

1900.
NEW ZEALAND.

FEDERATION OF FIJI WITH NEW ZEALAND.

(EXTRACT FROM THE *FIJI TIMES*, DATED 21st JULY, 1900.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by leave.

EXTRACT FROM THE *FIJI TIMES*, DATED 21st JULY, 1900.

A PUBLIC meeting was held in the Oddfellows' Hall, Levuka, on the evening of 14th June, to discuss the question of the federation of Fiji with New Zealand.

It should be mentioned that previous to the public meeting a caucus was held in Mr. W. I. Thomas's offices, called by the Warden, to meet Messrs. Riemenschneider and Humphry Berkeley, who, in response to the Warden's invitation, had come to Levuka for the purpose of attending the meeting.

The chair was taken by the Warden, D. J. Solomon, Esq. On rising he said: Gentlemen,—At the request of the ratepayers of Levuka, I have called this meeting to discuss the question of federation, but, before proceeding further, it will be advisable to appoint a secretary, for which post I would suggest Mr. Carr.

On the motion of Mr. W. I. Thomas, seconded by Captain Robbie, Mr. Carr was duly appointed.

The Chairman (continuing): Gentlemen,—I may state I am proud to preside at a meeting to initiate the federation movement, which I trust will be productive of definite results. We had Mr. Seddon here a short time back, and he made a few remarks on the subject of federation with New Zealand, among which he stated that he believed that, if the residents wanted it, there was a reasonable hope of their getting federation. On my part I believe in federation, I do not say with New Zealand particularly, as long as it is federation with a British, and not a foreign power. Now, gentlemen, the question is whether we federate with Australia or New Zealand? In discussing this, we must remember that with this country the great question will be the native population and the Indians. Now, Australian Governments have not shown that they can look after blacks and aborigines. I remember seeing King Billy hanging about Sydney hotels for drinks, and not too sober at that. On the other hand the New Zealand Government have shown themselves capable of looking after native races. Mr. Seddon informs me that the Maori race is on the increase, and he says there is no reason why there should be no increase among the Fijians. There is no doubt that the object of this meeting is federation with New Zealand. Such federation means markets for our products, and will allow their products in this country. At the present, this is a Crown colony under a "one-man government," and we must all recognise that federation with any colony possessing representative government is better than we are now. Of course, we should have delegates to the Federal Parliament, while internal affairs would be managed by a Council of local nominees and representatives. We should, at least, have some voice in our own government. At present the Legislative Council consists of official and non-official members appointed by the Governor, arranged in such a way that the supposed people's representatives, the non-official members, are always outvoted. Gentlemen, federation is the only thing that can bring this country along. Where are the many planters that it once possessed? There are, comparatively speaking, none now. With federation an increase of capital would pour into the colony, the country taken up, with the establishment and growth of industries. There is no reason why coffee, cocoa, tobacco, tea, and spices should not form staple products of this country. Therefore I say, gentlemen, every one in Fiji is, or should be, interested in the subject. It is no question of rivalry

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

We may go twenty or fifty years before such a chance occurs again. Remember, "There is a tide in the affairs of men which leads on to fortune." We are working for a country we believe in—we live in—the cannibal islands. We are here to-night the makers of an Empire. (Cheers.) I believe in enthusiasm; it is the salt of life. The man who has sunk so low as to worry his soul over a shilling increase on a dozen meats or the cost of a new frock I do not appeal to—he had better not join in this object; but, on the other hand, to those who put their shoulder to the wheel I say, let us do the best we can to forward this important movement. (Loud cheers.)

The Chairman called upon Mr. Garner-Jones to speak to the resolution. He said: Mr. Chairman, gentlemen,—Federation to us of Fiji means—in a nutshell—progression. We, like our forefathers, are naturally conservative in our feelings; but when we are convinced that changes are necessary we can also exhibit that dogged obstinacy and determination that is the heritage of our race, and which in the defence of Mafeking we have had the latest instance. (Cheers.) To attain our object we must sink all petty local jealousies; we must have no Levuka, no Suva. We must be united Fiji. This is undoubtedly one of the finest countries in the world, and one ruined by over-government. I do not hesitate in saying that a large business firm, or a company, in any of the adjacent colonies could run Fiji successfully as a department of their business. Now, we are not going to obtain federation in a rush—there are difficulties which, to be overcome, must be recognised. I place the principal of them under these heads, and in their order of importance: ignorance, officialism, and the labour question. With the first we collectively and individually must grapple. It will be our duty to put the matter before the public in its proper light, and to propagate all information bearing on the subject. The second obstacle is one to be naturally expected. A certain class have vested interests, as it were, in the Fiji of to-day, and to a superficial observer it would appear that any such change as federation means would be to them fatal. It may be so; but they would have at least the consolation of knowing that they suffered in a good cause. The good of the country must be weighed, and no consideration of or for one sect or section must deter us. The third point—the labour question—is, I take it, a matter of detail, not difficult of arrangement by the powers that be, but one, I am afraid, that will be largely used by opponents of federation. Forewarned is forearmed. On the other hand, what advantages do we obtain? In one word, all that is meant by the word civilisation: railways, roads, regular steam-service. We shall be a part of a concrete whole, but none the less a part of that Empire we so much love. Taxation reduced by increased population and decreased officialism, we shall be to New Zealand the province that makes her complete in herself; we shall offer her the advantages of the tropics, and she will reciprocate with the fruits and produce of the temperate zone. Fiji is New Zealand's geographical and commercial complement, and as such we shall be a respected ally. Our agriculture will be fostered; capitalists will have confidence, and the long-extinct biped, the small planter, will appear as of old. There will be no bitter competition as would be if we federated with the Australian Commonwealth. Our position will be unique. Do not think that New Zealand has nothing to gain. The New Zealand Government is by no means sleepy. It recognises full well our value. As to the details of future government, that is not for us to consider. We are here to-night to simply affirm a principle—namely, that it is desirable to federate with New Zealand, and I therefore commend the resolution to your earnest consideration. (Cheers.)

The Chairman called on Mr. Riemenschneider, Warden of Suva, to address the meeting. He was seconded with cheers.

Mr. Riemenschneider: Mr. Chairman, gentlemen—I must say that we feel very honoured by the invitation extended to us by Mr. Solomon to come to Levuka, and express our views on federation. Now, federation is a pet scheme of mine, and has been for a considerable time past. When Mr. Berkeley and I entered the Suva Town Board we drew up a list of ideas we had in view. Among them, in fact, at the head of the list, stood federation. At that time my idea was to federate with New South Wales, but since then the Commonwealth Bill has been introduced. And, further, the question of black labour would prove fatal to Australian federation. Under no consideration would the employment of black labour be permitted. A few weeks ago we received a visit from Mr. Seddon and I thought it was a very fit opportunity to introduce the idea of federation with New Zealand. He told us in Suva that stress of weather was the cause which he had to thank for his visit to Fiji. But I happened to see a paragraph in a newspaper, a copy of which I hold, that clearly stated the intention of the Premier of New Zealand to visit our colony during his trip. (Mr. Riemenschneider read the extract). So apparently it would appear that the very scheme I had in view has entered the mind of Mr. Seddon. Now, New Zealand is undoubtedly a great power in the South Pacific. We have, to-day, in our hands the opportunity of bringing this, the object of our meeting, to a successful issue. We are not represented in our own Government. It is idle to assert the contrary. Mr. Thomas has told you that we have tried in the past to federate with Melbourne and New South Wales, and the result. I came to Fiji with the intention of living here; this is my adopted home and my lot and future is cast in its destiny. If we have failed in the past, there is no reason why we should not try again. There is no time like the present, when all the colonies have done so well in the Transvaal crisis. Their claims cannot be shelved. The Imperial Government must recognise their strength and power. Any request made at the present time by federated Australia or New Zealand must be received with great consideration by the Imperial Government. From the extract I have just read it appears that the federation of Fiji with New Zealand is not a strange idea to the Imperial Government: that such a proposition would at least be well received. There was a great amount of consideration shown us when we remember that Mr. Seddon came down to see the place for himself. I think that if federation came about it would be the greatest thing that could happen for the benefit of Fiji. The exports of Fiji are at present very few. But we can manufacture staple articles of food such as sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa. We can look for no encouragement or help from our present form of government towards developing our resources. We cannot expect capitalists to simply experiment and risk their money in developing a country in which the Government offer no assistance or

advantages by way of inducement as in other colonies. Practically speaking, at the present time there are no inducements of any kind to attract capital. All our sugar goes out of the colony in a raw state. It is, practically speaking, our only export, thanks to the present system of government. Now, we have received excellent returns as to what we can do in coffee. One consignment from Fiji was pronounced the best in the New Zealand market. It brought the highest price as the first coffee of the season. And this is an article consumed in every household. Under federation, as suggested, the country would be opened up. Governor Thurston for years tried to get the mail-service, and he eventually brought it here. Now, what has Governor O'Brien done? Not only did he take the service away, but, as Mr. Berkeley will show you, he seemingly increased the revenue of the colony. And how? By increased taxation. He raised the duties! I do not hesitate to say for a moment that federation means to us, in the first place, a regular mail-service. To forward this I will do everything in my power—there must be a sinking of any local differences. We called a meeting in Suva; it was not heartily responded to, and we decided, after going into the matter at length, to communicate with New Zealand and await a reply, but previous to this we decided to obtain the views of the people of Levuka. The matter must be publicly discussed. It is essential that we make no mistakes and take no backward movement. The matter referred to by a previous speaker as an obstacle is open to explanation. I refer to the labour question, and particularly Indian labour. I, with Mr. Berkeley, have looked up the Ordinance and Schedule *re* Indian labour, and we find in the 8th section provision is made by which the Government of India possess and retain the power of granting permission to send labour to certain countries. Natal is mentioned as one. But Natal is no longer a Crown colony, yet by special arrangement Indian labour is still sent there. This, I take it, removes any difficulties as to the labour question; for if laws could be so modified as to meet the requirements of Natal it seems only feasible they could be so treated with New Zealand.

Mr. Humphry Berkeley said: Mr. Warden and gentlemen,—I can assure you I most thoroughly appreciate the honour that you have done me in asking me to attend your meeting. You have had laid before you in a most able way by the various gentlemen who have addressed you the reason that has induced us to assemble here to-night. The subject of federation with New Zealand is one of paramount importance to us all. It is a subject which commands our most earnest consideration, affecting, as it will, our future welfare. It is a matter which I feel sure will obtain the general approbation of the colonists of Fiji. Mr. Jones, in addressing you, said that there were serious difficulties in our way, and he places those difficulties in the following order: first, ignorance; second, officialism. I think those terms may be very well combined. In a great number of instances they are synonymous. We most of us, unfortunately, know the way in which affairs are conducted here. Gentlemen, I do not wish in any way to be personal, but I ask you how many of you know His Excellency Sir George Michael O'Brien by sight? He has been our Governor for four years now. To the citizens of Suva he is practically unknown. I venture to say, without fear of contradiction, that he might walk down Victoria Parade any day in the week without being recognised by 5 per cent. of the people he encountered. If that is true of the capital of the colony, may I ask how many of you, the citizens of Levuka, the mother-city of the colony, know your chief administrative officer by sight? Perhaps none. (Loud cheers. A Voice: "That is so.") Well, gentlemen, you seem pretty well agreed on that point; I only hope you will be as unanimous in recording your votes for federation. I submit that the rule of Crown colony officialism is not the kind of government we require, nor is it the class of government that the needs of the colony demand. Gentlemen, let us admit, for the purposes of argument, that His Excellency Sir George O'Brien is the ablest official that has ever set foot on these shores; but even in that case, what can he possibly know of the wants of the colony if he never (except on the rarest of occasions) stirs outside of the precincts of Government grounds? The assertion I am making is no idle one; it can without difficulty be vouched for. (Hear, hear). If it be, then, an admitted fact that His Excellency practically confines himself to the Government grounds, what means can he possibly have of knowing the wants of the colony? Gentlemen, he can only obtain his knowledge of those wants through his subordinates. Now, if it is absolutely necessary for a Governor of a Crown colony to rely on information which is filtered through his subordinates, what necessity could there be for such an official? Let us take one instance: A few months ago, at a public meeting held in Suva, in connection with the withdrawal of the Canadian mail-subsidy, certain leading men of that town were deputed to interview His Excellency, and to request him to allow the subsidy to be renewed. It was pointed out to him that our late Governor, Sir John Thurston, had, after very considerable difficulty, managed to induce the mail-service to make the port of Suva a port of call. Gentlemen, that deputation was fortified with a petition signed by all the most influential citizens. What was the response? Well, you have seen the account in the paper yourself, and will remember that he replied to this effect: It would be useless to apply to the Home Government for a renewal of the subsidy, because the certain answer would be, "If you are so well off, pay some portion of the Imperial loan back." The amount of the subsidy, as you know, was £1,500 a year, and you will remember that the petition showed that a considerably larger revenue than £1,500 per annum was derived by the steamers of the Canadian line calling here. Now, this was a peculiar statement to make when his subsequent actions are considered. The Crown Colony of Fiji would not, according to him, be allowed to subsidise a mail line which would put it in immediate touch with the outer world, although the revenue would be increased by the advent of that line, because the Imperial authorities would not sanction it so long as the Imperial loan remained unpaid. But what about that thousand pounds which His Excellency donated to the patriotic fund? Whose money was it? Did it belong to His Excellency? Did it belong to the Imperial authorities? No, gentlemen, it was £1,000 which came out of our pockets through the medium of taxation—taxation in which we had no say—our money, as to the disposal of which we were not consulted. Can His Excellency, or any of his subordinates explain to us why, if the Imperial authorities set their face against allowing us to

pay a subsidy to a mail line which was so materially contributing to our welfare because of the Imperial loan, they should allow £1,000 to be taken from our assets for the patriotic fund? Gentlemen, Her Majesty owns no more loyal dependency than the Colony of Fiji. We are proud of the deeds of her soldiers and our soldiers, for they are the soldiers of the Empire, and we have shown our sympathy with and devotion to the Mother-country by contributing according to our means sums of money which had already been forwarded to the Lord Mayor of London before His Excellency ever passed his vote in the Legislative Council: a Council composed of members selected by the Governor of Fiji himself. Gentlemen, charity commences at home. We had contributed the various amounts that we considered we could afford. If His Excellency was so desirous of associating his name with a contribution of £1,000 to the fund it is perhaps somewhat to be regretted that he did not first make himself acquainted with the fact that there was already a patriotic fund in existence in the colony. Now this is only one illustration of the arbitrary manner in which the affairs of a colony which has no representation are conducted. Gentlemen, federation will cure all this. By federation we will at once have representation, and there is no doubt in my mind that those who are chosen to represent you will take very good care that your wishes are attended to. Now, we must remember that, although we are in the main unanimous, there are always the ill-disposed and timid ones who will suggest difficulties, and you will find that one of the strongest cards that these people will play will be the question of black labour. You will find it stated that the Indian Government will not allow their natives to come to Fiji if we federate. It was only the other day that one man, who up to that time I had regarded as a practical man, remarked to me, "If you have federation the Colonial Sugar Refining Company will have to close; they will not be able to continue without Indian labour." And, in continuing, he said: "Look at the labour laws in New South Wales and Queensland; the Indians cannot go there." Gentlemen, the reason the Indians are not admitted into Queensland and New South Wales is not because the Indian Government will not let them go to those colonies, but because those colonies will not have native labour at any price. I admit at once that it must be a condition precedent to federation that our Indian immigration be safeguarded. Without that labour we shall suffer far more than we can possibly hope to gain by federation. Let us, therefore, understand from the commencement that it shall be a *sine qua non* in the dealings with New Zealand, that we shall have the same laws approximately as at present with regard to native labour. But it may be suggested, how is this to be obtained? Once federated the Parliament may pass laws prohibiting the introduction and continuance of coolie labour. That argument is easily met. Federation is merely a partnership; it is a term used where large communities join together for their common benefit; but for the purpose of illustrating my argument we will resort to the better known term, partnership. We all here understand what a partnership means. It is "the result of a contract whereby two or more persons agree to combine property or labour, or both, for the purpose of a common undertaking and the acquisition of a common profit." Now you know that in every partnership deed there are such clauses inserted as each party deems to be advantageous to him, and both partners are bound by the deed; now, in the larger partnership of communities, or federation, the rights of each community are equally safeguarded. With regard to Indian immigrants, the matter will simply resolve itself into this: Fiji will insist that a clause shall be inserted in the Federal Bill to the effect that no legislation shall be made by the Federal Parliament inimical to the retaining of the coolie. Every legislative body must have certain fundamental rules to govern its action in the same way that every Court of law must rely on the powers which are conferred on it by the Act constituting its jurisdiction. Another great point in favour of federation, to my mind, is the facility that it will afford us in the hearing of appeals. This is a legal ground, and, as a lawyer, I assure you that the difficulties at present attached to an appeal from the Supreme Court are in most cases insuperable. To commence with, before the right to appeal accrues the subject-matter in dispute must be of the value of £500. Now, the majority of cases heard in the Supreme Court are under this amount. Again, the costs of an appeal are exceedingly heavy, and they have to be provided for by the party desirous of appealing. Any one who wishes to appeal against the decision of the Supreme Court must be in a position, at the very least, to find £1,000. This practically renders an appeal unpracticable to most. Now, if we are to federate with New Zealand, it will be no more difficult for a dissatisfied suitor to obtain redress than if he were resident in New Zealand, for the distance between Suva and Auckland is no greater than the distance between Auckland and Dunedin. Federation would therefore cheapen litigation, and I feel certain that the people of Fiji would, in the main, be as content with the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal as they are at present with the decisions of the Privy Council. Besides the ultimate right of appeal from the Federal Council to the Privy Council would always be open to still dissatisfied suitors. Now, gentlemen, let us look at federation from another point of view: that of the benefits the colony will reap from having markets opened up for the disposal of our products. Tea, coffee, cocoa, arrowroot, tobacco—these all thrive, as we know, in this colony. Now we only grow them in small quantities. Why is this, you ask? The answer is that there is no means to dispose of these articles if we produce them. Tea cannot compete in New Zealand with the cheaply grown coolie labour which obtains in Ceylon; but once let the duty of sixpence a pound which is at present imposed on that product be taken off, and we will certainly be able to compete on a favoured ground with far distant Ceylon. The same remarks apply to all the minor articles I have enumerated. Once let us be federated with New Zealand, however, and we will have ready-made markets at our doors. Why is Honolulu in such a prosperous condition to-day? It is because she has been for years the petted child of the United States, and has always had a market ready to receive her staple product, sugar. Now, sugar is our staple also. Federated with New Zealand the statesmen of the federated colony would quickly, by means of reciprocal arrangements with Canada, find a market which we at present lack. There are many other reasons which I could give you were the time at my disposal; but I feel I have already been trespassing somewhat on your consideration. I can only say, in conclusion, that I think federation with New Zealand will be the saving and making of Fiji.

Mr. Boué (Messrs. Hedemann, Evers, and Co.) asked for information *re* comparison of tariffs of New Zealand and Fiji.

The Warden: You must understand that at present New Zealand tariff is higher than New South Wales, but the Federated Commonwealth's tariff will be undoubtedly a protective one, on a higher scale, on account of other colonies being protectionist and being in the majority.

A Voice: What about the imports and exports to come from New Zealand?

The Warden: I have no idea.

A Voice: The New Zealand tariff is 25 per cent. higher.

The Warden: You must bear in mind many goods that we are paying duty on now would, under federation with New Zealand, come in duty free, such as biscuits, meats, soap, being New Zealand products. Any way, whichever way we look at it, we cannot be worse off than we are now.

Mr. J. Harman: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I have listened attentively to all the speakers this evening. I know nothing about federation. I have been in this country a matter of forty years and know Fiji and the Fijians well. The Fijians represent a few thousands. Now, I say, take away the present restrictions on the native's liberty. When the famous deed of annexation was read to the native chiefs at Nasova (I was not there then) they were told that they were British subjects. Then, if so, why were and why are separate regulations and laws made for them? Why are they not treated as British subjects amenable to the same laws as their brothers, the white man? Take a case; for adultery they get three months, while fornication costs them four shillings to one pound. Is that liberty? Is that British freedom? Now we are told they are British subjects (I don't know if this is treasonable). But I assert these distinct regulations and distinctions proclaim loudly that they are not British subjects. No! the flag that waves over you and me does not make them freemen. If a native stays away from his home he gets one month; if he still stays away he gets three months. That is British rule. I cannot recall the Ordinance referred to by a previous speaker *re* Indian labour—section 8 or something. But this I say, we do not want the Indians here in Fiji, and to give them their freedom. Now, turn to another point—bribery. It is no secret; any man present to-night has had experience of it. Suppose you want to employ native labour, you must first bribe the buli. He must be bribed before a single man can be got. The men may want to go, but cannot stir without the consent of their chief; and to get that consent you must bribe him. Deny it, who can? Not the men but the buli arranges the whole matter. The native system is rotten—I speak from an experience of forty years. I remember, in 1873, we had a meeting here in Levuka, as now, at which I saw double the number of gentlemen present. The cry was, Let us have annexation at any price! And you have got it, and you know it. (Cheers.) Now, a new cry is raised, Let us have federation! Yes, I say, let us have it; let us have New Zealand or anything for a change. Melbourne would not have us; quite right. Sydney followed suit. Now, Dick Seddon looks on us with favour. What is he going to do with the sugar industry? I say, take the sugar away; it has done nothing for the country. When the great company—the C.S.R. Co.—came to Fiji, we had quantities of small planters, men who held an industry, the backbone of Fiji. Where are they now? Wiped out! Wiped out by the C.S.R. Co. Take the company away, refuse them Indian labour; and the colony as a whole will be the gainer. Now, as to that important question—products for export. Tapioca, tea, bananas; several have been referred to as being capable of export to New Zealand. Gentlemen, we have exported, and with what result? We tried, and we glutted the market. A few shipments supply New Zealand. She would not be able to take what we produce. But my experience since annexation leads me to say that we cannot be worse off. Let us federate with any constitutional colony that will have us.

Dr. Hallan: Mr. Chairman, the officials have been referred to by Mr. Berkeley as being opposed to advance. But I will ask you all to remember that medical men are the representatives of advance, and on that account alone I protest. I would ask for a little information. My mind is hazy on several points just discussed. I confess that I am still uncertain what is meant by federation. We want a better definition of the word. Suggestions have been made relative to the establishment of a Federal Council. This seems to me like the tail of the dog. (Laughter.) Again, a question stands out that is not fully dealt with, not the labour question here, which is a minor matter, but the native question in New Zealand. We had Natal referred to. Now, I have followed the native question in that colony closely, and I think, gentlemen, you can hardly quote Natal with enthusiasm. As to the public debt, why not keep your own debt? I cannot see any obstacle to that course. It seems to me that if we are to agree, we must first start with a clear idea of what federation means, or else schisms will creep in.

Mr. Cauley: Mr. Chairman, Are natives to have the franchise? (Cries of "No! No!").

The Warden: We cannot settle that at present. Mr. Berkeley might give us his idea on this point.

Mr. Berkeley: I should say that the qualification for the franchise would be on a property basis, and if the native possesses such property, why not let him vote? It is best, however, at this stage not to interfere with the question.

Mr. Mackenzie: In New Zealand there are a few Maori electorates.

Mr. R. Headdey (Bentley and Co.): This is a serious question. Fiji is about as low as possible. Let us federate by all means. I myself am not a great believer in New Zealand, but a change would do us no harm. This is a Crown colony of a severe type. Are we to pay New Zealand's debt? (Cries of "No! No!"). Well it is a question that wants thinking out. But let us have anything—federation or annexation.

The Warden: The doctor asks, "What is federation?" I take it that if New Zealand accept Fiji as a federal colony we will have to a great extent a voice in our own government—a parliament of residents of Fiji, conducting local affairs, also a parliament in New Zealand to discuss larger questions. At present we are annexed, and have no voice in our own affairs. There will be no trouble about the labour question. We have men in Fiji

amongst us quite competent to manage our local affairs. The natives of New Zealand elect so many members — there is no reason why the same course should not be adopted in Fiji. Understand that in managing our own affairs we should be represented by men interested in the country, not merely drawing their salaries. A speaker referred to annexation or federation. It is well to remember that we are annexed, and are tired of it. Shall we federate with New Zealand or not, that is the question? This must be settled. If they will have us, we cannot possibly be worse off, no matter what happens. What we want to do is to strengthen the hands of the New Zealand Government in their petition to the Imperial powers, and, as Mr. Seddon told you, the Imperial Government is inclined to be more liberal with her Crown colonies. I now put the motion to the meeting. (Read it.)

Carried unanimously, amidst loud cheering.

Captain D. Robbie : Mr. Chairman, gentlemen,—The honour has been deputed to me to move the second resolution. There is little doubt that the object of this meeting is the most important that could have brought us together. There are many points in favour of federation, many of which have been advanced this evening. New Zealand is a colony of untold wealth. Her mineral wealth is unequalled, and her pastoral area is second to none of the Australasian Colonies. She is a colony progressing politically and socially with great strides. (The speaker here read some statistics bearing out his statement.) He then proposed: "That a committee be formed for the furtherance of federation with New Zealand, such committee to co-operate with any other which may be formed in Suva, and to consist of the Warden (Mr. J. Solomon), and Messrs. W. I. Thomas, A. Eastgate, D. Garner-Jones, J. M. Hedstrom, and the mover, with power to add to their number."

Mr. A. Eastgate : I have great pleasure in seconding this resolution. I should like to add, however, one gentleman, to the number, viz., Mr. R. Headdey. He has large interests in the country, and it is a good thing to have men with several opinions on a committee, as it enables the matter to be threshed out properly..

The names of Messrs. R. Headdey and T. L. Wood were unanimously added to the committee. The resolution was then put by his Worship the Warden, and carried unanimously.

Mr. Riemenschneider thanked the meeting, on behalf of himself and Mr. Berkeley, for the patient hearing that had been granted them, and, speaking of meetings to be held in Suva in the future, expressed a hope to see some representatives of Levuka.

The Warden briefly responded, and trusted that the Suva meetings would be as successful as the one that night.

Mr. W. I. Thomas moved, and *Captain Robbie* seconded a vote of thanks to Messrs. Riemenschneider and Berkeley which, being carried by applause, brought the meeting to a close.

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