

The Bill has occupied the whole session between the 9th July and the 31st August. On the 6th September the Clerk of the Parliament, Makea Daniela, son of Judge Tepou, and who, trained to the work by me, has acted as Clerk to Parliament and to Government and as Paymaster since 1891, disgusted, as he says, with the waste of time, and the things into which Mr. Salmon was leading them, with which they had nothing to do, resigned, and Mr. Goodwin was at once appointed in his place. I declined to agree to his resignation: but the practical result is that I now only hear occasionally of what takes place in Parliament, and cannot with certainty say what has since occupied them, beyond a general discussion of all kinds of grievances against myself.

The Bill being rejected, a turning-point in Cook Island affairs has been reached, and the next steps to be taken becomes a serious question. The islands are small, but with a somewhat dense population—that of Rarotonga, for example, being at least a hundred to the square mile, and others about the same. Communication between them is irregular and tardy, and in the absence of harbours is likely to be so. Each island has its own system of land-tenure, and its own political and social peculiarities. Each island differs also commercially, and in the character of its people, from the other. In Rarotonga there are 147 persons of nationalities other than Maoris or Pacific Islanders. In all the other islands together there are not a dozen foreigners, but the population is purely Maori, with a few scattered traders of different nationalities.

These are the considerations that prompted me to make the experiment of the federation, which has healed old jealousies and brought the different islanders together, imbued them with new ideas and a broader conception of life. In my humble opinion it is still well worth preserving, if not the only practical way for establishing law and order without the friction that, in my judgment, would be sure to follow any attempt to rule from any particular centre, and which would soon call for the exercise of force in its train. The schools, in which English is now being taught, are the hope of the future, but meanwhile the ignorance of the natives in many respects, and the combined ignorance and inflated ideas of the Arikis especially, together with the whites ready to impose upon them, have to be taken into account.

After the most anxious consideration, and setting aside all personal feeling at the sudden change that has been produced in the minds of the Arikis, I am bound to say that there seems to me no system better suited to the conditions of these islands than that now in force; provided that there were in reserve a power near at hand that could be appealed to and relied upon for prompt and effective action if necessary. Such a power, I venture to suggest, would be found if the Governor and Council of New Zealand had full authority to legislate for, tax, and control at any time these islands. I believe that the knowledge of such a power being in existence would go far to render its use unnecessary. The federation might then continue—its Parliament might legislate, and its Government exist. The various islands could retain their local Governments, and the Maori, continuing to take part in governing, would continue to advance politically, socially, and commercially.

If, on the other hand, any system be adopted incompatible with federal legislation, each island would have to collect its own revenue, and Rarotonga, Aitutaki, and Mangaia would each require a British officer, for no Maori could be trusted in that position. The remaining islands (Atiu, Mitiaro, and Mauke) are nearer to each other, and one official would do for all three. The revenue could not be raised by direct taxation, for the Maoris would not pay, and they are wonderful adepts at passive resistance, with not a little readiness for violence if they are excited or deem it likely to succeed.

The adoption of any policy which did not give a large share of the work to the Maoris themselves would also arrest their development, lead to their decay, and end in reproach to the British name and nation. I venture to suggest that this is an aspect of the question to be kept in view, and also that though unhappily these kindly and clever Maoris are an ignorant they are nevertheless an advancing people.

Much important work is yet to be done among them. A better and more secure land-tenure to encourage cultivation, and the creation of machinery for the conduct of the elections which their Constitution pre-supposes in all the representative bodies, are the two most immediately needed, and will have to be gradually approached. To carry either would be as hopeless as the Federal Court Bill as matters at present stand.

In conclusion, if your Excellency should decide on any radical change from the present system I would respectfully recommend that a Royal Commission should be sent to make inquiry and suggestion. I do not feel competent to advise in that direction alone, but respectfully ask that if a Royal Commission be sent I have in it such a position as would prevent its being regarded or represented here as a censure on myself or my conduct of affairs.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS,
British Resident.

His Excellency the Earl of Ranfurly, Governor of New Zealand, &c.

Enclosures.

From PARLIAMENT to the BRITISH RESIDENT.

SIR,—

Parliament House, Rarotonga, 31st August, 1897.

Salutations! The Federal Court Bill, as amended, has been laid before us. We have read and given it much consideration, and our thoughts are still the same as when we threw out the original Federal Court Bill. We still say, Leave it now, and we will look slowly for some substitute for this Bill. We will not agree to this work being done quickly. Leave it so that it may be done carefully. It will then be a good law, and our thoughts on it will be enlightened.

Enough. Salutations!

V. MAOATE, Chairman (*pro tem.*).