

I have also to report that three Bills have been laid before the Parliament. They are the Import Duty Act Amendment Bill, the Federal Court Bill, and the Juries Bill, all of which are still under consideration.

The Import Duty Amendment Bill is merely to abolish compulsory free treatment at the hospital, as provided in the Act under which the revenue for the hospital is derived, and to leave the regulation of such treatment to the Hospital Board since created. The reason for this Bill is explained fully in the opening message.

The Federal Court Bill and the Juries Bill are important. The reasons for the introduction of the Federal Court Bill will also be found fully stated in the opening message. Since Judge Tepou's disability, from illness, no other native Judge has been found, nor can any other be found, competent to take his place. The Arikis' Courts in each island, over which these Judges preside, are incompetent to deal with commercial and other cases in which Europeans are concerned. When Judges allow themselves to be biassed by listening out of Court to interested parties, delay justice, do not understand the cases before them, nor decide in accordance with the evidence produced, appeals are made to me against their decisions, and I find investigation difficult and unsatisfactory upon the imperfect records which they keep. A remedy is imperative, but the want of funds compels a careful regard to the cost.

The simple and most direct course appeared to me to be that embodied in the Bill which, as drafted and now before the Parliament, I enclose for your Excellency's information. The powers of the Federal Court are extended so as to enable it to act as a check upon the Arikis' Courts and the local governments in their several proceedings. The Court will also have the sole jurisdiction in certain cases, and in all cases where Europeans are concerned. There is no one here to take the Presidency, and there are no funds to pay him adequately if there were such person. The only alternative is that the British Resident for the time being, if allowed to assume the office of President, shall do so, but be answerable only to his own Government, and not in any way to that of the natives. Of course, he will act without pay, but in consideration of the extra work and more direct responsibility, will be provided from the Federal revenue with a Private Secretary, who will act also as Registrar of the Court.

The Bill is strongly, and with great unanimity, opposed by the members of Parliament. They object to it as taking away their mana, or, as might be more properly said, the mana which their Judges are all competent to possess. The passage of the Bill is extremely doubtful, but I hope that time and a more full understanding of the position will induce the members to change their present view.

Among the Europeans an objection is also raised to the additional power given to the British Resident. The objection would have more weight if he did not already possess the power of interfering with the decisions of Judges, and of insisting, through the Government, on appeals, rehearings, and other indirect and slow means of remedying errors that are made. But to meet this objection the Juries Bill has been introduced, providing for a jury of four. I enclose this Bill also for your Excellency's information.

I trust that the course proposed to meet the imperative need of change in the administration of justice, especially where Europeans are concerned, will meet with your Excellency's approval.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS,
British Resident.

His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, &c., New Zealand.

Enclosure No. 1.

COOK ISLANDS PARLIAMENT: OPENING ADDRESS.

From the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT to the PARLIAMENT of the COOK ISLANDS.

WE welcome you to this your seventh yearly meeting since the Federation and the establishment of civil government in our islands.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Our beloved Sovereign, Queen Victoria, attained on the 20th June the sixtieth year of her happy and eventful reign, the longest reign of any English Sovereign. The occasion was celebrated on the 22nd June with great rejoicings throughout the Empire. You were not in session, but we felt that your earnest wish would be to take part, however humbly, in these rejoicings. Therefore, in your name, and in the names of the Government and people of the Cook Islands enjoying Her Majesty's gracious protection, we sent, on the 27th March, an address which would arrive in England in time for presentation, and of which a copy is appended for your information.

Compiling and Printing the Laws.

The compiling and printing of the laws passed by Parliament and in force on the 31st December, 1896, has been proceeded with as fast as our limited means of printing would permit. We hope to be able to lay before you the English version. The Maori version, carefully revised, will follow. We propose asking you for a vote in order that the laws passed by the Councils of the several islands of the Federation may be similarly treated. All our laws have been published in the parliamentary blue-books of New Zealand, with the despatches sent by the British Resident; but many so published are in English only, while the means of publication here, till lately, were confined to writing and its duplication. Now that we have a printing-press available the difficulty hitherto experienced will be overcome.