

might not be possible now, but might be possible in the future. It might not be possible to get all the islands at once, but it would be a great thing to prevent other Powers from extending their possessions there. The assistance of the association in the future on these matters would be of the greatest possible value to the Government, especially in connection with the young people of the other colonies. The association would do more to bring about a good feeling between the colonies than could be done by the heads of Governments meeting together, for the association began at the root. He should be always happy to obtain their assistance and advice on all these matters.

The deputation then withdrew.

## Enclosure 2.

[Extract from the *Argus*, 19th March, 1886.]

### THE PACIFIC ISLANDS QUESTION.

A DEPUTATION, consisting of the Heathen Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, accompanied by the Rev. J. G. Paton, the South Sea Islands missionary, was introduced to the Premier yesterday by Mr. Harper, M.L.A., for the purpose of bringing under his notice the danger in which the New Hebrides group stand of being annexed by the French Government.

The Rev. A. HARDIE, chairman of the Heathen Missions Committee, said their Church was deeply concerned at the prospect of France taking possession of the New Hebrides group. They understood that the French had so manipulated the principal natives of the Island of Malicolo that they had signified their willingness to have their island placed under the protectorate of France. The deputation had every reason to believe that the natives of that island did not understand what their principal men were doing. Their Church was now sending two new missionaries to labour on this island. He believed about £160,000 had been expended on missions in this group, and their Church had invested £30,000. It felt that if the French were allowed to take possession of the islands it would be in the interests of another religion altogether. There could be little doubt that it was the ultimate intention of France to send large numbers of convicts to the South Seas. Such a course would be exceedingly detrimental not only to the islands, but to all the Australian Colonies. The Church felt that it was her bounden duty to protest against another Power taking possession of these islands, and to do all that was possible to have the group annexed to Great Britain. The Rev. J. G. Paton, who was in possession of full information, would be able to speak at length.

The Rev. J. G. PATON said they felt that this was a crisis in the history of their missions, as well as in the history of the colonies. The Premier's predecessor was deeply interested in this subject, and did all he could to induce Great Britain to annex the New Hebrides group. The late Agent-General, Mr. Murray Smith, also took a very deep interest in this movement. He had frequently conferred with that gentleman on this subject when he was recently in London. He hoped that what had been done in this matter would prepare the way for the Premier and his Government, and enable them to secure the annexation of this group. There were many reasons in favour of annexation by Great Britain. He had had nearly thirty years' experience in connection with this mission. When he first knew the islands the natives were all cannibals: now, owing to missionary efforts, life and property were as safe as in Melbourne, although there was neither law nor police. Since 1882 twelve petitions had been sent by the natives to Great Britain praying for annexation. The last petition was got up by a representative of the *Argus*, and signed by eighty-six chiefs. All the natives were eager for British annexation, and feared the French, because of the way in which the French had treated the natives of islands already annexed by them. France never thought of annexation until the missionaries published a statement showing how advantageous it would be to British colonists to annex and develop the group. Unfortunately the colonists did not respond. But France did. When he was in London he was asked what terms should be made with France with regard to the annexation of the New Hebrides. His advice was—"Make no terms; let us protest to the last; and, if France annexes the group by force, Australia in course of time will claim otherwise what is now desired if our country allows France to annex." Those islands were very rich and fertile; there were fine spacious harbours, which the holding of by France would be dangerous to Australian shipping and commerce. It was said that there was an agreement between England and France that neither should annex this group. But a similar agreement in respect to Raiatea had been broken. France said it was only for three years, and her flag now floated over that island. The Récidiviste Bill having now passed the Senate, the French Government would be able to pour into the Pacific a hundred thousand of her worst criminals. These people would be free to go where they pleased so long as they did not return to France. Wherever the French had seized islands they had done great damage to the Protestant missions already established there. In one case the French had seized a mission-station, and when inquiry was made and redress demanded by the British Government it was found that the French had placed on shore as payment for the station a box of dynamite and some gold coins. France was doing all in its power to induce the natives to part with their lands preparatory to annexing the islands on some excuse. The recent agreement between Germany and France would make it appear as if everything were moving in the direction of the islands being annexed to France. If so, it would be a great curse to Australia. The French criminals, who were to be sent to the islands, were clever men. They would probably become pirates, and make the South Seas more dangerous for Australian commerce than they could ever be when inhabited by cannibals. From every point of view he hoped strong efforts would be made to have the islands annexed by Great Britain. When he was at Home he consulted on the subject with many noblemen—among them Lord Rosebery, who was heart and soul with them. They were in accord with his views; but, owing to the circumstances of the case, they were unable to move. He had received a private letter representing the views of five or six of these noblemen, which was to the following effect: "We have consulted over the matter, and our advice to you now is, let