

that during all these years, before even land titles were recognised, there were British settlers in that group; there were British missionaries; and that whatever was being done in the way of trade or to inculcate the principles of Christianity was undertaken by Britons, including a certain number of Australians. I am not delaying for exact dates, but think it was in consequence of our fresh representations made in 1902 that a British Resident was appointed, a gentleman without real status or legal authority of any effective kind, who was to keep a general oversight of British interests and to advise. He had no real power; he was not authorised to keep records, and has not even the means of necessary transport which would familiarise him with the various islands and villages of the group. Under all these difficulties it is not surprising that he has accomplished little. During this earlier period, the New Hebrides had been dealt with by the individual Australian States and New Zealand; and among the very first resolutions passed by Conferences which were then held at which six or seven Colonies independent of each other were represented they passed strongly worded resolutions about the New Hebrides, with which I do not desire to detain you. Never at any time has this matter been out of the view of Australian public men, and of the Australian public. It has always been within their horizon. On January 1st, 1901, the present Commonwealth came into being, and within two months one of the first despatches ever directed from the new Government of the whole of Australia, addressed to this office, related to the New Hebrides. Consequently, statements which have recently been made in Parliament, here and elsewhere, that the New Hebrides have been the subject of correspondence for the last 20 years, and that some persons here were saturated with the views we have expressed, have very good foundation. We have kept on protesting and urging action without any cessation for the last 24 years. Before that there were frequent and spasmodic outbursts of complaints as we saw the islands slipping away, but for the last 24 years there has been systematic agitation, yet practically there has been nothing to show for it until this last.

Fourteenth Day.

9 May 1907.

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BRITISH
INTERESTS IN
THE PACIFIC.
(Mr. Deakin.)

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Are you asking for any special action or protesting in general terms against the supineness of the Government?

Mr. DEAKIN: Let me first get on record an explanation of the Australian attitude expressed in both special and general protests and now approach my second subject, the Convention recently concluded. That I do not propose to discuss in detail here. As to the merits or demerits of the convention made, we have said our say and I have since had the opportunity of communicating with Members of His Majesty's Government here in reference to it. I feel it would be idle to criticise that Convention now; but I do feel in justice to ourselves, and to meet some statements to which I must presently refer, that we are entitled to have it understood why, and with good reason, we have an exasperated feeling. I do not know of any series of public incidents that have sown more discord in Australia and created more discontent than those dealing with the Pacific Islands. They have caught and kept the popular eye and inflamed the popular mind. I think that after all our unfortunate experiences these years we were entitled to expect that in any dealings with the New Hebrides, Australia and New Zealand would have been consulted, kept in close touch with the Colonial Office, and afforded every opportunity of assisting to bring about a fair settlement. The trade of the New Hebrides, such as it is, is with Sydney and Auckland, and consequently the best information available is to be