

(10.)

COMPLAINT OF THE HOSPITAL BOARD AS TO RETENTION OF THE SUBSIDY BY THE BRITISH RESIDENT.

[Sent, at their request, on 9th December, to the Governor of New Zealand.]

SIR,—

British Residency, Rarotonga, 24th December, 1897.

I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, copy of a despatch and its enclosure sent by me to the Governor of New Zealand on the 9th instant, at the request of the Hospital Board.

It is only necessary to add, in regard to the Board's statement that the information sought by me will be given in their report at the end of the financial year, that no such information was given in their report at the end of last year, nor can I see any reason why—dealing as it does with public money—the information should be withheld.

I submit the question for your Honour's consideration, in accordance with my despatch to His Excellency the Governor.

His Honour Sir James Prendergast, Rarotonga.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS, British Resident.

The BRITISH RESIDENT to His Excellency the GOVERNOR of New Zealand.

MY LORD,—

Rarotonga, 9th December, 1897.

At the request of the Hospital Board, I have the honour to enclose the copy of a letter sent to me by the Board for transmission. The circumstances are as follows:—

1st April, 1897.—The Board entered into an agreement with Dr. George Craig, as Medical Officer, for twelve months, the remuneration being at the rate of £180 per annum. For that amount Dr. Craig is to provide a suitable nurse, and medicine, food, and attendance to all patients at the hospital, as required. (*Vide* Board's report, July, 1897.) At the same time the Board issued new regulations, whereby the charge for patients was made £1 per week instead of 7s., and all free treatment was abolished, except under special order given by a member of the Board.

14th September, 1897.—A letter officially published in the *Torea* newspaper by the Treasurer of the Board complaining of the inadequate provision for payment of the Medical Officer pointed out that for the five months ending 31st August Dr. George Craig had only received £75 (the Government subsidy), while he had expended £76 19s. 8d. out of his own pocket for drugs and dressings, food for patients, and servants, alone.

16th September, 1897.—A petition was sent to your Excellency asking for a Royal Commission to inquire into various matters. Among them was the inadequacy of the provision made by the British Resident for the hospital. The thirteenth paragraph stated that the subsidy of £180 per annum was "the only amount obtained for the salaries of doctor and nurse, medicines, and food, and all appliances for a hospital, and to give free treatment to a population of some six thousand inhabitants." This petition was signed by five persons, of whom three were Mr. Kohn (the Chairman of the Hospital Board, and still a member), Dr. George Craig (the Medical Officer), and his brother.

16th October, 1897.—In his published quarterly report to the Board, the Medical Officer states that "many cases have been turned away owing to lack of funds," and urges that strong representations should be made to the Government.

From the published reports of the Board for the six months ending the 30th September it appears that there were treated twenty indoor patients and 264 outdoor patients. The responsibility for signing the warrant for payment of the monthly subsidy has devolved upon me for the time, and on ascertaining the facts as above stated I asked the Board to supply me with information as to the number of patients—indoor and outdoor—who had been treated since 30th June last (from which date my responsibility begins), and of the proportions that had been treated with and without charge respectively, together with the amounts received. The published accounts of the Board do not show that anything has been so received. The Board declined to give this information, and I declined to sign the warrant for payment of the subsidy until it had been received.

In forwarding the letter from the Board, and this explanation, to your Excellency, I may add that I purpose submitting it also to the Commissioner, Mr. Henry Berkeley, on his arrival.

His Excellency the Earl of Ranfurly, G.C.M.G.,
Governor of New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS, British Resident.

Enclosure.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, 8th December, 1897.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date. We would respectfully remind you that on the 1st September, 1896, the Cook Islands Hospital was handed over to the entire management of the Board. In pursuance thereof we entered into an honourable agreement with an accredited medical man. We fail to see how any subsequent political change can legally affect our liabilities as a Board, and we cannot admit the justice of making the payment of the guaranteed monthly subsidy contingent on the furnishing by us of certain information which has not hitherto been asked of us under such conditions. Therefore we, as a Board, reiterate the request that you, as British Resident and as administrator of the Cook Islands expenditure, do give orders that the monthly subsidy now due be at once paid. In persisting in your present attitude you are only throwing obstacles in the way of our fulfilling our part of the agreement, and putting the community in danger of being again left without the services of a competent and qualified man. All the necessary reports will be duly furnished by the Board at the termination of the financial year. This complies fully with the Government Act under which the Board took office.

If the authority for the payment of this subsidy be not furnished at the hospital by noon to-morrow, the 9th instant, we must request you to forward the enclosed copy of this letter to His Excellency the Governor of New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

F. GOODWIN,

F. J. Moss, Esq., British Resident.

Chairman of the Cook Islands Hospital Board.

(11.)

APPROPRIATION ACT NOT PASSED BY PARLIAMENT, AND PROCLAMATION OF THE 29TH SEPTEMBER, UNDERTAKING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE EXPENDITURE IN THE ABSENCE OF APPROPRIATION ACT.

(No. 22/97.)

MY LORD,—

14th October, 1897.

I have the honour to inform your Excellency that the Parliament of the Cook Islands held its last sitting on the 27th September, when the two members who remained adjourned to the 5th December. The members from the other islands are not likely to attend, and, in any case, the proposed meeting on the 5th December would be illegal, and need not be taken into account.

I enclose also Proclamation made by me on the 29th September, with estimates, as passed by the Parliament on the 26th August, and minutes of proceedings of Parliament from the 26th August to the 27th September, attached to said Proclamation.

With regard to the Proclamation, as Parliament adjourned after declining to pass the Appropriation Act for 1897–98, it appeared necessary to take upon myself the responsibility of temporarily administering the expenditure in accordance with the estimates, and that I could do so without in any way varying the simple Protectorate that had been declared in 1891. It was necessary to act promptly and in the absence of legal advice, but I trust that the view taken by me will be found correct, and the action meet with your Excellency's approval. Affairs can now go on regularly till the Parliament meets again in July, 1898, and ample time be taken to decide upon the course to be pursued, as each separate island has its own local Government, and administers affairs in its own way, subject only to my approval of any laws which may be passed by its Council.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS, British Resident.

His Excellency the Earl of Ranfurly, K.C.M.G., Governor of New Zealand, &c.