

PRESS RELEASE

8th February 2006

As has been its stance to ignore vilifications from newspapers which have been pronounced guilty of libel by the IMC following adjudications of complaints from the public, the IMC would have remained silent on the mudslinging article on the IMC published in the Peep Newspaper of January 30, 2006 and the article “Mendes are hypocrites”.

However, persistent phone calls from the public expressing concern over the constant challenge by Peep of the authority of the IMC and its apparent utter disregard for the ethics of journalism as portrayed in his article about the Mendes forced the Commission to come out with a statement.

The Editor of Peep claims that he paid his renewal of Registration fee for 2005 and that the letter sent to him by the Executive Secretary requesting him to pay this arrear was erroneous. The staff of the Commission has revisited all receipt books and other pertinent documents for 2005 and there is no record of payment from Peep.

The IMC would like the Editor of Peep to send his receipt to the Office as proof of payment.

The Editor of Peep, in the article of January 30 referred to earlier gave the public the impression that the activities and decision of the IMC are influenced by the SLPP government and that even the appointment of the Executive Secretary was SLPP inspired.

The Commission wishes to make it known that the IMC comprises men and women of proven integrity, fearlessness and sobriety; people with independent minds who cannot be easily swayed by any one. At no time has any politician, from the President of the Republic right down to the last person in the SLPP or any of the other political parties for that matter attempted to influence the decisions of the IMC on complaints before the Commission or on any of its activities. Since the establishment of the Commission, the President has never invited the Commissioners for discussion on any issue, nor has the Commission visited the President for consultations even though the Commission is under the Office of the President.

With regard to Mr. Ganda's appointment as Executive Secretary, like all the other applicants for the position, he went through an interview and came second in the order of ranking of the candidates. The candidate who came first was offered the appointment which she originally accepted. However she later turned down the offer for concrete reasons explained by letter and the job was offered to the candidate that was next in the order of ranking. For the benefit of the Peep, Mr. Ganda's referees did not include any politician. They were as follows:-

1. The General Manager of the Sierra Leone Ports Authority
2. The Programme Manager, GTZ
3. The Country Director, ARC Sierra Leone

Peep’s allegation that Mr. Ganda was an SLPP appointee is therefore a fabric of the imagination.

Peep’s insinuation that the newspaper cannot be fined more than Le500,000 and a censure and his request for the IMC to develop a Media Code of Practice in collaboration with SLAJ must be addressed.

The Commission would like to call the attention of Peep to Section of the Independent Media Commission Act 2000 which reads:

The reason why the IMC is reluctant to enforce this section is because it realises that the government

Commissioner Bernadette P. Cole	-	Chairperson
Commissioner Ade P. Bell	-	Member
Commissioner Anthony Brewah	-	Member
Commissioner Cassandra Davies	-	Member
Commissioner Francis L. Davies	-	Member
Commissioner Christo Johnson	-	Member
Commissioner Dr. Abu Bakarr Kargbo	-	Member
Commissioner Patricia Macauley	-	Member
Commissioner Sam J.E Metzger	-	Member