

between town and town, but a question of Fiji as a whole, in which the interests of all are involved, and to which end local differences must cease to exist. I should now like to hear any gentleman's opinion on federation to New Zealand or Australia, or even opinions against federation at all. I will now call on Mr Thomas to move the first resolution. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. W. I. Thomas on rising said: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—During the thirty years I have been in this colony, I have never been present at so important a meeting. This is not a question of Levuka *versus* Suva. I appeal to your common-sense to sink differences of opinions, and to pull together for the good of the colony as a whole. I may tell you that I have not gone into this subject, but it is one that appeals to every intelligent mind. It is a matter which deals with the progress of this country. Gentlemen, I say, I cannot bring before you all the advantages consequent on this country allying itself to New Zealand, but rest assured the gentlemen who will follow me will conclusively prove that we cannot live better than as a part of New Zealand. The points that are evident are: (1) Federation means comparatively free trade, a question I cannot go into. (2) It means a cable, a connection that in itself is of inestimable value to business-men and all alike. We have been here ten days with absolutely no connection with Suva. All such irregularities and inconveniences under federation would be swept away; a new era will come fraught with benefit to all concerned. Some gentlemen might think and may tell you that federation with the Australian Commonwealth is better than that with New Zealand. Now, Mr. Chairman, in my recollection and in the memory of many gentlemen here, this colony was offered to Victoria and refused, although it would have been of immense importance to them. We have tried New South Wales with a like result. Now we have been approached by Mr. Seddon—that is, New Zealand. In a cursory sort of way he told us that he thought that it was very likely that the New Zealand Government would entertain federation, but he could not guarantee that. But we must remember that an expression of opinion such as that from the man who had so long successfully, and still holds the reins of government in that important colony, meant a great deal. Therefore we have this in our favour: that if we move as one man we can rely on a favourable reception being given to our petition. There are between sixty and seventy gentlemen present to-night who, I hope, will speak out their minds on this subject. Do not let the opportunity slip for want of taking it up. Little as I have said, this is a matter that requires a great amount of careful consideration, and so to establish the principle that federation with New Zealand is a desirable object, I beg to move the following resolution: “Resolved, that in the opinion of the citizens of Levuka it is desirable that the colony of Fiji be federated with the Colony of New Zealand.” I will now call upon Mr. M. Hedstrom as seconder of the motion.

Mr. Hedstrom: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I am very proud to have the opportunity of seconding this resolution which will initiate a most important movement. At the same time I would point out there is a peculiar fitness in the choice of mover and seconder. The mover is one of Fiji's pioneers and the seconder a son of the soil. We have here two generations represented, separated by a period of forty years; and we, the younger men here, those whose duty it is to take up the work before us. Gentlemen, Napoleon has called us a “nation of shopkeepers.” But we feel sometimes like the defenders of Mafeking—we are widening the outposts of the Queen. Why are our armies fighting in South Africa? Why are half a million men shoulder to shoulder in arms against the Boers? I was going to tell you at what cost—but the object is of more importance—it is for the franchise. We, the supporters of freedom, are pouring out blood and money to vindicate our proud boast in South Africa, and yet, gentlemen, we of the Colony of Fiji are, after all, only Uitlanders. (Loud cheers.) Taxation and representation form the fundamental principles of British rule. Now we have here just as much to fight for as the oppressed Uitlanders of the Transvaal. The Chairman has told you of the constitution of our Legislative Council—of the unofficial members being always outnumbered by the official members. The official members are directed to vote so-and-so, the result being we have less voice in the management of this country than the Uitlanders have in that of the Transvaal. (Cheers.) The next point is: Is there any chance of improving our condition? It is a principle of the British constitution that the people should have a voice in the government of their country, and, as a rule, that the country should be governed by the people and for the people. We reckon that instead of having a government as at present, caring no more for us than if we were Uitlanders, we should federate with a colony having democratic ideas and institutions—to our mutual benefit. By federating with New Zealand we obtain a direct market for our products, for New Zealand is entirely situated in the temperate zone. She grows no tea, sugar, coffee, or other tropical products; therefore New Zealand is the most suitable colony to turn to. In Queensland they grow tea, sugar, coffee, the same as our own colony; hence there our interests clash. New Zealand is willing to take us, and she is undoubtedly the most suitable colony to federate with. There are many other reasons, among which comes first that the Government of New Zealand is a democratic body not in any way likely to deprive us of our rights as citizens, but to give us a voice in the governing of our own colony. We must work for a federal Government sitting in, say, Wellington, to which certain members are elected from Fiji. In Fiji would be a local government consisting of local men and an equal number of elective members and others. It is no use trying for the moon; we must work for something that we can get. We must work tentatively: there is no use in going too hard. Another point is that New Zealand has a large native population that is on the increase. They have had a large experience, and have conclusively demonstrated that in their dealings with the native races they have used justice and temperance. It is to be sincerely desired that New Zealand will be persuaded to accede to our request. Another important factor is that the Premier of New Zealand, as head of the Government, is at this moment a *persona grata* with the colonial authorities at Home, in consequence of assistance of colonial troops sent to the front. His request and petition would receive attention at the hands of the English Government. This is a most propitious time for bringing this matter forward. Mr. Seddon is a man of strength and will, and we know that if he takes it in hand all will be well