

1900.

## NEW ZEALAND.

## FEDERATION OF FIJI WITH NEW ZEALAND.

(PETITION FROM RESIDENTS OF FIJI, TOGETHER WITH APPENDIX.)

*Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.*

THE respectful memorial of the undersigned sheweth,—

1. Your memorialists are a committee nominated by the inhabitants of Suva in public meeting assembled for the purpose of bringing about the incorporation of Fiji with New Zealand.

2. A petition having that object in view was presented on behalf of this colony to the Speaker and House of Representatives so long ago as the year 1885, but did not then meet with a favourable reply. A copy of that petition is hereto appended. A period of fifteen years has elapsed since the presentation of that petition to the Parliament of New Zealand, but the disabilities and the grievances therein set forth still remain unremoved and unredressed; and your memorialists once again, in the name of the people of Suva, appeal to New Zealand.

3. Since the date of the petition above referred to the numbers of the white population have grown by natural increase and otherwise, and at present exceeds four thousand persons, according to the latest Government blue-book. During the same period the general population has been increased by the importation of immigrants from British India, as labourers on the great sugar-plantations which are established in this colony. The number of such immigrants now approximates fifteen thousand.

4. With deep regret your memorialists find themselves obliged to state that during the period referred to there had been a grave decrease in the native Fijian population. Numbering in the year 1885 approximately a hundred and fifteen thousand, the native Fijian race has now dwindled to ninety-eight thousand, or thereabouts, a decrease of seventeen thousand in fifteen years.

5. Various causes are from time to time put forward in attempting to explain away responsibility for the condition of the native race. Your memorialists, however, assert, without hesitation, that the Government of Fiji is unable to rid itself of responsibility for the present condition of the Fijians. The decrease in population is directly attributable to the specially oppressive system of government applied to them, and to the excessive burden of taxation to which, under that system, they are subjected.

The accompanying memorandum by the Rev. W. Slade, a Wesleyan missionary among the Fijians of many years' experience, supports the views expressed in this regard by your memorialists, and is a very powerful indictment of the grinding communal system under which the native Fijians are against their will compelled to live.

Your memorialists assert that the charges and allegations made by the Rev. W. Slade are in no way exaggerated, and your memorialists would welcome the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into such charges and allegations, and generally into the causes for the present condition of the native race.

6. Not only are the native inhabitants governed under a system of personal government which retards the moral and injures the physical development of the race, but the white inhabitants of the colony, who are for the most part New-Zealanders and Australians and their descendants, are also subjected to personal government, are entirely deprived of all voice in the making of the laws under which they have to live, and are altogether unrepresented in the Legislature which levies the taxes which they have to pay. In the administration of public affairs the interests of the white inhabitants of the colony are disregarded, and their wishes, though respectfully and constitutionally expressed, meet with curt and uncourteous refusal.

Recently the Governor has, in face of the unanimous opposition of the colonists, stopped the small subsidy of £1,500 previously to his arrival paid to the Canadian-Australian Royal Mail line of steamers, with the result that the colony has lost the advantage of that means of communication between Australia and Europe by way of Canada. Again, notwithstanding the earnest protests of the inhabitants of Suva, the Governor persists in retaining within the precincts of the town, and in close proximity to the dwellinghouses of certain of the citizens, a bubonic-plague station and a leper settlement. In the absence of representation in the Legislature the people of the colony are unable to place any check upon such arbitrary acts of the Executive or upon such maladministration of public affairs.