

National Assembly Debates (House of Representatives)

Thursday, 15th July, 1999

0543 [Votes and Proceedings]

[Matter of Urgent Public Importance] 0544

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Thursday, 15th July, 1999

The House met at 12.10 p.m.

PRAYERS

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Good morning, hon Members. I want to apologise for the delay. It is as a result of the information I received that various Parties are having their meetings.

I have examined and approved the Votes and Proceedings of Wednesday, 14th July, 1999.

OATHS

I want to call on Members that have not taken the Oath to please come forward. *(No response)*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Education Committee

All Education Committee Members are to meet at 2.00 p.m. at Committee Room 2. This is signed by Han. Abubakar Garba Shehu Matazu (Chairman)

Meeting of The South East Caucus

There will be an urgent meeting of all Members of the House of Representatives, South East caucus immediately after today's sitting. This was signed by Han. Chukwuma Mao. (Chairman)

Emergency Meeting

There will be an emergency meeting of Members of the House Committee on Women Affairs and Youth Development immediately after this session in the Chambers.

Funeral Arrangements

There is a Funeral arrangement for Princess Comfort Nwoko Nwoluni who died in London on 17th June, 1999. The arrangements are as follows:

Wake-Keeping - 30th July, 1999
Interment - 31st July, 1999

All Members are invited.

This announcement is from Han. Ned Nwoko. Those intending to travel for the wake-keeping ceremony should register with the Clerk of the House or with Hon. Emibra Agheoto.

Committee on Police Affairs

There will be a meeting of the Committee on Police Affairs on Thursday, 15th July, 1999 at 3.00 p.m. at Committee Room 14.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Prohibition and Punishment of Bribery, Corruption and other related Offences Bill, 1999 - *Second Reading (Second Allotted Day) (Adjourned Debate on Question 14th July, 1999)*

Mr. Speaker : Hon. Member, the first item on today's Order Paper is the continuation of the Second Reading Debate on the Anti-corruption Bill. The debate was adjourned yesterday to be resumed today. May I remind hon. Members that each contributor is permitted to speak for five minutes only.

Matter of Urgent Public Importance

Hon. Solomon Agidani (Apa /Agatu) : Point of Order, Mr. Speaker. My Point of Order is Order 37 (8). Before the Order of the Day is treated, I want to raise a Matter of Urgent Public Importance.

Mr. Speaker: When did that happen?

Hon. Solomon Agidani: I have just bought outside here a newspaper, which is *This Day* newspaper of today. It has a publication that attracts my attention and I think that the honourable House should consider it.

Mr. Speaker: You should have brought it to my office, please.

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Hon. Solomon Agidani: I have just bought the newspaper now, and it was not possible for me to have seen you in your office, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What is the title of the news?

Hon. Solomon Agidani: The title is *No records from Toronto University Exists*. That is the headline of *This Day* newspaper of this morning.

Several hon. Members: Which Older?

Hon. Solomon Agidani: Which one would you want me to read; the Order or the newspaper?

Several hon. Members: Order of the House.

Hon. Solomon Agidani: Older 37 says: *Antmgellldt of Bllsiness: Unless the H_oJreriwe directs, the business of each sitting day shall be transtlCted in the following order:*

- i Formal entry of the Speaker,
- ii Prayers;
- iii Approval of votes tmd Proceedi1lg8;
- iv. Oath of Allegiance and the Oath of Membership of new Member.r;
- v, M...-ge from the President of the Federal Reprtblic of Nigeria;
- vi. Other _ _ b y the Speaker;
- vii Petiti1JlIS;
- viii. Matters of tugenI prtblic i""fJOl1t1tCe.

Now, the newiipiJld headline reads: *I hpve no records on Mm, Toronto University insists. on the Speaker of this House.*

Mr. Speaker: We discussed this issue yesterday. I explained and made a statement on this. Can you please sit down?

Hon. Tony Aayamra (Ahiriaz0/Ezinihite): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of Ordec and they are Ordec 16, 11 and 18. If I may proceed and if Mr. Speaker and the hon. Members could accord me the ddcfrence to read Order 16 which says:

Any Member may rise at any time to speak upon a matter of privik8 suddenly arising, and he shall be p r e to _ , without notice, a motion declari at a conUmpt or breach of privilege has A en committed or referring the matter to te I1ftitke on Ethics imd Privik8es, ifthe matter is raised in committee of Whole House the Chairman shall kove the ir on an order to report progress.

Mr. Speaker, Order 16 gives me the right to move my

Motion and may I humbly move my Motion on my privilege and the collective privilege of this House?

HON. Musa Elayo (Awe/Doma/Keana): Point of Order, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker Sir, I would like this honourable House to note that the privileges of this honourable House are there at Order 15(a) which says:

Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the Members of the House individually conferred by the legislative House (Powers and Privileges)Act of 1990 and other statutes, or by practice, precedent wage and custome.

No Membca of this House wil just rise up •• the Floor of the House to talk of any privilege of this House withluh efeuiDg it to a particular law or Order. It is most important D a Member to assert his privilege. It must be balDcI up by ll and mis is the Ordec I Willlt to clmw tile attmtion of this •••••able House to.

ThaDk: you.

Hon. Chukwueke Nwajuba (Ehime MImIoI1hi"ul'1111iOOlowo): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to refir to Ordec S(c)which says:

In cases where adequate provision is not IJde in this Stomling Ord&v, resort shall be hod to the practices of fid British HOfISI! of Commons as far as am be applied.

I will draw your attention to the provisions of the HtJ1ISII'd of 1919:

That where a Member decides to have the floor on the bosis of a ri accruing to him, such Member shall pr the r w i guideline.

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This is drawn from the British practice which was done in 1979 under the administration.

The point I am trying to make, Sir, about the hon. Speaker is this; if there is a privilege in question, we all can imagine privileges and I have a lot that I believe are my privileges. But if it is not properly regulated, that is, it is not in the Orders and you can not produce where it is written, I would prefer a situation where we address ourselves to privileges which we know where they exist. I am not affronting anyone here. So, we, who are not privy to what you know, will be in a position to possess them. In the absence of any privilege being referred to specifically and in the absence of any breach of any particular procedure following it, and in the absence of a precedent which we can refer to, I would advise this honourable House to please not imagine privileges until they are, in fact, privileges.

Thank you.

Hon. Ndruk. Irabor (Ika East/Ika South): Point of observation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What point of observation?

Hon. Irabor : Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Members, the last two Members who called for Order ignored the fact that we too have set a precedent.

Mr. Speaker: Is that your information?

Hon. Irabor: That is the information I am raising. There is a precedent in this House. We have used Order 16 to bring a Matter of Urgent National importance following or from the complaint of a newspaper publication in this House and that matter was heard. I think it is the Member's privilege and entitlement to be heard based on this Order.

Thank you. (Applause)

Hon. Johnson O. Nwogu (Elembe/Tai Oyigbo): Point of Observation; Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker What Point of Observation?

Hon. Nwogu: Mr. Speaker, my observation is simply this. I think there is nothing wrong with the privilege of the Member.

At the same time, there is nothing new that we are

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hearing today that we have not heard again and again. We can, as a House, decide to 'sensationalise' what we have before us or we can decide to go on with the stoic dignity by which we have operated so far. The choice is ours.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, by way of observation that the House should go into the Orders of the Day. When we are through with today's Order, if any Member has anything that he thinks can be discussed, that should be raised, and at that time, we will be in a position to decide if we want to carry on with additional things. But the bottom line is that there is nothing new: hearing today that we did not hear yesterday, that we did not hear sometime ago and it is about time we face a direction. It is not everyday that we come up with something with a different view or with a different perspective on the same matter. We should have a definite route to follow and this is not something new.

Thank you. (Applause)

Hon. Lateef Adebola (Akinyele/Lagos): Point of Order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What Point of Order?

Hon. Adebola: Mr. Speaker, Sir, Order 15, and it defines what are the Privileges of the House that you should enjoy. The Order says and I quote:

Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the Members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative House (powers and Privileges) Act of 1990 and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom.

In other words, if you do not enjoy any privilege here, then whatever happens to us is just free. A privilege is supposed to be a protection to our rights and freedom. In other words, if we find anything amiss, we have all the right to bring it forward to this Floor. That is what the definition of Privileges actually mean.

Thank you.

Hon. Solomon Agidani: Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is an attempt to frustrate my Motion on this Point of Order.

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Mr. Speaker There is no attempt, please.

Hon. Musa Elayo (Awe/Doma/Keana): Point of Order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What Point of Order?

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Hon. Musa Elayo: Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I humbly refer this honourable House to Order 62 of our Rules. It provides as follows:

The Speaker in the House and the Chairman in any Committee shall be responsible for the observance of the rules of Order in the House and Committee respectively and their decision upon any Point of Order shall not be open to appeal and shall not be reviewed by the House except upon a substantive Motion and after notice.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the issue that is being raised today was raised before this honourable House yesterday and there was a decision by the honourable Chair. I cannot see the reason why we are trying to breach the provisions of our law. I would, therefore, urge the Speaker, Sir, not to entertain any matter in respect of the matter that was foreclosed yesterday.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order.

Hon. Barau Jibrin (Tarauni): Point of information, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What point of information?

Hon. Barau Jibrin Tarauni: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the information is this; I would like the honourable House to be very careful on this issue. This is because I have just been called from my home base of Kano this morning that the issue is taking a new dimension; it is being given a different colouration. That is, the issue of the allegation on our Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon. Jibrin. It is well noted. Let me do my ruling on that. I will want to call on the Deputy Speaker in the absence of the House Leader to move that this House go into the Committee of the Whole House to discuss the issue of Privileges. The Sergeant-At-Arms should clear the Gallery.

Hon. Cbibusom N. Nwocbe (Oduha I I Ahoada East): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby move that this House do go into the Committee of the Whole House to discuss the issue of Privileges.

I so move.

Mr. Speaker: Is any Member seconding the Motion?

Hon. Mohammed U. Kunia (Maiduguri Metropolitan): Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Members, I second the Motion moved by the Deputy Speaker that this House be constituted into the Committee of the Whole House to consider the issue of Privileges.

I beg to second.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved: That the House be constituted into the Committee of the Whole House to consider the issue of Privileges.

(Gallery Cleared)

Sitting suspended: 12.30 p.m.

Sitting resumed: 1.30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Mohammed Wakil (Innam Gwazai Chibok): Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Members, I move that this honourable House do stand adjourned till Tuesday, 20th July, 1999 at 10.00 a.m.

I beg to move

Hon. Abubakar G. Shehu (Malam Maza): Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Members, I hereby second the Motion raised by the Leader of the House that this House do adjourn till Tuesday, 20th July, 1999 at 10.00 a.m.

I beg to second

Question put and agreed to

Resolved: That this House do adjourn till Tuesday, 20th July, 1999, at 10.00 a.m.

The House adjourned accordingly at 1.45 p.m.