

No. 26.

Mr. F. J. Moss to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

MY LORD,—

British Residency, Rarotonga, 7th July, 1893.

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that the Federal Parliament met on the 5th instant at Rarotonga. The whole of the members were present, and the new Parliament House was opened with a plentiful feast given by Tepou-o-te-Rangi, the elected President of the Parliament at its past meetings. All the Arikis in Rarotonga at the time attended the opening. The Rev. W. Lawrence, resident missionary and agent of the London Missionary Society, was also invited, and kindly assisted officially at the opening. The occasion was marked by the best feeling among the members, and among the chiefs and others who were present from the various islands of the Federation.

In bringing together those who have been so bitterly divided by ancient feuds and jealousies, the Federal Parliament is quietly doing one of its best works. The building of this house will also domicile the Parliament, which will in future meet in a place belonging to all the islands, instead of each island contending for the privilege in turn.

Tepou-o-te-Rangi was again elected as President and Chairman, and the following papers (enclosed herewith) were laid upon the table: (1) Opening message from the Arikis (the Government); (2) Statement of Revenue for the year; (3) Statement of Expenditure for the year; (4) Statement of Account for the year; (5) Statement of Unauthorised Expenditure for the year.

The only business done was the adoption of an address of condolence with Mrs. Ballance on the death of her late husband, whose interviews as Native Minister with the Arikis, Makea and Ngamaru, when they were in Auckland in 1885, were largely instrumental in obtaining the establishment of the Protectorate.

At each of these meetings the members manifest a more active and intelligent interest in the work they have in hand, and are gradually adopting regular forms in the conduct of business. The keeping of a record of their proceedings is in itself a very great improvement, which they thoroughly appreciate, and which they are extending to the Councils in the different islands. They are also adopting a more regular system of accounts and finance in the local Governments; and I look to the Federal Parliament as their educator in these matters. The most difficult task is to teach officials not to interfere with each other, not to exceed their duties, and to perform them at proper times and places. Instances of such excess have been frequently brought before me; but I have only recently discovered that in the Aitutaki Council free speech has been effectually crippled, by the practice of the Chief Judge (who is also a chief of high rank) fining heavily, on the spot and without trial, any member who made what he considered to be "a lying statement," for the making of which by any person their laws have long provided such penalties. The most curious feature was that the members themselves seemed to consider the Judge quite right; though they complained bitterly that what he sometimes called "lying statements" they themselves believed to be truths. This was the only ground on which they objected to the practice. The unauthorised interference of members and officials with work with which they had nothing to do has been a source of much trouble, but the true position is being gradually understood and acted upon.

The elections for Aitutaki in the present Parliament were keenly fought. In the absence of a regular system, the right to the three seats was disputed by contending parties. Deputations were sent to me; but I insisted on a settlement among themselves, or they would lose their representation in the present Parliament altogether. They have settled amicably; and the eighteen or twenty chiefs and people who formed the deputations are content to wait here in order that they may see the working of the Parliament. While here they are considering the draft of a law which I have proposed to them for the regulation of future elections. This they will submit to their Council when they return, and, if passed, the example will no doubt be followed in other islands. Every Aitutaki man being a landowner in his own right, the people of that island are more in a position to regulate the suffrage than they are in other of the islands. The circumstances of the islands in this and other respects differ greatly, and any attempt at a uniform law would create trouble and confusion.

The Parliament adjourned till Tuesday the 11th, in order that the members might consider the papers laid before them, and consult together as to the needs of their respective islands.

I have, &c.,

FREDERICK J. MOSS,
British Resident.His Excellency the Earl of Glasgow, G.C.M.G.,
Governor of New Zealand.

Enclosure No. 1.

MADAM,—

Rarotonga, 5th August, 1893.

We, the Parliament of the Cook Islands, have heard of the death of your husband, the Premier of New Zealand, and of the grief of the people of that country at his loss.

Madam, it was to Mr. Ballance, chiefly, that we owe the blessing of British protection which we now enjoy. It was he who raised the question when Native Minister in New Zealand, and saw the Arikis, Makea and Ngamaru, when they visited that country in November, 1885.

Madam, we can only offer you our respectful and cordial sympathy, and say in the words of Scripture, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

By order of the Parliament of the Cook Islands.

Mrs. Ballance, Wanganui, New Zealand.

TEPOU-O-TE-RANGI, Chairman.