

On the 28th April H.M.S. "Goldfinch" arrived from Auckland. The Resident proceeded in her to visit the different islands of the group, and returned to Rarotonga on the 8th May. During this visit the Proclamation was formally read and published at Mangaia, Mauke, Mitiaro, and Atiu. At each of these islands, and at Aitutaki, arrangements were made for an assembly of delegates in Rarotonga on the 23rd of May, to federate the islands and frame a system of regular government. In each island peace and good order had been for many years maintained by the authority of the chiefs, but there was no regular civil government and no public revenue. The delegates met, as arranged, in Rarotonga. The following report, made at the time of this the first formal legislative meeting in the Cook Islands, will throw light on the subsequent proceedings:—

Minutes of Meeting of the Central Council, at the Schoolhouse, Avarua, on Thursday, 4th June, 1891.

The British Resident took the chair at 10 a.m.

The following representatives were present: Rarotonga: Te Pou o te Rangi (Avarua), William Isaiah (Arorangi), Samuela (Takitumu). Mangaia: Ngatama (Oneroa), Tangi (Ivirua), Oruruiti (Tamarua). Atiu, Mitiaro, and Mauke Ngamaru (Atiu), Tou (Mauke). Aitutaki: John Mokoenga (Arutanga), Ngativaro (Reureu), Raka (Arutanga).

Mana (Mitiaro) absent. Daniela (of Oneroa) claimed that he should sit instead of Oruruiti, and that he had been sent to do so. Vaipo (chief of Ivirua) and John (Ariki of Mangaia) declared that Oruruiti was the right member, and that they would be responsible for his being so. Furthermore, as Oneroa was already represented, and Tamarua (to which settlement Oruruiti belonged) was not, the Chairman decided that Oruruiti should be accepted as the member.

Makea Daniela was then elected to act as Clerk to the Council.

Mr. Moss then read the following address: "I have asked you, representing the people of the Cook Islands, to meet in order to consider how you can best work together so as to be strong and lift up to increased knowledge and prosperity the chiefs and people of the Cook Islands. It is the first time in your history that you have been thus brought together, and I earnestly hope that this meeting will lead to a good understanding among you, to the sinking of small jealousies, and to your laying a broad and strong foundation on which your children may continue to build long after you and I are gone. To do this a system of regular government must be established, and it must be based on two clear principles, which I ask you in your local Governments also to bear constantly in mind. The first principle is that those who make the laws should be a body distinct from those who carry them out. The one will then be a check upon the other, and it will be better for both of them and for the people. The second principle is that those who carry out the laws—namely, the Government and its officers—must be regularly and properly appointed, and personally answerable for what they do. I have drawn up a short law embodying these two principles. It is the first matter for your consideration. I hope you will find it good, but it will be for you to tell me frankly and fully what your thoughts about it may be. Then we shall work together and make a good law for the future government of the whole of the islands. Other laws will be submitted to you—to establish a Supreme Court, a post-office, and other things urgently required, as well as to raise money to carry them out. But the greatest of all work will be to establish schools, so that your children can be taught to read English books, and thus learn all that has made the English people wise and strong. The missionaries brought Christianity to you, and they have given you, in your own tongue, the first and greatest of all books—the bible. My desire is to help them in their good work, and they will, I feel sure, help me in mine. Then, by God's blessing, we shall together succeed in doing a great and lasting benefit to you and to your children. I ask you now to appoint one of your own number as Chairman, and leave you to the full and free consideration of the law 'for the good government of the Cook Islands,' which I now lay before you."

The Aitutaki members proposed that the British Resident should keep the chair, and were supported by others. After considerable discussion (as Mr. Moss insisted on their putting one of their own number in the chair), Te Pou-o-te-Rangi was proposed by Ngamaru. No other member being proposed, the Chairman declared Te Pou duly elected, and vacated in his favour.

The meeting being now properly constituted, prayers were offered by Ngamaru, and the business began.

The laws passed in this and subsequent sessions, and still operative, will be found in the following pages.

Provision having been made to enable the newly-formed Government to appoint officials for collecting revenue, conducting a post-office, auditing the public accounts, and to frame and publish the necessary regulations to give effect to the federal laws, the first Parliament ended its short session, and adjourned till the following year.

LAWS OF THE COOK ISLANDS FEDERATION.

No. 1/91.—To provide for the Good Government of the Cook Islands.—(Passed 5th June, 1891.)

Short Title.—"The Constitution Act, 1891."

It is hereby enacted by the British Resident and the duly-elected representatives of the several islands of the Cook Group now in Council assembled:

1. *Local Government.*—That each island shall continue to govern itself in all local affairs, subject to the condition that laws hereafter made by any local Government shall not be valid until formally approved by the British Resident for the time being, who shall also state the day when such law shall come into operation.
2. *Parliament.*—That the representatives of the several islands duly elected and now assembled in Council at Avarua, in the Island of Rarotonga, as the first General Council of the Cook Islands, hereby enact that the legislation and government of the Cook Islands shall henceforth be vested in the said Council, which shall be styled "the Parliament" of the Cook Islands.
3. That the Parliament shall be responsible for the peace, order, and good government of the Cook Islands, and by it shall be undertaken all good works and all duties which cannot be properly undertaken by the people of the islands separately.
4. That all laws made by the Parliament shall be expressed as made by the British Resident and the Parliament of the Cook Islands, and shall not be valid till formally approved by the British Resident, who shall also state the day when each of the said laws shall come into operation.
5. That unless and until otherwise provided by Parliament the number of representative districts and the number of members assigned to each shall continue as at present—namely: Rarotonga, three members; Mangaia, three members; Atiu, Mauke, and Mitiaro, three members; and Aitutaki, three members: being, in all, four districts and twelve members.
6. That in each of the said districts the people shall elect their members to the Parliament in such manner as the local laws of the district may direct.
7. That the Parliament shall meet at Avarua, in the Island of Rarotonga, at 10 a.m. on the 15th day of June in every year, and when the day falls on Sunday the day following shall be substituted.
8. That the Parliament shall at each yearly meeting elect one of its members to be Chairman for the year.
9. *The Government.*—That an Executive Council is hereby appointed to carry out the laws made by Parliament, and to look after the well-being of the Cook Islands when Parliament is not in session. That this Council shall be styled "the Government" of the Cook Islands.
10. That the Government may at any time call a special meeting of the Parliament, giving not less than thirty days' notice of such meeting. The notice to date from the date of publication.
11. That with the Government shall rest the power of reducing or remitting any penalties imposed under laws passed by the Parliament; but such power shall only be exercised with the approval of the British Resident.
12. That all Arikis of the Cook Islands shall be members of the Government.
13. That Makea Takau, Ariki of Avarua, is hereby appointed chief of the Government, but no act of administration shall be valid unless with the approval of the British Resident. All letters or other public documents issued by the Government are to be signed by the said Makea Takau.
14. That all appointments to public office shall be made subject to the approval of Parliament, and shall be submitted for its consideration at the first opportunity.