

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

JEWISH SUBJECTS OF RUSSIA.

(LETTER FROM MR. SPEAKER TO LIEUT.-GENERAL DE RICHTER, AIDE-DE-CAMP TO H.M. THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA, FORWARDING ADDRESS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON BEHALF OF THE RUSSIAN JEWS.)

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Speaker, by Leave.

The SPEAKER, House of Representatives, New Zealand, to His Excellency Lieut.-General DE RICHTER, Aide-de-Camp to H.M. the Emperor for the Reception of Petitions.

Speaker's Rooms, Parliament Buildings,

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Wellington, New Zealand, 20th August, 1891.

As Speaker of the House of Representatives of New Zealand, I have the honour to enclose herewith to your Excellency the respectful memorial of that House addressed to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor on behalf of His Majesty's Jewish subjects.

I beg that your Excellency will do me the honour of laying this memorial at the feet of His Imperial Majesty.

Your Excellency will see that the House entertains towards His Imperial Majesty sentiments of the most profound respect, and that, in soliciting for the Jews in Russia His Majesty's generous consideration, it is influenced by no political or religious considerations.

I further enclose for your Excellency's information a copy of the *Hansard* report of the proceedings in the House in connection with the passing of the resolution under which the memorial is now transmitted to your Excellency.

Begging that your Excellency will receive the sincere assurance of my high esteem and consideration.

I have the honour to be,

Your Excellency's most obedient servant,

WILLIAM JUKES STEWARD,

Speaker, House of Representatives, New Zealand.

His Excellency Lieut.-General De Richter,
Aide-de-Camp to His Excellency the Emperor for the Reception of Petitions.

Memorial of the House of Representatives of New Zealand on behalf of the Russian Jews.

To His Imperial Majesty ALEXANDER III., Emperor of all the Russias.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY,—

We, the Members of the House of Representatives, in the Parliament of New Zealand assembled, in our own name, and on behalf of the inhabitants of this colony, whom we represent, approach your Majesty with the assurance of our most profound respect, and humbly crave your Majesty's gracious permission to intercede on behalf of that portion of your Majesty's subjects who belong to the Hebrew race.

We have learned with sorrow that that section of this ancient people who dwell within your Majesty's vast dominions are subjected to exceptional disabilities and restrictions, and that numbers of them have been and are being expatriated from Russian soil, notwithstanding their loyalty as a people to your Majesty's Throne and person, a loyalty which has often been sealed with their blood while fighting under the Imperial standard.

We are emboldened to solicit the extension to your Majesty's Jewish subjects of your Majesty's clemency and generosity, by the remembrance that in the days of our forefathers restrictive legislation imposed political and other disabilities and deprivations upon the Hebrew subjects of the British Crown, and by the knowledge that the removal of all such restrictions and disabilities, which has now been for some time accomplished within the British Empire, has been attended by such happy results that we feel assured that a like extension of liberties and privileges within your Majesty's dominions would be productive of a like effect.

The name of your Majesty's illustrious father is now and ever will be held in honoured and grateful remembrance throughout the world for the great boons which, through his royal beneficence and large-heartedness, were conferred upon the Russian people during his reign, and we would gladly see the reign of your Imperial Majesty, like that of our own beloved Queen, crowned with the glory of admitting all your Majesty's subjects to the enjoyment of equal rights and privileges, whereby we are persuaded that the loyal attachment of all classes to your Majesty's Throne and person would be deepened and strengthened.

We therefore respectfully pray that all exceptional and restrictive laws which afflict your Majesty's Jewish subjects may be repealed, and that equal rights with those enjoyed by the rest of your Majesty's subjects may be conferred upon them, and that your Imperial Majesty will be pleased favourably to receive this our humble petition.

Signed by direction of, and for and on behalf of, the House of Representatives of New Zealand, this twentieth day of August, 1891.

WILLIAM JUKES STEWARD,
Speaker.

REPORT of a Debate in the House of Representatives of New Zealand on 30th July, 1891, on a Resolution moved by Sir George Grey, K.C.B.

Sir G. GREY.—Sir, I have but very few minutes left before the adjournment of the House to move the motion of which I have given notice. I may say that this is a most important question, concerning some five millions of Jewish subjects of the Emperor of Russia. I will state to the House my reason for bringing before it so grave a question. In the first place, New Zealand will be taking for the first time a place amongst the nations of the world, in moving in a question which is of common interest to all mankind, for it is about to present a petition to the Emperor of Russia begging of him to bestow mercy on his Jewish subjects. I need not say anything as to our fellow Jewish subjects here, and the claims they have upon us that we should endeavour to prevent the sufferings that the members of their ancient race are undergoing in Russia. For many years I have been on friendly terms with a large number of persons of the Jewish race, and I have the kindest feelings towards very many members of that race. I will also say that the Jews of Russia are really undergoing very great sufferings indeed, and that any effort that may be made, however humble it may be, to save them from a continuance of those sufferings, which are of no ordinary character, must have a beneficial effect. We believe that the present Emperor of Russia is a good and merciful man. We know also that his own life has been imperilled for years by the dangers surrounding him in consequence of the animosity shown to him by one class of his subjects, and a belief may hence exist that this circumstance may have had the effect of hardening his heart; but I believe from all I have heard that his trials have ennobled his disposition, and rendered him truly compassionate for his fellow-men, and that we may rely on his being merciful towards the portion of his people to whom my motion refers; I should not be surprised also that such a movement being made in a part of the earth so distant from Russia, may convince him how deep are the feelings of the people of the world generally with regard to the sufferings the Jewish portion of his subjects are undergoing. I think, therefore, that this resolution should be passed. It may be said that we have nothing to do

with this matter, but I say that we have a right to strive to do good to our fellow-men in all parts of the world. Then, while we are asking in this way for mercy for others, we are really doing some good for ourselves, for it is impossible for us to move in any question of this kind without, to some extent, raising our own thoughts to higher and nobler and entirely unselfish paths. We shall have at the same time a knowledge that we shall be leaving behind us an example to those who follow us, when they look back and see that in this early stage of the history of this young nation we strove to do good to our fellow-citizens in distant parts of the world. We by the step we propose to take formally recognise that it is the duty of the New Zealand nation, however small, or however great it may be, to do all the good it possibly can for people in all parts of the world. I hope the House will agree to the motion.

Mr. WARD.—In seconding this motion, I have merely to say, in the language used by the venerable mover of it, that it deals with a subject in which some five millions of people are concerned, and I am sure it is one that will commend itself to a large majority of the people of this country. I believe, too, that the carrying of this motion will be calculated to do some good. I have no doubt that when the resolution is conveyed to the Emperor of Russia, and when it is made known throughout that great empire, the people there will thank the honourable gentleman for having brought the question forward in this distant part of the world.

Motion made, and question proposed, "That a memorial be addressed to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias, respectfully praying that all exceptional and restrictive laws which afflict his Jewish subjects may be repealed, and that equal rights with those enjoyed by the rest of His Majesty's subjects may be conferred upon them. That the said memorial be signed by the Speaker, and be by him transmitted to His Majesty."—(*Sir G. Grey.*)

Motion agreed to.

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