

**THURSDAY, 19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2015**

The Parliament resumed at 9.30 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

**PRESENT**

All Members were present, except the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs; the honourable Attorney-General & Minister for Justice, Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications; and the honourable Dr. Biman C. Prasad.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- Confirmation of Minutes.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Leader of Government in Parliament.

**MINUTES**

HON. LEADER OF GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Minutes of the sitting of the Parliament held on Wednesday, 18th March, 2015, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, is there a seconder?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

The Parliament will now vote on the motion. Does any Member oppose the motion?

As no Member opposes, the motion is agreed to unanimously.  
Secretary-General.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- Communications from the Chair.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

MADAM SPEAKER.- I welcome you all to today's sitting and also extend a welcome to those joining us, watching through television, the internet and listening to the radio.

I also welcome the students of USP, who are enrolled in the PL100 Course. Also amongst us, are members of the Valelevu Women's Club, I welcome you. Ladies and gentlemen who are here in the gallery, I also extend to each one of you a very warm welcome.

Thank you for taking interest in your Parliament's business, and please do join us for a lighter refreshment during the break.

On another note, I wish to meet with the Chairs of all the Standing Committees. Please, can we meet at 2.30 p.m. today at the Big Committee Room.

On population issues, in Fiji, it is projected by 2030, one in four people will be over 60 years old, including those over 80 years, that will increase from 5,000 in 2006 to approximately 28,000 by 2030. Food for thought.

Thank you. Secretary General.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- Oral Questions.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I have accepted an Urgent Oral Question under Standing Order 43 from the honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to the Minister for Education. This question was delivered to the Secretary-General under the timelines required by Standing Order 43.

As required by the Standing Order, I am satisfied that the question is of an urgent character and relates to a matter of public importance. As required by Standing Order 43, this will be the first Oral Question for today.

I have also accepted the withdrawal of Question No. 60/2015 by the honourable Anare Vadei and will be treated as the omitted question. Honourable Viliame Gavoka's question will remain on today's Order Paper. I request the honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to ask her Urgent Oral Question.

## QUESTIONS AND REPLIES

### Urgent Oral Question

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to ask my Urgent Oral Question, having satisfied the requirements of Standing Order 43. Allow me some latitude, Madam Speaker, to explain the basis for my urgent question. But before doing so, just a general reminder, Madam Speaker, as stated on page 858 of the *Daily Hansard* of Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, the Speaker had stated, and I quote:

“...the Fiji Electoral Commission has advised us that Mikaele Leawere has been awarded the vacant seat and he will be sworn in as soon as practicable this week.”

So, I hope that that will be done as an urgent matter, Madam Speaker, because our next sitting is not until May, and we need him for some work that we would like him to perform as a Member of Parliament.

Madam Speaker, on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, our Office received complaints from parents and students about being made to go out and get signatures for the Government's petition for the change in the flag. We made further inquiries, Madam Speaker, and established that there was indeed a move by Government to use under-aged children to go out and get signatures.

On Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, the Government's PR Specialist, a Ms. Jyoti Pratibha, obviously made aware of our inquiries, tried to defend the Government by deflecting the truth in her coconut wireless article, saying that the petition was a fake, and I quote; “To set the record straight, the petition on the flag change happens to be

fake”.

Madam Speaker, honourable Gavoka issued a statement on Monday with supporting evidence, and our SODELPA Youth President’s letter to the Chairman of the Suva Sangam Board was delivered. We have received calls from officials and student leaders from schools, confirming that teachers were told they had to get the petition signed, and student leaders said that children were compelled to sign.

Madam Speaker, on page 3 of the *Fiji Times* dated Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, the Minister is quoted as saying that no teacher will be victimised, if they do not sign the petition to change the flag.

Madam Speaker, can the Minister not understand that the very fact that he is seeking signatures from teachers to support the Government’s imposed flag change project, is in itself, an act of pressure and intimidation? Can the Minister not see, Madam Speaker, that by his actions, he is injecting party politics directly in to the education system? He is using, Madam Speaker, innocent young children...

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Hear! Hear!

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- ...for a divisive exercise for political gain.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, I think your question is very clear.

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- Why can’t he let children be children, Madam Speaker?

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- Theirs should be an age of innocence, so please, let them be.

I have here, Madam Speaker, evidence from students and their concerned relatives on this political exercise at the height of *Cyclone Pam* preparations.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Order! I think the question is very clear, and according to the ...

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- Madam Speaker...

MADAM SPEKER.- ... Standing Orders, we need to keep questions short, and I think you have got the issue already reflected very clearly in your speech. I will now request ....

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you much, honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Can I ask the oral question, Madam Speaker.

Anti-Fiji Flag Petitions  
(Question No. 1/2015)

Would the honourable Minister responsible for Education confirm to this House:

- (a) How many Anti-Fiji Flag petitions he has distributed to Fiji schools and students;
- (b) What are the conditions relating to this Anti-Fiji Flag Campaign; and
- (c) the use of teachers as a propaganda arm of the Government, as students have been told to get 100 signatures each?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I will now give the floor to the Minister for Education.

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts).- Madam Speaker, I want to thank the honourable Member for asking that question, so quite convoluted.

The oral question that is tabled is very different from the initial introductory statement - full of questions and allegations that the honourable Member has made.

Madam Speaker, the oral question tabled has two questions and one allegation. The first question is, how many Anti-Fiji flag petitions has been distributed to Fiji

schools; and the second being, what are the conditions relating to this Anti-Fiji flag campaign. The allegation there is, teachers have been used as a propaganda arm of the Government. Madam Speaker, let me address these two questions and the allegation.

My straight answer to the first question, which is, how many Anti-Fiji Flag petitions have been distributed is none. There is no Anti-Fiji Flag petitions circulated. That is my straight answer, but I would answer probably the intention of that question later on.

The second question is, what are the conditions relating to this Anti-Fiji Flag campaign? Madam Speaker, my answer is – there is no condition.

On the third question, the allegation that the teachers are used as a propaganda arm of the Government, Madam Speaker, a serious allegation. That is not true. There is no truth to that, and those kind of emotional statements should not be made in this House, Madam Speaker.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- What is your point?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Let me finish. It is my turn now.

Madam Speaker, now let me go back to the question of what was sent out to School Heads. Madam Speaker, on 9<sup>th</sup> March, a circular was sent from my office to the Heads of Schools, and the Circular reads as follows:

“To: All Heads of Schools

Good morning Sirs and Madams,

As you may be aware, Government has announced its intention to examine the Fiji Flag Design, and change it to depict contemporary Fiji. The current flag, while displaying our history does not project contemporary Fiji and Vision of One Fiji.

Attached is a petition that you wish to obtain, should you wish to support the above cause.

Please note that only teachers should be engaged in this activity and not students. Please sign, scan and revert by Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> March.

Looking forward to your support and prompt response in this regard.”

Madam Speaker, that was from 9<sup>th</sup> March.

Madam Speaker, subsequently, I have heard that three schools have distributed the petitions to students to get it signed by the parents. Once we learn of these schools (probably it is not good to name the schools), we told the School Heads that these should be withdrawn. If there are teachers who want to sign, they are willing to sign, and return it to the Ministry of Education.

Madam Speaker, on the second question, no, there is nothing as such, not that I am aware of, nor is there anything not in the circular, nor that we have written to any teacher, et cetera.

The third allegation that the honourable Member has made about being in propaganda, there is no proof to that. So, I don't know what the honourable Member is getting to. Madam Speaker, that is the truth, the fact. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- The questions that the honourable Minister has read out is exactly the questions that I read out to him, that he has repeated.

Madam Speaker, the two Teachers Unions, both the FTU, in yesterday's paper have raised their concern on the directive that has been given to teachers and the students to find signatures for that petition. We believe that students have been told to get 100 signatures each, and I have here, Madam Speaker, information from students where one said, and I will just read out:

“Brother, they gave us this petition too, but I don't want to respond to something and being forced into. If they want to give it, straight to the grownups for their approval not us kids being sent out to do

the government's work for them. Besides, I am also a foreigner in Fiji.”

And, I have others, Madam Speaker, which I do not want to name. I don't want them to be victimised, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I didn't see any question in there. Just allegation that some other students have been intimidated. Madam Speaker, I can get 1000 letters written by someone to accuse the other side of the House. That kind of allegation holds no ground, and it has no place in this House.

Madam Speaker, let me read again, “Attached is a petition that you wish to obtain, should you wish to support the above cause.” “Should you wish”. Thank you.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- We have evidence here!

(Chorus of interjections!)

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will call on the three of you. I will give the first question to honourable Gavoka. Sorry, only two more supplementary questions.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I am a little confused about the whole thing, that we are going out, asking the teachers...

(Chorus of interjections!)

... whether they like to change the flag? I thought this was a done deal. All we bring is designing the flag. If they are going to ask teachers, why don't we just ask the whole of Fiji in a referendum?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Exactly!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They are confused!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Why do you just ask some teachers?

HON. MEMBER.- That's better because ...



HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Why? They're civil servants!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I thought the Committee was already designing the flag. Now, they are still asking people whether we should change the flag.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- They're confused!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Where are we today? I am very confused, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Minister for Education?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, it is about information.

(Chorus of interjections!)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- It is about information.

(Chorus of interjections!)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Its propaganda!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Where is it?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Member may have also seen information on TV about the contemporary Fiji, about the existing flag and our desire to change the design. So, it is about information. It is not only about teachers. I think they are using this as an attack.

(Chorus of interjections!)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- The petition is out to general members in Fiji, including ...

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- ... teachers. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. And the last supplementary question, I am giving it to the honourable Dulakiverata who stood up before.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- No, I didn't stand.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Oh, I'm sorry!

(Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will give it to you. The last question.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I thank the responses from the honourable Minister this morning about the flag, and how the circular was sent to the schools.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- It should not have been sent to the Schools.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Not even the schools, and not even the teachers.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- The Government has set up an *ad hoc* committee headed by the Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports, for the general public to give their submissions on the designs, relating to their proposals on the new flag. Why did the Minister use the school through this process of getting to the children? Why did he use the school – the education system?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Teachers are civil servants. You shouldn't use them.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, we have...

(Chorus of interjections!)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- ... subsequent to this circular, we then went ahead and informed the students about the design.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Even that is bad.

(Chorus of interjections!)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, you may take your seat.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- It looks as if the Opposition don't want to listen to the answers that is being given. I will now move on to the next question, and I ask honourable Sanjit Patel to ask the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Department of National Trade Measurement and Standards  
(Question No. 56/2015)

HON. S. PATEL.- Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to ask oral Question No. 56 of 2015 under my name to the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism;

Would the honourable Minister inform this august House what actions has been taken by the Ministry to improve the performance of the Department of National Trade Measurement and Standards.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism.

HON. F.S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism).- Madam Speaker, I wish to thank honourable Sanjit Patel for his question.

Madam Speaker, by way of background the Department of National Trade Measurement and Standards plays a crucial role in terms of consumer protection in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, the Department through its Standard State and Quality Control Decree develops a standards for all goods and services to ensure that it's safe and it's of good quality and are kept out of the Fijian market if it is not. Certainly the other significant role Madam Speaker, is to ensure that all weighing and measuring instruments used for trade are certified to provide the right readings.

Now Madam Speaker, most people probably don't realise the importance of the department's law especially in our daily lives. Measurement and standards are very important part of our lives and it is actually from the minute you get up with respect to your alarm clock and it is for the measurement of the machines and the products we utilise to make our lives easier.

Madam Speaker, the tooth paste that you use in the morning needs to be of the weight and contain the ingredients as stated on the tube and the tooth paste is manufactured to a standard so that it will serve the purpose it is for.

Madam Speaker, the weight of the bread, the pre-packed food items, the speedometer of the car, the taxi meters, the service station fuel pump. All of these are instruments that need to be weighted properly, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in a nutshell everything that everything that has to do with measurement and trade is the responsibility of the department. Taking into consideration the actual importance of the department there was an urgent need to review the department to bring it in line with the current market practices and the international practices and mode of operation Madam Speaker. We need it to identify the resource needs, the gaps in the area, etc. that we could capitalise on .

Madam Speaker, the laws governing weights, standards and measurements date back to 1992 and 1989 respectively. With the exception of a few minor amendments the law has remained substantially in its current form for over 25 years. Legal framework for the operations of the department is now clearly due for a substantial review and there has been significant developments within Fiji the region and the global community. As this mark us within which the Department had to operate.

The review will establish any changes that needs to be made to ensure that the Department continues to effectively deliver its objectives. It's ensuring the integrity of the Fijian National and Trade Measurement System and its for protection of consumers from unsafe and poor quality products and it enables Fiji to effectively compete in the regional and global economy by responding to many developments in the last 25 years.

The process of the review Madam Speaker, began in October 2013 with the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) undertaking a needs assessment Madam Speaker, of the Standards Section of the Department. As part of the process

the consultant provided an assessment report identifying all the gaps and areas of opportunities and also the amendments that needed to be made in the governing law.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the ISO also assisted in training of Standard Officers and develop Standard Operating Procedures for the department.

The second part of the review Madam Speaker, began in February this year and it involved the hiring of an international expert with the assistance from the Australian Government. The expert Doctor Richard Burton who is part of the Australian Volunteer Scheme has both science and legal knowledge. Had extensive experience in the National Trade Measurement Law and Infrastructure in Australia.

Madam Speaker, the consultant had been working with the department and stakeholders to identify amendments necessary in the legal framework and the infrastructure to be aligned with Fiji's current and future needs. This work will improve the confidence and accuracy of measurements both for trade and for other regulatory purposes. This will enable Fiji to take a huge step towards its goal of leadership in the field of technical and trade infrastructure in the Pacific region Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Fijian Government has a vision for the Department of National Trade Measurement and Standards. We did not only to strengthen it to serve the needs of every Fijian but to make it the premiere Trade Measurement Standards Department in the region.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to respond

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Minister.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Supplementary question Madam Speaker. I believe here in Fiji our markets have been flooded with foreign goods and also the protection of our local investors.

Can the Minister inform this august House when can the laboratory testing of goods and products be provided to consumers in Fiji?

Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I understand he is asking when can the laboratory provide testing for goods and products?

All goods and products Madam Speaker, go through the actual process as I explained. So, if there is a particular good that you are concerned about please let us know we will give you the exact testing that it has gone through.

HON. P. SINGH.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Could the Minister inform this House as to how often the meters are calibrated and at what intervals and the weigh bridge at the FSC Mills. The practice used to be in the presence of FSC and the representative from the growers. Is that still the practice?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Yes, it is a practice as I said in my earlier answer. All measurements that will take place with respect to anything to anything that needs to be measured and that means FSC weighing station, that means electricity meters, that means water meters, all of that is undertaken, it is taken up on a regular basis, Madam Speaker. And just for argument's sake like petrol stations. It is just about done almost on a 1 to 3 months calibration. You see calibration is required on all these things that you have mentioned honourable Prem Singh this is taken up on a regular basis.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I will give honourable Karavaki the floor.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Supplementary question. In regards to the Police radar gun Madam Speaker whether the Ministry has the capacity and the standard and the expertise here locally to certify the calibration of these radar police gun in Fiji.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEKAER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I think that maybe a question that might need to be directed to the Minister of Infrastructure but from what I understand if there is a deficiency in being able to measure than it is sent off overseas to get measured so the process of testing does take place.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. That is the end of our third supplementary question we will move on to the next oral question and I invite the honourable Samuela Vunivalu to take the floor.

Housing Grant for First Time Home Owners  
(Question No. 57/2015)

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise this morning on Question No. 57 of 2015 this is addressed to the honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment. My question is;

Can the Minister inform the House how many Fijians have benefitted from the Housing Grant for first time home owners?

Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment.

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government Housing and Environment).- Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to respond to the question raised by the honourable Member and I wish to thank him for bringing this subject matter.

Madam Speaker, one of the government's top priority is to increase the home ownership and in 2014 a total of 186 Fijians took advantage of this grant program. As of 2015 until 18 March 2015, a total of 79 Fijians have benefited through the grant programme. Madam Speaker, from the time of the implementation of this programme, until 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, a total of 247 first time home-owners have been assisted through this programme, at a total grant of \$2 million.

Madam Speaker, I have just finished with my team from the Ministry on the road show in the Western Division, and I want to inform this august House that there is so much interest in regards to this programme. I would be able to inform this august House by the end of the year, how many Fijians have exactly benefited from this programme, because the responses that I am getting from the people is that they are very much in it, and I think this is the first time ...

HON OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- For how long?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- ... this Ministry has been ....

Of course, yes, by the FijiFirst Government. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Supplementary question.

MADAM SPEAKER.- A supplementary question, honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I thank the honourable Minister for visiting my area – the Western Division. Whilst he was visiting, Madam Speaker, did he also see the homes destroyed, especially in 2012, and they are still waiting for the promises by the FijiFirst to be repaired?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- He could have discussed this with me during tea-break because that really does not fall under my Ministry. But it has been noted, and I will refer it to the relevant Ministry.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I thank the honourable Minister for his answer this morning. He has talked about 47 homes being benefited by Fijians. Can the honourable Minister inform as to how many applications were made by the general public in Fiji for this scheme, and what was the criteria that was supposed to be met, and how many applications did not qualify because of that?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Since the question is statistical in nature, the honourable Minister can give a written answer later on to the honourable Member. I will now give the floor to the honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his explanation that they have a system now. He also mentioned about the road show in the West. The question, Madam Speaker, is, is there a system where they receive applications from Fijians all over Fiji, or if those people in the West (they are the only ones who are aware of this scheme and it means that they will be the only ones who will be applying for this) and whether there is a scheme where people from all over Fiji will benefit from this too?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, sometimes I wonder about the type of questions the Opposition is asking in this august House.



This Government is for all Fijians. Let me make it very clear. I have said that we have just finished the road show in the Western Division. The next road show will take place in the North, whereby we are going to inform the general public about this initiative.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA- Only in the West!

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- I am not biased like you. We see all Fijians in this country, and I hope this is the last time I am telling. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The honourable Nawaikula - last oral question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I ask this question on behalf of the rural villages included in this, perhaps our Indo-Fijian brothers who settle in the periphery, because most of them have their leases so they have security of title.

In the Fijian villages, how many applications have you received from them and how are these addressed. How do you monitor applications from Fijian villagers, for first home-owners?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- I do not have any issue in answering that, I can answer, do not worry. What I am saying is that, it falls under the Rural Department ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER. (Inaudible)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Can you listen, that is the problem with you.

Madam Speaker, as I have said, there is a policy in place.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Implement the policy.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- The ceiling is \$50,000 for an individual or a couple can qualify, whether he or she lives in the village, urban or rural area. That is the policy and I will give the details later on.

Withdrawal of Question  
(Question No. 58/2015)

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I rise to withdraw Question No. 58 of 2015, standing under my name in today's Order Paper.

MADAM SPEAKER.- The next question, I will invite the honourable Prem Singh.

Cane Farmers Levies – Sugar Cane Growers Council  
(Question No. 59/2015)

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you Madam. I rise to ask Question No. 59 of 2105 standing in my name in today's Order Paper.

What is the authority for the continuous deduction of proceeds from cane farmers as levy for the Sugar Cane Growers Council (SCGS), even after the dissolution of SCGS elected councillors in 2009, which is the only lawful authority under the Sugar Industry Act, to approve an annual budget for the SCGS?

MADAM SPEAKER.- The honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Sugar Industry.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for his question and for giving me the opportunity yet again, to remind the Fijian people that we, on this side of the House, have a proud record of standing up for more than 200,000 Fijians who are dependent on the sugar industry for their livelihoods.

The premise of the honourable Member's question is entirely wrong. He is suggesting that we continue to take money from cane farmers for the SCGC. without providing them with the service. Madam Speaker, his knowledge of the SCGC and the responsibility has never changed. What has changed is, we have removed the politicisation of the SCGC; we have removed the members of the SCGC who have been politicising the industry for a long time; and I understand some may be friends of his. But this is again, Madam Speaker, another incident of the Opposition playing politics with the industry, while we as Government continue to put in the hard yards to keep sugar viable.

Madam Speaker, all we have done is to get rid of the politicisation of the institution, as I have said before, the administrative arm and the work of the Council is important, and needs to continue. I am sure the honourable Member will agree that

we cannot deny the growers, the day to day existence the institution provides, thus the necessity for continuing the deduction or imposition of the levy. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. P. SINGH.- A supplementary question. The question is, by what authority? Since 2007, there was only one Promulgation - doing away with the nominated councillors. The life of elected councillors continue, and I could not find any Decree or Promulgation that says it was abolished. That was my question – under what authority?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you Madam Speaker. I have just answered his question that the work needs to be done.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Where's the Sugar Act?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Whose authority to have the deduction?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- There is a reform in place right now, Madam Speaker, on completion of which we will let the House know, and of course, when question time comes. But that work continues to be done by the Council for the growers and that needs to be done. In the last couple of years, the levy used to be 37 cents, now it is down to 33 cents.

Madam Speaker, let me go back to one of the supplementary questions that was asked earlier on which I did not have facts to back it up. The Budget prior to the termination of the Councils was averaging around \$1 million a year. From the following year, after 2010, the Budget was reduced by 40 per cent to \$600,000. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, the fundamental question here is this, if you pay, you must have a say. That is fundamental. When can the Cane Growers have a say in what they pay for? Can the honourable Prime Minister please answer that? There must be a programme in place on when they eventually have a say in what they pay for.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Prime Minister.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Of course, Madam Speaker, they have a say in what they are paying for and that is the

administrative assistance that has been provided to them by the Sugar Cane Growers Council. It is very simple. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula, last supplementary question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The supplementary question is, the honourable Prime Minister has not answered that question. Could he just tell us what authority, do they have the mandate to make this deduction?

MADAM SPEAKER.- The question has been repeated, it has been answered. Do you want another repeat of the answer? We will ask the honourable Prime Minister to repeat the answer.

Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I am not repeating myself.

MADAM SPEAKER.- That is okay, thank you. We will move on to the next question and I will ask the honourable Viliame Gavoka to ask his question.

Distribution of Lease Money  
(Question No. 61/2015)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to ask the question appearing in my name. Given that previously the *Turaga ni Yavusa* and *Turaga ni Mataqali* were apportioned larger shares of lease money because of their traditional roles and obligations to the *vanua*, can the honourable Minister inform the House if adequate provisions have been made in the Government's new equal distribution of lease money system for the *Turaga ni Yavusa* and *Turaga ni Mataqali* and *Turaga I Taukei*? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister and Minister for **iTaukei** Affairs and Sugar Industry).- Madam Speaker, can he ask the question again. It is not the same question.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Given that previously, the *Turaga ni Yavusa* and *Turaga ni Mataqali* were apportioned larger shares of lease money because of their traditional roles and obligations to the *vanua*, can the Minister inform the House if adequate provisions have been made in the Government's new equal distribution of lease money system for the *Turaga ni Yavusa* and *Turaga ni Mataqali*?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The reason I ask, Madam Speaker, that he repeat his question because he came up with the additional term that is not in my question. I thank the honourable Member for his question and for reminding us all, yet again that the Opposition continues to represent the interest of the elites,....

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The *iTaukei*, the *vanua*!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-....while the Government insists on equal treatment for every *iTaukei*,....

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-... irrespective of rank or position. That is the gist of what we have done, Madam Speaker. It is to empower the landowners, the *iTaukei*. Not only some and leaving out some. To empower everyone, all the landowners. As long as your name is in the VKB, you are a landowner, you are entitled to equal share, equal means equal, Madam Speaker.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Tell them, tell them.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- As the honourable Member is fully aware that Government amended the *iTaukei* Land Trust....

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Under whose authority?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- This is the problem, Madam Speaker. They cannot accept the fact that there is a Constitution, there is a Government in being, there is a Parliament, that is really the problem that they have. They keep asking; whose authority? It is the authority of Government.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Government does not own the land. Government does not give any contribution ....

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Who is this guy? Can you get him to shut up?

The relevant section, Madam Speaker, now states “after the deduction of any sum in accordance with Section 14 of the Act, the balance of any money received by the Board by way of rent and premiums in respect of native land, including any money is received by the Board, but not yet distributed at the date of commencement of the Native Land Trust, Leases and Licenses Amendment Regulations 2010 shall be distributed by the Board to all the living members of the propriety unit in equal proportion.”

HON. OPPOSTION MEMBER.- Proposed by force!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. MEMBER.- Can you choose which three?

(Chorus of Interjections)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, I have the three. I will give the floor to the honourable Draunidalo.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I ask the honourable Prime Minister, does he understand that there is unequal distribution of obligation in the *Vanua*...

MADAM SPEAKER.- Can you address the question to the Speaker.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, through you, I ask the Prime Minister, does he understand that there is unequal distribution of obligation in the *Vanua* so that not every indigenous Fijian,...

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Tell them, tell them.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- .... including me, I live in the city is not to get an equal proportion because I do nothing back there, Madam Speaker. Does he understand that?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Can you just reword your question? I think the words “can you understand” is very demeaning. Can you just reword your question, just reformulate your question to be more respectful in the way you....

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, what words would you like me to use?

MADAM SPEAKER.- When you keep saying, “can you understand”, as if you are talking to a little child. Reword that question.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- The honourable Prime Minister has said that they are trying to make all Fijians equal and that we have been unequal before. My question is, does the honourable Prime Minister understand that there is an unequal distribution of obligation in the *vanua*, so that Fijians like me, who live in the urban areas....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Clearer now. Thank you, honourable Prime Minister.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, that is the question that was presented to me by the honourable Member of the House.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Just answer the question.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- That was the same question that he asked me. We understand it very well but we want to empower everyone that has ownership of the land, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will now give the floor to the honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the honourable Prime Minister a simple question. Who owns native land?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Very simple question, honourable Prime Minister.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I can provide him with two answers because he is not fairly clear with his question. If he is talking about native land in the villages, it is owned by the landowners. So, what are you talking about?

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will now call upon the honourable Nawaikula for the last supplementary question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, the problem we have is that the honourable Prime Minister has not been properly advised. The owner of native land by definition is the *mataqali*, not every single individual. Secondly, the tenure of native land says that the rights are determined by customs and tradition therefore, it means they decide who gets what according to custom and tradition. That is the law because he has not been advised properly and I feel sorry for him, that is why we have this problem. You go look at your laws – Section 2 of the Native Lands Act.

(Chorus of Interjections)

I am on my feet ....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Enjoy.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am on my feet and that has to be respected.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, your question, please.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The question is, did you consult the owners, all the owners of the *mataqali* before you made your decision?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, this is the problem that this side of the House faces. It came out from yesterday's questions which they could not accept the answers to, that, we the Government has the authority to do this and that is wrong when he says that all *mataqali* own the land, that is not true.

(Chorus of Injections)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. That marks the end of our question time.



(Chorus of Interjections)

Can I have the floor, please? Thank you.

We now have an additional agenda which has been presented to us. I have been approached by an honourable Member who wishes to make a Personal Explanation under Standing Order 80. As this is the first request to make a Personal Explanation that I have received in this Parliament, let me explain this provision.

A member may explain a matter of personal nature only with the permission of the Speaker, which I had given. I will request to see a written copy of the Personal Statement before I decide whether to allow the explanation to proceed. This is in line with Parliamentary Procedure as outlined in the Erskine May and I quote:

“Because the practice of the House is not to permit such statements to be subject to intervention or debate, the precise content of the proposed statement are submitted in advance to the Speaker to ensure that they are appropriate. The member granted the privilege of making such a statement may not therefore depart from the agreed text.”

Personal Explanations must be brief and can be used to set the record straight. Personal Explanations cannot be used to make any political points or make any allegations. As statements are only allowed with the permission of the Speaker, I do not expect this privilege to be abused. There is no debate on the explanation.

I now call on the honourable Tikoca to make a personal statement.

### **PERSONAL EXPLANATION**

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I seek leave to make a personal explanation under Section 80 of the Parliamentary Standing Orders and special emphasis, Standing Order 133 – my Privilege in this Parliament.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Excuse me.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Although there is no requirement ....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! You have deviated from the agreed script that was submitted to me. In that case, you have not complied with the requirements as had been alluded to earlier.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, Standing Order 133 is about anyone who is a member of this honourable House – the rights and privileges for him....

MADAM SPEAKER.- In the case, may I have the floor, please. Thank you.

You have deviated from what was agreed to. In that case, if you wish, you may re-submit and this can be considered for tomorrow or another sitting.

That is the end of our sitting this morning. I wish to remind honourable Members that the Business Committee will meet at the Big Committee Room, straight after this.

The Parliament is now adjourned until 9.30 tomorrow morning.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.26 a.m.