

1898.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# COOK ISLANDS:

CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO REQUESTS FOR THE REMOVAL OF F. J. MOSS, ESQUIRE,  
BRITISH RESIDENT.

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

## No. 1.

Mr. F. J. Moss to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

(No. 16/97.)

MY LORD,—

Cook Islands, British Residency, Rarotonga, 16th September, 1897.

In my despatch 15/97, of the 21st August, I informed your Excellency that Parliament had referred Federal Court Bill—at the suggestion of the Arikis of Rarotonga—to a meeting of all the Arikis of the different islands to be convened in Rarotonga. Their decision was to be adopted by Parliament and to be final. No date for the meeting was proposed, nor would they agree that one should be named.

The Arikis of the whole federation form its Government, but have no legislative powers. Their decision was a foregone conclusion, and the shelving of the Bill certain. Success of that kind would have led to similar tactics next year, and delay have been made indefinite. Parliament members themselves made no secret to me at the conference held with them on the 16th August that they would put the Bill off from year to year till their children knew English and were able to be judges. They would not have more white men.

To counteract this I drew up an amended Bill—copy enclosed. This Bill met many of the objections which they have raised, and contained a clause—24—which made it law on the 1st January next unless the Arikis took certain action therein defined before that date. I also offered to leave the Bill to your Excellency's decision instead of acting upon my own judgment. The Bill, thus amended, was laid before Parliament on the 26th August.

It was all fruitless. The Arikis and the Judges, and some few of the white people, were afraid of the Bill. They believed that it might be used to check corrupt practices in the Governments of the different islands, but, above all, that it would in the end be used to make them pay debts, and, as they finally were persuaded, to take from them their land to pay such debts if necessary. The Chairman of the Parliament is there only because he is the husband of one of the Arikis. By birth he is said to be English, but he calls himself an American. He would certainly not be chosen by either Europeans or Maoris, but in the absence of electoral machinery was put in by his wife, the Ariki of Aruangi.

This gentleman, Mr. J. M. Salmon, and his friend, a Mr. Goodwin, an old trader here, whom he has succeeded in getting temporarily employed by the Parliament as its Clerk, have been and are among the most active intriguers against the Bill. Other influences, to which I shall have to refer in another despatch, have been brought to bear, and to it all may be added a good deal of detraction towards myself and a continued assertion that the only object in my case was to add to my personal importance and increase my own power by destroying the mana of the Arikis and chiefs.

The Maori—the Ariki section especially—is ignorant and credulous. The Arikis and the Parliament held continual and, in many cases, secret meetings. From all that I can learn they admitted that—up to now—I had done much for them in all ways. They had nothing but the kindest feeling towards me, but why did I want the Bill? Why not have had it long ago if it was necessary? Hard questions these to answer unless they could be convinced, as I am, of the corruption that is again creeping in, and the inability of the Courts in any case to deal with the matters now brought before them. The Bill must not become law. That was their final decision, conveyed to me on the 31st August, and replied to by me at their next meeting on the 2nd September—both herein enclosed. I may observe that I thought at one time of referring to your Excellency's despatch to me of the 8th July (received on the 10th August), but in the circumstances, as they then stood, such reference would only have led to renewed misrepresentation and the despatch being met with disregard and disbelief.