

this matter with the Resident Agent, and I shall have no hesitation in asking the House to assist where assistance will help to bring about closer settlement and better communication between the traders or facilitate the shipping of produce. I think there are three places where you can ship on the island.

*Mr. Rex* : The roads to the shipping-places are the worst in the island.

*Hon. Mr. Mills* : I will see what funds Mr. Maxwell has for going on with the work, and authorise him to do all he possibly can in the matter.

*Mr. Rex* : I have to thank you very much for your kindness.

The Minister and party were then introduced to "King" Togia. A large gathering of chiefs and people had already assembled on the open grassy space in front of the new house which the people have built for the Resident Agent, and a lengthy conference took place, Mr. R. D. Head interpreting. The following is a report of the proceedings :—

*Hon. Mr. Mills* : On behalf of the Premier of New Zealand, my colleagues, myself, and party I have to convey to you our hearty salutations and greetings. The Premier hoped that he would be able to come with us too, but found he was unable to do so. So as Minister in charge of the Cook and Other Islands Administration I have taken his place, but he will probably visit you some time early next year. When the Right Hon. Mr. Seddon returned from his visit to the islands some two years ago and told us what he had seen in them, a great deal of interest was created, as well as a desire on the part of members to see them for themselves. So the Government resolved to form a party this year from both Houses of Parliament and make the trip to the islands, so that we might get a great deal of information and be more familiar with your ideas and customs. We have already visited a number of islands, and we have now come to Niue, and when we leave here to-night we shall visit Tonga, and from there we shall go to Fiji, and then back to New Zealand. I can assure you that a great number of our party would like to remain longer than to-day, but we cannot spare the time. The General Assembly of the New Zealand Parliament meets during next month, and we must all be back there in time to take up our respective duties when the House meets. We have been very much pleased with our visit to the various places, and we shall be able to carry back a great deal of valuable information, so that the Government and the House will better understand what these islands that have recently been annexed to New Zealand really mean to the colony. I want you all to understand that one of the results of this annexation is that you have become part and parcel of the great British Empire to which we all belong, and New Zealand is answerable for the administration which deals with matters relative to the islands. We shall therefore be only too happy and pleased to hear any expression of opinion from any of you present here to-day, because we are very anxious to gain all the information we possibly can. I have received a petition from Niue, handed to me by Colonel Gudgeon, in reference to the liquor traffic on this island. When I return to New Zealand this will be submitted to the Cabinet, and it will receive their consideration when they deal with the same question as affecting Rarotonga and the other islands. I shall be very pleased to write and let you know what the Cabinet's decision may be with regard to it. I understand also that there has been some feeling as to what is being done with regard to the revenue derived from this island, and I have to tell you that the Government has arranged with Colonel Gudgeon that whatever revenue is collected from Niue is to be administered by your Resident Agent, Mr. Maxwell, and will have nothing whatever to do with the revenue at Rarotonga.

*King Togia* : Thank you.

*Hon. Mr. Mills* : I shall have copies of your accounts printed both in English and in the Native language, and a fair number of these publications will be sent down here so that you can look them carefully through. Then you will all see how these funds have been administered during the past year, and you will be able to tell me by letter whether you are satisfied or not. The Government will give careful consideration to your requests, and do what it considers best in your interest and the interests of the whole colony. I should be exceedingly glad if I had more time to personally visit the different parts of the island, and so be able to speak from my own observations, but I must rely on information which is supplied by those people whom I can depend upon here. I have heard that there has been some dissatisfaction with regard to the duty imposed on tobacco, and on my return to New Zealand I shall bring this item before Cabinet, and it will then be fully discussed, and we will see what can be done to meet your wishes by reduction of the duty on that commodity. I will then communicate at once with the Resident Agent here, Mr. Maxwell, and he will let you know what the Government has decided to do. I understand that tobacco has been in general use for commercial purposes and as a medium of exchange instead of silver, and therefore I quite realise the necessity of getting the matter settled once and for all. At the same time, I must point out that, while you may have suffered with regard to the duty on tobacco, there are many other things which are now imported into Niue from New Zealand which will be free of duty, as the old 10 per cent. duty formerly collected on goods from our colony has been removed, as well as the 25 per cent. duty charged on hats; and it is a question for consideration whether even the extra duty derived from tobacco might not be profitably and satisfactorily applied in effecting certain improvements which would assist you greatly, as in the way of better facilities for shipping produce from the islands or in the further construction of your roads, thus bringing people into closer communication so that they could ship whatever they have to export with greater facility. Now, I shall not detain you any longer, as I understand some of you would like to bring some important matters before me, and my friends also are anxious to hear whatever you have to say. I want you all clearly to understand that it is not simply a pleasure excursion that brings us here; we are here to obtain all the information we possibly can get. A great number of our party are men holding very responsible positions in New Zealand, and they have had great difficulty in sparing the time necessary for such a long journey as this will be, so if there are any important matters that you wish to lay before us now is the proper time to have them ventilated.