] no, no, I do not think so

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, that is Africana with is a long-sleeve; what you told us was that, we should not bring in short-sleeve Africana to the House but that is a long-sleeved Africana Mr Speaker [*Undertone*]. That is how they dress in Moyamba.

THE SPEAKER: Which part of Moyamba? I know Moyamba very well, which part? Rotifunk

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Thank you very much Mr Speaker for your observation, we are promoting local content.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Minister

HON. DR. MARK M. KALAKOH: Mr Speaker, I stand on S.O [34]; the Honourable Member from Moyamba debated last week.

THE SPEAKER: Did he? I have the record of the debaters here, and his name is not amongst them; so your record is wrong, Honourable Member.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Thank you Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please be seated.

Honourable Members, please take your seats; it is a great privilege and honour for us to welcome to the Well of our Parliament, the Honourable Vice President of the Republic of Liberia who combines that position, with the Office of the President of the Senate of Liberia [*Applause*]. Madam Vice President and President of the Senate of the Republic, you are most heartily welcome to the Well of the House of the Parliament of Sierra Leone [*Applause*].

HON. Her name please?

THE SPEAKER: I think the Honourable visitor, deserves a louder welcome than this [*Applause*] thank you very much. Very well, continue with the debate after which, the Honourable Vice President has graciously agreed to make few comments to the House. You may continue.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: I want to thank the Attorney-General and the entire Ministry and other staff, for putting this document together. Before going to the Bill

proper, I just want to advance some points in the form of benefits if we have the PR system introduced into our electoral cycle once more. One amongst them will be; national cohesion.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with the Propositional Representation, we will be able to achieve national collusion after the election if this Bill is passed into an Act, Members from both sides of the aisle, you would see on the other side SLPP MPs seated on the other side coming from Bombali, SLPP MP coming from Tonkolili; APC MP will be coming from Kono, Koinadugu all over the country *[Applause]*. At any time they are going to Port Loko, you would have SLPP, mixed-up political parties moving that end; it is not like the normal old fashion wherein you would say Constituency elections and when you go to Port Loko for example, they will say this is my stronghold; with the PR system, this stronghold issue will be a thing of the past.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other benefit of the PR system is that, it is very cost-effective; although that will also render the NEC officers redundant because, they will no longer be engaging in bye-elections any more. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when we have the Propositional Representation, all of this bye-election saga we are hearing all over the place, will stop; and if you check the records, Sierra Leone has moved up the ladder in the Peace Index. One of the reasons why we have registered so many violence is as a result of this bye-elections; Sierra Leone is a very peaceful country but because of recent bye-elections from the records, we have skirmishes all over the place - you would see people moving with thugs and all types of offensive weapons just to go and get political seat in that particular area; so with the Propositional Representation, we would no longer have bye-elections, and I believe that will be a very laudable venture which we should all applaud *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you check the records all around the world, people are no longer practicing Constituencies-based election; there are more of Propositional Representation, so I think we have to match up with the current trend in the global phenomenon as well.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will now move to the Bill proper. I want to take you to Clause [57], page 31 of this Bill. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in my view with your leave, Clause [57]: 'a general election of Members of Parliament other than Paramount Chief Members of Parliament, shall be by: [a] the one-member Constituency System, under Sub-section [2] of Section [38] of the Constitution, or the District Block Representation System, in accordance with Section [38] of the Constitution.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in my own opinion, this Clause should be expunged from this particular Bill because it is explicitly stated in the Constitution so we do not need to discuss it in this Well in fact, because it is expressly stated in the Constitution and the Constitution is the grand norm.

THE SPEAKER: No, you are making a mistake; the Bill does not seek to introduce those two systems but rather, re-affirms what is already contained in the Constitution.

HON. MUSTAPHA M. SELLU: Thank you Mr Speaker. That was why I said that in my opinion, since it is in the Constitution we cannot even digress from the matter; but I will follow your caution Mr Speaker. I will go to Clause 55 [c] and 59 [ii]; if you go to Clause 99[ii]: 'for every three candidates nominated under Sub-section [1], one of them shall be a female' under 59 [ii] *[Applause]*; if you come to Clause 55[c] reserved seats for Members of Parliament constituting not less than 30% in each of the districts. If you go to the Schedule, it talks about female; for me, if this Bill is passed into law and being enacted here, you would have 59[ii] rendering this 55[c] redundant *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with this arrangement if you look at 59[ii]; for every three, you must have one, we have 132 Constituencies and if you divide it you would have 39.6 and rounding it up you would have 40 seats for female representatives *[Applause]*; which for me, it is a laudable venture having forty women in this House of Parliament speaks volume. In fact, it is slightly above the thirty per cent quota based on the recommendation in the Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me take you to Clause [140] on page 85 of this Bill. I want to draw the attention of the Minister to Part [Xii] of the Offences Act – offences related to Information Technology; with your leave Mr Speaker: 'A person who

knowingly, and without lawful or unauthorized, cause a computer to perform...; if we go to the Act Electronic Commissions Act. Mr Speaker,

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: Mr Speaker what is blablaba?

THE SPEAKER: It means; etcetera, etcetera.

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: Where is that dictionary coming from, Moyamba?

HON. MUSTAPHA SELLU: It is coming from Western Area. If you go to the Electronic and Communications Act being enacted here, I think it presently caters for this particular offence in this Bill and it falls under the purview of the Bill we recently enacted here under offences for Information and Technology. So for me, **NATCOM** has that authority as the body responsible to regulate all Telecommunications they are supposed to manage that; therefore, we cannot have that again in this this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I conclude; I would want to encourage colleagues on the other side, for them to see the need to allow this PR System to come into being having highlighted all the benefits of the system because, what we are presently practising is the Constituency-based election. It is very clear as stated in Section [38] of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, which is the ground norm of this country that we should respect. Once again, I thank you very much for your contributions towards this Bill for it to be passed into law. Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member, for his contribution to the Debate.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, just a minute. I just want Honourable Members to know that since we are dealing with a serious matter which has to do with elections; and as a Presiding Officer, it will be good for us as a Nation to know that there are clear provisions in the Constitution, so we are expecting you to give some edification for the good of Sierra Leoneans in line with what we have in the provisions of [38] and [38][A], so not to change the trajectory of the argument. We are not doing arguments on PR, because of SLPP or APC, but coming up with scenarios in making our points based on concrete evidences; but by the look of things, it seems we are

changing the trajectory of the argument in front of us. Since you have said that you are very much au-fait with the provisions of the Constitution that we have, we should then have a proper trajectory because we are debating on the provisions of the Bill, as well as what is in the Constitution, which we referred to as; 'a sacred provision'. It seems as if we are mixing them up and people are listening to us; as Presiding Officer, it will be good for us to move along with that in our debates, for you to interject and make some clarifications.

THE SPEAKER: I think I have done that.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Wait a while Mr Speaker; why am I saying this? It is because, there was an argument between a Member of Parliament here on my side and the Honourable Member from Kono; I deliberately asked him to tender the validity of the meeting in the form of a document, and you overruled which I respected in order for confusion not to have ensued. Seeing our colleagues on the other side not debating, it is because they wanted to be edified through us, as they have not read the document properly; that is why they are not debating. As the Presiding Officer, as we move along, it will make the argument very interesting and palatable for people who are listening to us; the way we are now moving, we have been completely deviating because we have not seen the nexus. There is that clear provision for [38] and [38][E], what they have done is that, they have not given us the platform for PR in this Bill, they have misconstrued the provisions before us in the House on the Bill. I am just pleading with you Mr Speaker that as we move along, you make the necessary clarifications for our edification.

THE SPEAKER: Well, I will no longer wait for another opportunity; I will seize this now.

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: Mr Speaker, not deviating from what my colleague just said, I want to make this word of caution Mr Speaker; because he has repeated the word 'Presiding Officer' more than four times so Mr Speaker, whatever statement you make keep it within that limit because, you are a referee [*Applause*].

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Sorry Sir; Honourable Leader, that was why I said 'specific provision' so that people cannot see us as deviants. This is a Constitutional provision, I fully agreed with you; that is why I am using it so that he can remain to be neutral as we await series of debates on the Constitutional Instruments and other Bills.

THE SPEAKER: I am very much cognizance of my role, and the imperative that I have been impartial; and I want to believe that I am recognized in that direction.

HON. DR. MAMOUD M. KALOKO: Mr Speaker, by way of correction we are not...

THE SPEAKER: Who are you correcting?

HON. DR. MAMOUD M. KALOKO: The Leader of Government Business; by way of observation, he said we were not debating because we did not read the document; that is not the issue, we have read it but the procedure is questionable.

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: Honourable Member, had we not read the document and raised objections this morning? The point we found ourselves, we would not have been there; but because we read the document, that is why we were able to make this submission so that was aside.

THE SPEAKER: OK let me take this opportunity once again to make the clarification that I have been asked to make. In consonance with the provisions of the Constitution, I am sure you are all aware that Section 38[ii] of the 1991 Constitution, makes expressed provision for the introduction and application of a system known as 'First Pass the Post' System for the election of Members of Parliament and other public officers as stipulated in the Constitution that is, Section [38] Sub-section [2]. Section 38[A], capital 'A' also introduces another system known as 'the District Block Representation' System. They are both provisions of our existing provision of our Constitution - the extant Constitution, makes those provisions. Repeating them in this Bill is a mere re-affirmation, articulation, and amplification of those provisions; it is not a means of introducing them anew, they already exist in the highest law of our land. Having said that let me now turn my attention to the matter immediately at hand. I want to thank all of you for warmly welcoming to the Chamber the Honourable Vice President.

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: Mr Speaker I want to stand on S.O [82]

THE SPEAKER: You are standing on what?

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: To suspend S.O [19] because of what you proposed to us Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: S.O [82]?

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: Yes, to suspend S.O [19] Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Let me now turn to SO [19]. What are you suspending, SO what?

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: S.O [19]

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order Sir. We were thinking about something else but let us proceed [*Noise and Applause*], we can come back to it; Mr Speaker, let us proceed please I have raised a point of order but let us proceed it is well noted we can understand.

THE SPEAKER: Are you asking me to ignore the Honourable Member? [*Laughter*]

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: Mr Speaker, please let us proceed please.

THE SPEAKER: Let me try to explain what I believe the Honourable Member wanted to say: By leave of Mr Speaker, we shall now continue [*Applause*]. We have in our midst the Honourable Vice President of a Sister Republic of Liberia, who also doubles as the President of the Senate of that country. She is being accompanied on this very special occasion, by the following personalities: His Excellency the Sierra Leone Ambassador to Liberia, Mr Edy Massalay; the Honourable Boto Kanneh, he is also here Senator of Liberia, the Honourable Moimabrigs Mensa, she is representing District Sixth Bon-county, and she is also Chairperson of the Bon-county Legislative Caucus [*Applause*]. You are all most welcome; I beg your pardon, I understand the Liberia Ambassador is also here, Md. With the leave of Mr Speaker, it is now my pleasant duty to invite the Honourable Vice President of Liberia, to make a brief statement to the House.

HON. VICE PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA: Good afternoon the Right Honourable Speaker, Dr Abass Chernor Bundu; Honourable Members and Officers of the Sierra Leone Parliament from all across Sierra Leone, and Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen. I feel Honoured by this opportunity to say Hello, and I appreciate the fact that you have given approval by leave of the Honourable Speaker, for me to say few words; I thank you so very much *[Applause]*.

The Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, few months ago, His Excellency the Vice President, Dr Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh visited Liberia for over four days. His visit was very important because he drove from the city of Freetown to the city of Monrovia. I believe over all of the years, this was the first time an official of government drove across our borders signifying an era of peace, stability and brotherhood *[Applause]*. We were so grateful that he took the opportunity to come and visit us; he visited the Liberia Senate and spoke about the beautiful and amazing work that is being done here by His Excellency, President Julius Maada Bio and the Honourable House of Parliament. It truly takes a relationship between the Executive and the Legislature, for any significant work to be done and so his work has been buttressed by Honourable Members of Parliament; and so I am grateful and want to extend our appreciation to this Parliament for the work that they, as a body is doing in Sierra Leone.

The Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, I got an invitation few weeks ago to attend the 10th Africa Conference on Sexual Rights to be held here in Sierra Leone by the First Lady; Her Excellency Madam Fatima Maada Bio. This Conference, in the city of Freetown, brought more than forty one delegates from more than forty one countries across the world. Our visit here has signified your name a city of peace, a city of freedom, a city where today, women across the world can gather to talk about issues affecting them. And so, this has lifted the profile of this capital city high in the echelons of our history for which, we are grateful; that is also based on the work of Parliamentarians, and that being done by the Executive we are truly grateful.

The Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, our discussions over the past few days, centred on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the high level of rape and

Early Child Marriages that are still occurring not just here in Sierra Leone, but also in our regions. I believe as we move from one era to the other as humans, we will change; as we look at existing issues and put aside those that are negative and expands on the positive ones. Our discussion with young people brought a very strong message; but I am happy that Her Excellency the First Lady explained, that most of the issues are already being handled. There have been significant laws being passed by Parliament in support of President Bio's intention to reduce Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. I want to thank you so very kindly for looking at this issue as they should - violence against your daughters, wives, sisters and mothers. Africa as I know is a continent of peace and love and so when something tragic like this continues to happen, then all of us must step back and see what can be done. This morning before I take my seat, I would only want to emphasise on two things: the first thing is that, we would want to ask the men who are the holders of the powers in all aspect of our national lives, to become true 'He for She' champions *[Applause]* and begin to look at how the rate of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence can be reduced. For most times, such attempts of these perpetrators of this heinous crimes are male; we want your voices, we want your actions, we want your support in speaking to Nilopolis across Sierra Leone and across our regions, for this important aspects of our lives that harm women and girls to start changing their attitudes, transform their minds, to see us as we are – God's special gift. Be you a Christian or a Muslim, the Bible and the Quran tells us one story: that God created the entire earth and he said, it was good; but then turns around, realizing that something was missing and so he created woman *[Applause]*. A God who is the creator of all things can say a woman is needed, so who are we as mere mortals, to continue to deny simple rights and responsibilities that we have asked for; have we asked much more than is required of our basic lives? I would say no, all we wanted is for that chance to be given to our daughters to grow up and become what they want to be as partners in development of their beautiful countries. I hope over the next few years the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence across our regions will begin to reduce because men, who are part of our social systems, will begin to say 'enough is enough'; that is my first plea, Honourable Speaker *[Applause]*.

The Right Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, my second plea is a request in the same vein. Women are part and parcel of what needs to be done; I believe God created the women to support the men to be able to fast-track our development. In my country, my mother will say that; 'one hand cannot fill a basket, we need two': and two hands are necessary to do anything; whether washing, eating or walking. The male makes up 50% which is one hand, and the female makes up another 50%; so together, our country can grow and develop in amazing ways. We still have the issue of low representation of females in our Parliaments across our regions *[Applause]*. Honourable Members of Parliament, when you hear about quotas for women, most men think it is not important; let me tell you a short story before I take my seat. Many years ago, I had an idea to run for the Liberia Senate, and I went to a Political Party and asked for their support and they said; oh Jewel Taylor, go and sit because there is no way you can get elected. But there was some quotas placed in our Electoral Laws that provided a minimum of 30% representation of all seats, asking Political Parties to put women on the balance; that provided me the opportunity that took me to a two-term Senator, to now the female Vice-President of my country *[Applause]*; and as the first female President of the Liberian Senate, I am truly honoured. What we are asking the Right Honourable Speaker, and Members of Parliament, is to deepen your hearts in order to provide us with those opportunities where we can work with you and develop our countries, develop our nations and secure our families. Side by side: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast, and all of the countries in our regions, can do better. I believe when you were in schools, 50% was not a good grade and I believe that 50% today, is still not a good grade. The men are only 50% and the women are bringing in the other 50%; so if you would just provide the opportunity where women are included in this House, where critical decisions concerning everything we do is made, we would bring in our ideas, bring our vision and energy, and we would bring our fire to what happens. Though the men have the power, the women carry the fire and without fire, nothing works *[Applause]*.

The Right Honourable Speaker, Members of Parliament, I am truly grateful and I hope as we watch at the numbers in the upcoming elections in Liberia, in Nigeria and Sierra

Leone over the next years, spaces will be created where many more women will join you in this fight for peace, democracy, development and equality, so that together; side by side, we would create the West Africa that we need. I am truly honoured Your Excellency, thank you very much for this opportunity *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I would not like to be the last person to have the last word in response to the wonderful remarks we have just received from the Honourable Vice President of the Republic of Liberia. Let me give you the first opportunity to respond and I would like to start with the Mama of the House; who is the President of the Female Caucus of Parliament. She would be followed by the following speakers: the Leader of C4C, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of Government Business; in that order.

HON. VERONICA K. SESAY: Thank you very much Mr Speaker, my humble and noble Members of Parliament, the He for She; we are very much happy this afternoon. Before saying a word or two to my sister, I please want us to just rise and sing the first stanza of our song because, it is being stated in the Commonwealth where His Excellency our Speaker, is now the President and Leader of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association [CPA], Africa region; he knows that he can attest to it so please, let us all rise thank you very much. If you do not know how to sing it, just murmur it. **[The song on Gender was sung by the female MPs].**

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today is another historical day that we the women in Sierra Leone should be proud of, to have a woman as the Vice-President, to visit our House of Parliament. I have been here for years, but we have not seen such; because, we are still yearning for women's representation all over the world. Now that we have got one in the Sub-region - our sister country Liberia, Madam Vice-President, you are welcome; and in this House, we are together; in as much as we sometimes have some huddles but notwithstanding that, we are all the same, one country one people, we are the same family and that should be the spirit. When it comes to debate on Bills, we argue because we have the Opposition and the Ruling Party; you would have to do your own bit so that at the end of the day, the people you are representing will see and hear

you. That is why we are here, we are here in three folds and we are aware of it: to represent, make laws and oversees Ministries, Departments and Agencies [MDAs]; these are some of the things that we are doing. At the moment, there is a Minister here and we would want to know what is going on in that particular Ministry; that is why we are here. In as much there is a topic and that topic is dear and closer to our hearts; this is a male-dominated Parliament though they are friendly, we have a hundred and forty-six [146] Members of Parliament, and you can see just few women but we are very strong because we work together, we debate together, and we dine and wine together with our men. I believe, as you have made this plea today, it will reach them to ensure they do the needful; because they have sisters, wives and Aunties; it is not about us anymore, not even about Veronica anymore, but about the women that are coming up to take after us: you have wives, you have sisters so let us fight for the young stars, let us fight for women who are behind us that are yet to come. We believe that the men, and of course we the women, will work together to build a better Sierra Leone; behind any successful man or a Government, there are women and we are the women. Madam, thank you very much; a word to the wise is quite sufficient, and based on your history or story that you have stated this afternoon, I know they will take it in good path. I know my men, I know my Honourable Members, they will say they will not do it, but at the end of the day, they will see reasons that we are together *[Applause]*; I believe and have trust in them because I know they will support us in whatever way, to come to a round table and take a decision. With that my Honourable Members, I want to join you again in welcoming our sister, we met the last time and we have been meeting in several fora. As I stated the last time, she has been my friend; I was asking her to come but officially, I want to thank the First Lady for facilitating this movement and we are very much happy and since this is the very first time you have being in Sierra Leone and you were yearning to come to Sierra Leone, you have yearned to come to Sierra Leone and now you have seen it, it is a friendly country, we are good people you can attest to that, so come again as we are always here; you are our sister and they are your brothers, we all work together, we are a very friendly country like Liberia; thank you very much *[Applause]*.

MR SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for her remarks and warm welcome. It is now my pleasure to invite the Leader for C4C,

HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA: The Right Honourable Speaker of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Her Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of Liberia, His/her Excellency Ambassadors to Sierra Leone from Liberia as well as to Liberia from Sierra Leone, Honourable Members, I am not only honoured but thrilled to respond to the scintillating and fascinating speech delivered by Her Excellency from Liberia. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if there is anything better or rather best, the Republic of Liberia gave to West Africa, it is nobody but the Lady, Her Excellency the Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia. Honourable Speaker and Her Excellency, you would recalled that past leaders of this great Republic, have be yearning for gender empowerment; they yearned with short reference to our Ex-President, President Ahmad Tejan-Kabbah, through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] recommendation, he dreamt of the 30 per cent Quota for our women-folks. We acknowledged him without stopping at just recommendation, and not seeing the light of day. We also acknowledged Ex-President Ernest Bai Koroma, who apologized to the women in Moyamba for the numerous and erroneous things that they went through in Sierra Leone in 2010, that happened in Moyamba. We acknowledged and recognised the present president, His Excellency Rtd. Dr. Julius Maada Bio. He did not only say it because, it has been legislated today; *[Applause]* which tells us that he meant well, as well as the others; as it is in legislation, that our women-folks should be remembered to represent their people in both elective and non-elective positions.

Her Excellency, the Vice President of Liberia, I beseech our male-folks that they will be inspired by the so-touching speech given to them today; in order for us to support and empower our women-folks to reach at the climax of positions. Her Excellency, it is our fervent hope that, all of us ranging from the Leadership to the Honourable Members, by learning from the Honourable Vice President. Least I forget, if you watch at ICC today, we have women-folks representing Sierra Leone, and also at the ECOWAS Vice President's Commission, we have women-folks from Sierra Leone representing us. We have barrage of Ministers here also representing us; but this is so-touching speech is

our hope that our male-folks will be inspired by your speech, and they would be ready at all length, I am a male champion and would also want to bring to your notice that representing the third biggest party in Parliament here - C4C *[Applause]*, we came from a male juvenistic society wherein women, representing our folks is a taboo. The good news is that in 2018, the taboo was broken by bringing in the first female Member of Parliament in the person of Honourable Rebecca Yei Kamara *[Applause]*. She is here; we broke that taboo in 2018 representing many women-folks and it is our hope that the number will increase during the 2023 electioneering process. Again Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity given to me in responding to the speech of Her Excellency, the Vice-President; thank you very much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Leader of the C4C Party; we do not have the NGC in our midst. In the absence of the Leader of the NGC, I would want to invite the Honourable Member, to step into his shoes to say few words, before I pass the baton to the Leader of the Oppositions,

HON. FODAY M. KAMARA: Thank you Mr Speaker. Your Excellency, President of the Senate of Liberia, and Vice President of the Republic of Liberia and entourage, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Distinguished Guests; I am very grateful for this opportunity accorded me in stepping into the shoe of my Leader, whom we all know he is bereaved, and cannot be with us here today. Mr Speaker, it is indeed a great opportunity for the Republic of Sierra Leone, to have in our midst, the Vice President from Liberia; to me, it is an inspiration, her presence here should teach this nation a lesson. Talking about women's empowerment, it is part of it and as a teacher, I know that we learn from experience; her presence here in Sierra Leone, teaches us a big lesson and I am not sure that it is only by legislation that we can push women to responsible positions, I believe in merits *[Applause]*. When the Vice President was delivering her speech, we all accepted and believed that it would be inculcated in us, she being a woman of substance *[Applause]*; she merits her position, which cannot be gainsaid. To be true to ourselves, we have women of substance, we have women who have lived exemplary lives for our daughters and future generations. It is true that they only need a push, but I want us all to believe that, they have the potential, we have

women who can do a lot, and we have women who can do even far better than men in most things.

Madam Vice President, I am grateful that you made it a point to come to this Parliament to deliver a speech for the people of this country to hear you, for our daughters and sisters to see and hear you thereby asking themselves, why they cannot do like you; this is my aim, for people to be inspired by you since you are an inspiration to this country. Liberia, should be an example for Sierra Leone, we should aim high for our women-folks, we should see them being placed in higher positions of trust than just preparing places for them; this woman, merits what she is today. Thank you Mr Speaker, thank you Madam Vice-President *[Applause]*, I am grateful that you are here and I pray that you will go back to Liberia in peace and please come back again and again for the people of Sierra Leone to be seeing you and for our women-folks to see and emulate you; thank you Mr Speaker, thank you Honourable Members *[Applause]*.

MR SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member; it is now my pleasure to invite the Leader of the Opposition to say a few words.

HON. CHERNOR R.M BAH: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I will focus solely towards the directions you have given that is to say, to respond to the felicitations messages that came from the Vice-President; I would not delve into the issues that I am not concerned about at this point in time. Madam Vice-President, we want to thank you very much for not just coming to Sierra Leone, but for also taking your time to visit our Parliament; we appreciate you. I also want to acknowledge the presence of your delegation; I am seeing some familiar faces, some of them are from the same country like myself, from Bong County. We want to thank you very much *[Undertone]*, *[oh! you are coming from Banga, that is where the vice president is coming from]*. As others before me have said, you are not occupying the position by coincident, you have walked your way to the top *[Applause]*; and we believe that similar inspiration coming from you, other women will also walk their ways to the top. In walking their ways to the top, some of us will assure you that we would be supporting them to climb the ladder *[Applause]*. We like competition, now that we are

talking about side by side, and we have also said that fifty per cent is not a good grade, we have carefully listened to those words; and we want to assure you that, we would do all we could deliberately, in ensuring that we get the other fifty per cent to join us. We hope you will enjoy your stay, and that this would not be the last in the near future; we want you to make it more frequent and more often, we would only know that you have enjoyed your visit in Sierra Leone, when you do it more frequently so we would be looking forward to that. We know that in 2023 of October next year, you will be going into an election which is over a year from now, and you still have the time to come back.

Mr Speaker, whiles appreciating her for making a deliberate effort to visit our Parliament, we also want to thank you for making this platform available. We appreciate what you have done in ensuring that she did not just get the platform in the House, but also provides us the opportunity to say these few words, we are making today; so we want to thank you Mr Speaker *[Applause]*. Whiles the Vice-President was working in from my opposite direction I looked at most of those she came with, and I found out that a lot of women are in her delegation, she is also deliberately making efforts in promoting women; thank you very much Madam Vice President. Mr Speaker, like the Honourable Member from the C4C said, he is representing the third largest party; I am in the opposition but today, I am representing the majority party in this House *[Applause]* but in opposition. I want to assure you Mr Speaker, that we will use that majority in supporting women's empowerment in the Republic of Sierra Leone; so Madam Vice-President, you are highly welcomed and I thank you very much, thank you Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

MR SPAEKER: I thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I will now give the floor to the Leader of Government Business *[Applause]*.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Colleagues, Madam Vice President of the Republic of Liberia, I salute Madam, much respect to your delegation, we welcome you to this House, Ambassadors of the Republic of Sierra Leone respecting us in Liberia in your entourage, good afternoon. With my majority in the House, quoting

the Leader of the Opposition which we are yet to see, I will support the Women's Empowerment and Gender Bill in front of us *[Applause]*. "I am a Christian, and I am a Catholic Christian; I am a Knight of the Knights of St. John, I am not paying lip service to this business in addressing the issue of Gender Parity but principally trying to promote and address the past injustices that we have done due to policy-making *[Applause]*. In your statement, which you repeated over and over by saying: 'in his likeness and image, God created man and woman' because of that religious statement uttered by you; 'in his likeness and image', I believe our policies deliberately have discriminated against our female-folks *[Applause]* by our political practices, by our religious practices, by our cultural practices; so what are we doing? We are now taking affirmative actions to address Gender Parity *[Applause]*. Madam Vice President, Her Excellency, in my opening statements made on the President's Speech to this very House and in my closing remarks, I challenged the women of this House; I used the motto of Fourah Bay Collage, *[non-sidis sed balis]* 'not for self, but for others'. You have been given the opportunity in this platform in representing women, fight for them, stand tall; President Bio has given you the platform – firstly, to use the Gender Policy *[Applause]*. In the 2001 Presidential Statement, he talked about the Gender Policy and I quoted that provision in my presentation; taking affirmative action as an executive in-charge as a President, by deliberately looking at the Mining Sector, Labour Sector, as to how to address Gender Parity. Let us stop paying lip services for God's sake towards this drive, in solving this problem of injustice *[Applause]*. Madam, before you came in, I have admired you; and saying those religious remarks that God created us in his own likeness and image, we should walk side by side because he had known that men cannot live alone without women. We have been arguing, and people have been giving us some statements as to whether to be for or against; but I said, if we have all the women in one direction and today, in our population and they decide to vote for one political party, they would win because, 52% of our population are composed of women; but because of our conduct in policy-making, our partial way of thinking, and depriving our female-folks, bad policies, injustice of the past; we are refusing to accept it *[Applause]*.

President Bio, in his wisdom said to this very House *[Applause]*, it is not about politics; we should not politicised the issue of addressing Gender Parity and Equity. Madam, I would not want you to get back to Liberia and say we have been fighting here against the Gender Equality Bill; but let us be honest to ourselves, we are hugely divided in the fight for Gender Parity, we have been campaigning, we have been lobbying, so tell your colleagues - the female-folks in the House, that they should come together irrespective of party affiliations, our party affiliations is one that is affecting us today, the macro aspect of fighting this 'gender parity' must be felt by all of us; instinctively we must fight it religiously, we must fight it and collectively as people of Sierra Leone and not as political parties, so let us come together and fight for the good of our Honourable women. Madam Vice President the days of rhetoric are gone, let us think about the consequences of the war; you said the Vice President droved from Sierra Leone to Liberia and maybe you too, because this is a clear manifestation of a pathway for peace. What we need to address is the issues of the past administration to consolidate our peace and if we fail to address it, uprising and revolutions would start coming up. President Bio, a father of democracy, the one who ushered in democracy from a Military government to a Civilian government *[Applause]*, he has given a clear pathway as to how we should address Gender Parity, how we should address Gender Equality. Before you came here, I have said that people are rejecting to accept our female-folks in representing them using the ratio; now, the Election Bill is in front of us and in Clause [59], it is 3:1 but we are rejecting it, let us be true to ourselves 'emancipate yourself from mental slavery', let us think about the bigger picture because our female-folks are suffering and we here talking about addressing Gender Parity using lip services, I will not do that because I am far above a smaller aspect of our politics but the major picture that is needed is to promote women, you are in a higher position of trust and for Liberia to produce a female President, first time in the history of Africa for which you are the Vice President consistently, you are in a high position of trust. Let us stand tall in talking about the bad Gender policies that we have passed in yester years; I am proud that you stood up yes, we have quality women but we are not giving them the space for them to preform, and it is the space that we are talking about and not about

quality, because it is already there. Yesterday, we approved a female Paramount Chief, with a PHD in Curriculum Development, double Masters by one who which she is representing us at the Student Loan Scheme; I am bringing you to speed for you to understand that we are fighting a very huge battle, we cannot be hypocrites to ourselves, but just to tell you the circumstances in which we are behaving. Having said that let me assure you Madam, as I am on record by reading the caption to you; Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill of 2021 – reading from Part Three, Promotion of Gender Equality: duty to promote Gender Equality – [v] equal pay, [vi] equal training, education, access to finance and so on. In the Presidential Speech the President said, 'if you educate a woman, you have educated a nation'. This Bill is a government Bill, it is a government Motion, so thank you very much for coming here as a coincident to talk to all of us so as to understand the need to come together in order to fight a common fight for the good of our women of Africa; and we will continue to be in that direction, we will continue to prove it in that drive. Thank you very much and may the good Lord bless us all *[Applause]*.

MR SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of Government Business for his statement. Madam Vice President, if I may just have the last say and as a Presiding Officer here, I would like to get you to understand the configuration of this Parliament. We are made up of [146] one hundred and forty six members of whom, [14] fourteen are Paramount Chiefs elected on a limited franchise, and those elected universally, surfaced in number – [132] a hundred and thirty-two, and of that number, the opposition side is fifty-eight [58] plus one who is yet to be sworn in as a Member of Parliament, they are fifty-eight [58] in number plus one awaiting; and fifty-eight [58] also on the government side, the third party C4C has [8] eight seats in Parliament, and the fourth party which is the NGC, has four [4] that makes the total of one hundred and forty six. Asking the Leaders to respond to your statement, you have been given an opportunity to have a snap-short of the varying opinions in this Parliament on the critical question that is currently in bold print – **'Women Empowerment'**. With that message, I am sure you would leave the shores of this country with the belief that, they are all committed to the principles of empowering women but again, in different ways; but we hope ultimately,

that the objective will be achieved. The other issue you made mention of in your own statement which is: the fight against violence - against women and children, we have taken a very progressive position on that, we have passed a legislation in this Well that is being implemented and there is a very special court that has be set up by the Judiciary of this country, to deal with violence against women and has been doing very well. On that score, Sierra Leone can be rated high today amongst the Commonwealth countries that are dealing with that particular issue. As we welcome you, so also it will be sad for us to say goodbye; and as the Members have said, let this not be your last visit to Sierra Leone and we look forward to you visiting us again as soon as the opportunity presents itself. We wish you the very best of luck and successful deliberations in the conference that has brought you to our country. Thank you once again, for visiting us *[Applause]*.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA: I here now beg your indulgence to leave you as I have had a very insightful moment listening to Honourable Members, and I feel grateful; thank you so much *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: May I invite the Leadership please, to come up here for a group photo with the Honourable Vice-President. Honourable Members, please take your seats; we have reached a convenient point at which we can now take an adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

[The House stands adjourned to Tuesday 5th July 2022 at 10:00 a.m.]

The House rose at 4.45p.m.