

1900.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE FEDERATION OF FIJI WITH NEW ZEALAND.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.

PETITION PRESENTED, IN SYDNEY, TO THE PREMIER OF NEW ZEALAND DURING SITTING OF INTERCOLONIAL CONVENTION HELD IN SYDNEY, 1883.

To the Honourable the Premier of the Government of New Zealand.

The petition of the European portion of the inhabitants of Fiji sheweth,—

1. That your petitioners are greatly dissatisfied at the political disabilities they now labour under, consequent on the form of government existing in Fiji.

2. That your petitioners are taxed at the rate of about £30 per head, and yet have no voice whatever in the expenditure of the public revenue.

3. That your petitioners have been deprived of the right of trial by jury in mixed cases, and have practically no appeal, there being only one Judge, and the appeal lying to him from himself.

4. That your petitioners have no representation of any kind whatever, all the members of the Legislative Council being either officials or nominees of the Crown.

5. That your petitioners have been for the most part colonists, previously, of either Australia or New Zealand; that not less than £1,700,000 of Australasian capital is already invested in Fiji; and your petitioners therefore desire a more intimate political, as they already have a social, connection with one or other of the Australasian Colonies.

6. That the Colony of Fiji is self-supporting, and has this year a small surplus.

7. That by the resolutions passed in the late Colonial Convention, as well as by the permission given by the Secretary of State for the Colonies that she should send a delegate to such Convention, Fiji is fully recognised as one of the group of the Australasian Colonies.

8. That your petitioners have lately transmitted a petition to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, a copy of which is hereto attached, praying—First, “For the inclusion of Fiji as an integral portion of federated Australasia”; secondly, “In the event of such federation not being immediately accomplished, for incorporation with one or other of the Australasian Colonies,” without naming any particular colony.

9. That the incomplete and partial federation accomplished by the Convention does not immediately affect Fiji in the manner or to the extent wished for.

10. That your petitioners believe that were New Zealand and Fiji united under one Government great good to both would eventuate, as well politically as commercially.

11. Your petitioners therefore now designate New Zealand as the colony with which they wish to be incorporated, in accordance with the second prayer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty; and pray that you will take such immediate steps as to your wisdom may seem appropriate, by supporting the petition to Her Most Gracious Majesty, and otherwise initiating such measures as will tend to the complete union of the two groups of islands most interested in the trade of the Pacific, and only one thousand miles apart.

And the delegates appointed by the white inhabitants of Fiji, in public meeting assembled, to represent them at the Colonial Conference, and negotiate for annexation to one of the Australasian Colonies, hereto subscribe themselves.

R. BECKWITH LEEFE, M.L.C., Fiji.

CHARLES B. CHALMERS.

GEORGE McEVROY, M.L.C., Fiji.

EDWARD W. KNOX.

J. C. SMITH.

INTERCOLONIAL CONVENTION, 1883, HELD IN SYDNEY (EXTRACT FROM PROCEEDINGS).

To Her Most Gracious Majesty VICTORIA, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, &c., &c., &c.

THIS, the humble petition of the undersigned, your Majesty’s British subjects resident in the Colony of Fiji, respectfully sheweth,—

1. That your petitioners are colonists of Fiji, and are largely interested, commercially and otherwise, in the present and future prosperity of the colony.

2. That Fiji has been a British colony since the 10th day of October, 1874.

3. That the present population of the colony consists, it is estimated, of 110,000 native-born Fijians, and of 2,500 European and other foreign residents, exclusive of labourers introduced from other of the Pacific Islands and from India.

4. That the Government of the colony is now administered by the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council.

5. That the Executive Council, as ordinarily constituted, consists of the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney-General, the Receiver-General, and the Agent-General of Immigration.

6. That the Legislative Council consists of the Governor and his Executive Council, the Honourable the Chief Justice and other officials not members of the Executive Council, with certain gentlemen not connected with the Government but who are nominees of the Crown.

7. That all laws and Ordinances passed for the government of the colony are enacted by the Governor with the advice of the Legislative Council.

8. That the votes of the official members of the Legislative Council are recorded as His Excellency may direct, notwithstanding that their personal opinion may be at variance with his own.

9. That no member of the Legislative Council, other than the Governor, can propose any expenditure of money, nor reduce nor add to any amount proposed by him.

10. That since the constitution of the Government as now existing no single Ordinance has been passed when introduced by any non-official member.

11. That the revenue of the colony has now reached a total of at least £90,000 per annum; that the European inhabitants are the principal contributors (directly or indirectly) thereof; and that such revenue exceeds the present expenditure of the colony.

12. That all appointments to offices and positions of emolument within the colony are made by the Crown alone; that a reference to the appointments made for some years past will show that only an exceedingly small proportion of the offices created have been filled by residents in the colony, and that in the great majority of instances preference has been given to cadets from England or Scotland, or persons from India.

13. That your petitioners are denied all right of local self-government, and show that in the year 1877 provision was made for the appointment of a Town Board in Levuka, so constituted that such a proportion of members should be elected by the ratepayers as to give them a majority in the Town Council. That this system worked successfully when tried in Levuka, but that for the management of the Town of Suva an officer of the Government alone manages the municipal business of the town, and imposes and expends all rates.

14. That a reference to the statistics of the colony and to other sources of information will show that the European colonists are as orderly, law-abiding, and well-conducted as any other subjects within your Majesty's dominions.

15. That your Majesty's subjects in this colony are discontented and grieved that all right of being represented or heard in the Councils of this colony is denied to them, and that they have no voice in the administration of the government of the colony, the enactment of its laws, or the public expenditure.

16. That, with few exceptions, the Ordinances of the colony are introduced to the Legislative Council and passed without prior publicity having been given to them, so as to allow discussion, and objection or suggestion thereto—to be made through the medium of the public Press, or in other ways through the non-official members of the Council.

17. That the fact of the inhabitants of the colony consisting of so large a proportion of native Fijians is no reason why the right ordinarily granted to British subjects of being represented in colonial Councils of Government should be entirely denied to your Majesty's subjects in this colony.

18. That, as there will shortly be assembled at Sydney, in the Colony of New South Wales, a Convention of representatives of the Australasian Colonies to consider the question of a general federation of the colonies, and the annexation of parts of New Guinea and also certain other islands or groups of islands in the Western Pacific, the time has therefore seemed to your Majesty's petitioners opportune for praying from your Majesty's Government consideration of their present political position. In furtherance of which object your petitioners have memorialised the said Convention now about to meet, and have requested them to assist your petitioners in obtaining the objects herein set forth.

Your petitioners therefore now most humbly pray,—

(1.) That your Majesty will see fit, in the event of the Australasian Colonies becoming federated, to constitute the Colony of Fiji an integral portion of federated Australasia.

(2.) That in the event of such federation not being now immediately accomplished, your Majesty will see fit to allow the Colony of Fiji to become incorporated with one of the Australasian Colonies as now existing, with the consent of such colony.

(3.) Or that your Majesty will see fit to grant to the British-born subjects resident within this colony complete relief from the humiliating condition in which they are at present politically placed.

(4.) That such relief be granted with due regard to the preservation of all existing rights and privileges of the native races inhabiting this colony.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

Dated in Levuka, Fiji, this 19th September, 1883.