MOTION

MADAM SPEAKER - MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE (04/04/17)

(5.30 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member to move his motion, I would like to make the following statement.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

(10.00 p.m)

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened carefully to the hon. Member from the Opposition side who has just spoken. What I could gather from his speech is that he is still wondering why his letter of appointment took a few days to reach him and he has been making us all think very thoroughly and try to find out the reason for that. The shortest way and the quickest way of getting the answer would have been to ask the Office of the Speaker.

Talking about the motion that has been moved by the hon. Member Mohamed, I must say that, throughout his speech, I tried to figure out what solid evidence he has to show that the Speaker has not shown impartiality. I must say it has been a tough job, but I could not see any point that he has put forward that was valid enough to ask for the motion to come to Parliament.

Après le discours magistral de l’honorable Sinatamboo, je ne crois pas que ce serait important pour moi d’aller dans tous les petits détails, mais il y a certains points sur lesquels j’aurais aimé attirer votre attention.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Members of this august Assembly are all aware that, apart from our Standing Orders, there are certain established parliamentary customs, conventions, etiquette and rules that are required to be observed by Members in this House. These are based on past practices, rulings delivered by Speakers from time to time as well as unrecorded customs of the Assembly which Members come to know through their personal experience in this House. This is normally what we call parliamentary etiquette, and no Member should deviate from the decorum, dignity of this House.

We have heard the hon. Member Mohamed talking about parliamentary democracy, talking about the way that the House should be run. But let me just
remind the House that the Parliament, that the National Assembly is, in fact, the best example of democracy, and it is perhaps one of the most respected way of governance since the mantle rests upon the elected Members of the National Assembly. Elected Members, representatives of the people who come in here to discuss important matters, but who do get privileges, have certain obligations. I think hon. Sinatamboo has put it very nicely, that there are the three D’s: discipline, dignity and decorum.

No one in this House has the right to sully this decorum. No one has the right, by his behaviour or misdoing, to tarnish the reputation of this august Assembly, especially that now all the proceedings of this National Assembly will be broadcast. Today, we have seen, as someone has mentioned, the cinéma qui s’est passé, and we know that sometimes we give the impression that it is done solely because - it is very clear that they know - it is being passed live on TV, and so we can say anything. On peut débiter n’importe quoi, dire n’importe quel - laissez-moi ne pas définir ou qualifier les termes ; dire n’importe quoi, en pensant que ça ira jusqu’au peuple, et on se permet de le faire, we have parliamentary immunity. Mais il faudrait qu’on se rende compte qu’on a quand même des devoirs en tant que parlementaires, on a des devoirs et des obligations, and one of the most important obligations is to behave in a dignified manner. On est supposé être des exemples pour les jeunes qui sont en train de voir ce qui se passe à l’Assemblée.

We have to make sure that we do not disappoint them.

On n’a pas le droit de les décevoir, parce qu’en tant que membres élus, en tant que représentants du peuple, il nous faut savoir comment se comporter dans cette auguste Assemblée. Tout à l’heure, l’honorable Sinatamboo a bien fait ressortir que si on ne se comporte pas comme il se doit, il est normal que le Speaker ou la Speaker - la présidente - doit prendre des mesures qui s’imposent. Si on n’arrive pas à respecter la présidence, c’est normal qu’il y aura des sanctions, et cela n’est pas seulement à Maurice. C’est à travers le monde. C’est d’ailleurs une pratique parlementaire ; le respect pour la présidente est un must. Et là, avec les onze interruptions qu’a fait ressortir l’honorable Sinatamboo, on s’est bien rendu compte que le renvoi du parlementaire de la Chambre a été provoqué par son comportement dans la salle, et on ne peut imputer à la présidente une partialité quelconque.

Ceci dit, M. le président, j’aurais voulu retourner un peu et essayer de voir ce qui s’est passé le jour où ce Sports Bill a été débattu au Parlement. Let us carefully scrutinise the genesis of the whole issue. The procedures in force in this august Assembly are such that hon. Members must indicate their willingness to take the floor on Bills or matters that they deem vital to their constituency or to the public good. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is common
practice in this Parliament that, a day before, through the Whips, you give your name and you express your intention of intervening on a particular Bill. And if you go back to that day, the list of orators was given at the very beginning of the day, and it is not at that time that the hon. Member expressed his wish to the Whip or to anyone that he intended to take part in the debates. No! It was at the time that the debates were on and Members had already intervened that, all of a sudden, in this Assembly, he sat on that side and started cross-talking to the Whip and using very rude language, asking him to put him on the list, and in a very arrogant way.

And this caused the brouhaha that happened in the Parliament and this had caused the Speaker to come up and to take position.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, we know that this could have been dealt with differently.

If he had taken the pains of talking to the Whip early on that day, maybe his name would have been on that list. If, in spite of that, he had wanted to talk on that Bill, he could have, en aparté, gone to the Office of the Speaker and expressed his wish. Non! Ce n’est pas ce qu’il a choisi de faire. Il a choisi de faire encore une fois du cinéma dans le Parlement. Et alors, vous savez ce qui a suivi. Mais pour moi c’est clair dans ma tête. If your name is not on the list of orators, you cannot take part in the debate. This is not something that is new. It has always been the case. I must say that we also have had times when we wanted to intervene on a particular Bill, but we didn’t get the chance because we did not inform the House at the right time that we intended to take part in a Bill.

I’m not here to be the moral conscience of hon. Members, but it is true and I strongly believe that we must not do anything that brings disrepute to the National Assembly, anything that affects its credibility and the more so at a time when the population is watching every single move that we make in this House.

We should not allow our personal ego to hold the supreme way. Quite the contrary! We have a duty as elected Members to give the good example. I must say one thing. What I found surprising is that whatever reproach they had to do vis-a-vis the Speaker was about things that are commonly done in this National Assembly. Saying that the Speaker had shown selective deafness is extremely strange in a particular case chosen by the hon. Member. He mentioned the case when supposedly something was uttered in the Assembly and the Speaker had said that she did not hear. But what he also mentioned or maybe he did not mention is that the Speaker took the pains of going to the records and to find out whatever he said was uttered in the Assembly was true or not. But then he, himself, chose on the advice of X, Y or Z - it is not my concern - not to go ahead with that. And today in spite of the fact that he that he had decided not to go ahead with that
particular case, he takes the same case and brings it to the House as a point on which he wants to give evidence that the Speaker has not shown impartiality.

Knows sûrement bien that he had decided not to go ahead with that particular case, he takes the same case and brings it to the House as a point on which he wants to give evidence that the Speaker has not shown impartiality.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, c’est de la mauvaise foi. Now, there’s something more. They have been talking about...

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order. This is unparliamentary. She cannot accuse me. This is an imputation towards worst level. Maybe, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I mean, for once I hope that we could have the Standing Orders applied here.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, please carry on!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, please resume your speech!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what I mean to say is that any person who thinks properly cannot use a point where he, himself, has decided not to go ahead with and to use it as evidence against the Speaker. This is all the point that I wanted to make.

The next thing is that when we come to the case of the position taken by the Speaker vis-à-vis one journalist. Now, what I find strange is that this is a practice that has been accepted in this Assembly. When a former Speaker had asked that a particular journalist be not allowed to enter the Parliament unless she presents her excuses or apologizes, no one had anything to say about this case. No, c’était
normal! It is according to Standing Orders. Everything went on smoothly. No one had anything to say. No one pointed a finger at that Speaker at that time and rightly so. But then, when it comes to Mrs Hanoomanjee, when it comes to the present Speaker, the fact that she took position against a particular journalist who had decided to write about the Parliament in her own way and decided to – I think mudslinging was the case. Then, all of a sudden, it is bad. Something is coming to my mind. It is most probably they find it hard that a woman is in authority in this Parliament. Had it come from a man Speaker, no one would have anything to say.

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** No one would have ever said anything.

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I had the patience and the courtesy of listening to them. I expect them to show the same respect towards other Members of the Assembly. Now that I am talking, I would like them to listen to what I have to say. Why is it that when the same situation arose in the case of a Speaker formerly in this Assembly, no one had anything to say. But today when it is the Speaker, there are Members who were there, today...

(Interruptions)
**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Mohamed, I have listened carefully to you. Please, allow the hon. Minister to make her speech.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** When we come with such a motion to the Assembly, I think the basic thing one has to do is to go back to the Hansard and see what were the cases because we have been talking about past practices. I have listened very carefully to the parameters that you have set, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are allowed to navigate within a restrictive space. I’m trying to limit myself to that only. But since this case has come up in this House, we have mentioned the case and I will come back to it and I want this to be noted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let me take the case that came here and let me quote what was said by that Speaker at that point in time –

“I must say, at the outset, that I am placed in an unwanted and delicate situation, as I am also directly concerned in this matter. After having given due consideration to this fact, I have come to the conclusion that I have no choice than to abide by the law and the Standing Orders of the National Assembly.”

He goes on to say –

“The author of the article does not only thrust indignities upon the House by reflecting on the character and behaviour of hon. Members but categorically accuses the Chair of partiality. That a stranger to this House accuses the Chair of partiality is unprecedented.”

*Je saute tout cela pour aller plus devant pour voir qu’est-ce qu’il avait à dire* –

“I view this matter with much concern. To my mind, this amounts to an evasion of the privilege of this House to discharge its function without external interference. A media or press reporter is, for the purpose of our Standing Order and the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act, a stranger. Admission of press reporters within the precincts of the House is governed by the Standing Order 13 and rules made by Mr Speaker. The reporters are expected to give a fair and accurate account of debates and proceedings of the House without offering any observation which may be construed as a reflection on the conduct of individual Members and ultimately the House itself.”

*Et à la fin, M. le président, ...*

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** No crosstalking, please!
Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: …he said –
“Such conduct deserves an exemplary sanction. I believe that I can safely exercise
the powers conferred upon me under section 8 of the National Assembly

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed! Hon. Adrien Duval! No crosstalking,
please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,
“But, in a spirit of nurturing the close relationship existing between the Press and
the National Assembly, I wrote to the Chief Editor of “l’Express” and expressed
my…

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I gave you the opportunity and I listened
carefully to whatever you had to say!

(Interruptions)

Allow me to listen to the speech of hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bérenger!

(Interruptions)

Don’t make gestures with me!

(Interruptions)

Don’t make gestures with me!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bérenger, allow the hon. Minister to speak!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I won’t take the time of the House. I just wanted to
show that the same thing happened earlier, and that when it comes from a man, it
is acceptable…. 
(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bérenger, I order you out!

(Interruptions)


(Interruptions)

I order you out!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, I order you out!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, I order you out!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, I order you out!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, I order you out!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, I order you out!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, I order you out!

At this stage the Members of the Opposition left the Chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: The sitting is suspended for ten minutes.
At 10.28 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.40 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what has just happened in this House confirms whatever we have been saying about the Opposition. There is absolutely no respect towards the Chair. They were even threatening the Chair.

This is horrible! And I am really very, very dismayed by such a way, such a behaviour from so-called hon. Members.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proceedings of the National Assembly are being passed live on TV, and there must be hundreds of young people watching TV.

What impression they will get on representatives of the people! Elected representatives of the people! We have been sent here to discuss matters for the good of our population, for the good of the people who sent us here. And what do we see! A total lack of respect for the Chair and for the decorum of this august Assembly! No discipline, no dignity, and obviously gone is the decorum! So, I must say I am not surprised. This is the type of things we have been seeing for years in this National Assembly from the hon. Members of the Opposition, but today they have gone very far. It is the first day that the Deputy Speaker is chairing this august Assembly, and they did not hesitate a single moment to threaten and to try to intimidate the Chair. I must say that we are proud of the occupant of this Chair.

(Interruptions)

You have, in a very dignified manner, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, shown them the way because we cannot accept such an attitude especially from people who have been lifting their fingers at the Speaker, stating that she does not know how to run the proceedings of the Assembly; stating that she shows partiality, but the way they behave and the way that had been very nicely depicted by hon. Sinatambou show they have almost forced the Speaker, on the day the Sports Bill was being debated, to throw them out of the Assembly. There is a limit to patience. Today, whilst discussing, while debating on a motion of blame supposedly for showing partiality; they have shown how they can misbehave and I am sure that no one sitting in this august Assembly would tolerate such behaviour.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having said that, I would like to stress that we cannot accept the motion of hon. Mohamed because, as we have seen, it is a motion that
has been motivated solely for him to come in the Assembly and to do his show so that people in the country can look at him and to allow him to say whatever he feels like saying, allow him to carry on with his mud-slinging and with that he is protected by Parliamentary immunity. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we shall definitely vote against this motion.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Rughoobur!