

1901.
NEW ZEALAND.

PACIFIC ISLANDS:

LETTER FROM MR. S. PERCY SMITH, GOVERNMENT RESIDENT AGENT, ALOFI, NIUE ISLAND,
BEING REPORT ON MATTERS AFFECTING THE ISLAND OF NIUE.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Command of His Excellency.

COPY of LETTER from Mr. S. PERCY SMITH, Government Resident Agent, Alofi, Niue Island,
to His Excellency the GOVERNOR of NEW ZEALAND, Wellington.

MY LORD,—

Alofi, Niue Island, 11th October, 1901.

I have the honour to report my proceedings under your Excellency's letter of instructions dated the 29th July, 1901.

I left New Plymouth on the 5th August, having received intimation from Captain Worsley, of the schooner "Countess of Ranfurly," that he proposed to sail on the 6th. It was not, however, until the 15th that the vessel got away. We called in at Sunday Island on our way to Rarotonga, in order to make inquiries as to the missing vessel "Maungaroa," but could hear nothing of her. We arrived at Rarotonga on the 4th September, and left again, having Lieut.-Colonel Gudgeon, C.M.G., with us, on the 6th September, and, after calling at Aitutaki for men; anchored off here on the 11th September.

I may, *en passant*, refer to the new schooner, about which many disparaging remarks were current in Auckland. She has turned out to be a very staunch and quick boat, easily handled, and safe. We experienced a somewhat severe gale off the Kermadec Islands, which put her sea-going qualities to the test, and nothing could be better than her behaviour, for she never shipped a sea the whole time, though the decks were necessarily constantly wet from the spindrift, making it a very uncomfortable time for the passengers. Immediately on landing, Colonel Gudgeon sent for Tongia, the Patuiki, or King (so called), to meet us at Alofi, but he was ill-advised enough not to attend. A satisfactory meeting of welcome with the Alofi people took place on the day of our arrival, and, as Colonel Gudgeon could not wait to visit Tongia, I arranged to meet him and the chiefs of the island at Tuapa, where Tongia lives, on the 17th September.

I proceeded to Tuapa on the day fixed, accompanied by the Rev. F. E. Lawes, who then and ever since, with the greatest kindness, has acted as my interpreter. I was received very heartily with the accustomed welcome of the people, who gave a feast, accompanied by their native dances, singing, &c.

On the following day I met the Patuiki and the chiefs from all parts of the island, and explained the object of my coming and the changes which I considered necessary in the form of government, the impending imposition of Customs duties, the abrogation of the native method of levying fines, &c., the necessity for appointing capable men to administer justice amongst themselves, and other matters which I proposed to enter into more fully with them at a meeting of representative chiefs at Alofi, after I had been round the island and made myself better acquainted with the existing state of affairs. The general tenor of the speeches of the chiefs at the meeting was to the effect that they were much afraid Great Britain would impose heavy taxation, that they wished to be connected directly with Great Britain and not with New Zealand or Rarotonga, and they trusted the Resident Agent would be able to indicate to them means by which they could become more prosperous, &c.

Council for the Island of Niue.

On my return to Alofi, I employed myself in drawing up an Act to constitute a Council for the Island of Niue which should contain the principle of election of its members by the people of the eleven villages of the island, to replace the nominated Council existing, which appears not to have the confidence of the people. This Council has heretofore been nominated by the Patuiki from people who are likely to support his views solely.

Revenue Act.

I also drew up a Revenue Act imposing a 10-per-cent. impost on all goods imported into Niue which are not free by the New Zealand tariff, and provided for the expenditure, under authority of the General Council, to replace the objectionable tribute levied by the Potuiki for his own benefit. This Act also prohibits the sale of spirituous liquors to Natives, &c.

Administration of Justice.

A further Act dealing with the administration of justice as between Natives and others—dealing with the marriage, divorce, and registration of births, deaths, and marriages—has been drawn up, besides one bearing on the emigration of labourers to other islands: all matters which call for early attention.

You will observe by the Council Act that provision is made for the Patuiki (King) to take the position of President of the Council. He is in reality a sort of "fifth wheel in the coach,"