

In reply to further questions the RESIDENT AGENT said that he thought the Government should get an auxiliary schooner to run between the islands of the Group. At the present time there were three schooners running which belonged to three separate individuals. The total cost of completing the passage through the reef would be £3,000, but even with the passage only canoes would be able to go in and out, and the schooners and ships would have to lie outside. He had no control over the prices paid by the trader to the grower, and the Natives preferred that it should be so. The Native need not necessarily sell to the trader, but could consign on his own account if the price offered did not satisfy him. Many of them did consign on their own account to auctioneers in New Zealand.

Mr. HOLLAND asked what price per case was paid to the Natives, and the Natives replied that the first shipment last year brought 4s. per case on board the ship, and the second 5s. per case on board the ship. The cost of the cases was 2s. 6d. each. In reply to a further question they stated that about half the fruit went to waste each year on the island.

The RESIDENT AGENT stated, with respect to the water-supply on the island, that all drinking-water was collected in concrete tanks. There was a running stream in the centre of the island, but owing to the Natives using this stream for washing clothes and bathing it could not be used for drinking purposes. No wells had been sunk in the island owing to the practical impossibility of boring through the rock. In 1906 the population of the island was 8 whites and 1,523 Natives; in 1911, 5 whites and 1,466 Natives; and in 1916, 4 whites and 1,241 Natives.

A member of the Council said that if the Administration would present the island with a motor-lorry to run their produce from the main landing-place to another which was four miles farther along, the Natives would clear the passage through the reef free of charge. He also said that if they were guaranteed a regular service they would be prepared to look after their plantations, which during the last five years had been allowed to go back.

The Hon. Sir JAMES ALLEN, in replying, said that it was quite plain that the main difficulty was shipping and the export of produce. The Union Steamship Company had been approached with a view to improving the service, and he understood that improvement had taken place. But the Government would be prepared to consider the granting of further assistance to the islanders, either by making arrangements with the Union Company or by means of a Government trading-schooner. The question had already been considered, and would be further considered on the return of the party to New Zealand. With regard to the passage through the reef, the Natives offered to remove the material if they were presented with a motor-lorry. That would be considered by the Government on his return. The Government was anxious to improve the landing-place at Mangaia. The Public Works Engineer, who was accompanying the party, would report on that matter. With regard to the water-supply, it was obvious to him that a better supply should be secured, and a report would be made about that also. An officer of the Post and Telegraph Department, who was with the party, would report to the Government on the proposal to establish a wireless plant at Mangaia. The Department was at present investigating the wireless telephone by sending an expert to America and England, and if that were installed the people of Mangaia would be able to speak to Rarotonga and so keep in touch with the outside world. On behalf of himself and his fellow-members of Parliament Sir James thanked the people of Mangaia for their very cordial welcome, and expressed his own personal pleasure in again visiting the island.

RAROTONGA, 26TH FEBRUARY, 1920.

MEETING WITH THE ISLAND COUNCIL—PRESENTATION OF PETITION.

*Present:* Hon. Sir James Allen (Minister of External Affairs) and members of the Parliamentary Party; Mr. F. W. Platts (Resident Commissioner); Island Council—Pa Ariki, Karika Ariki, Makea Ariki, Tinomana Ariki, Goodman, Tuparetu, and Charles Cowan.

The Council was introduced by Mr. W. J. Stevenson, the Acting-Commissioner, and Mr. Savage acted as interpreter.

Mr. STEVENSON said it was the wish of the Council to present a petition to the Hon. Sir James Allen and the members of the New Zealand Parliament, and this was accordingly read by the interpreter as follows:—

[TRANSLATION.]

Rarotonga, 18th February, 1920.

To the Honourable Minister Sir James Allen and to all the Honourable Members of the New Zealand Parliament.

GREETINGS to you all in the great love of God! We salute and welcome you on this your visit to our land, Tumū-te-varovaro—that is, Rarotonga. Welcome, welcome, welcome! Greetings to you all!

This is a petition by us, the chief Arikis, and the Mataiapos and Rangatiras, and the Council members, and the people—men, women, and children—that we place before your presence.

Our petition is this: Send Mr. Platts back to us as our Resident Commissioner, so he may live among us to lead, and guide, and look after us—to be our parent.

The reason why we made this petition is because of his goodness to us, the Maoris. He has never done us any wrong or ill; on the contrary, he has done us all the good he can. He is never weary to seek out and do all those things that are good for all the islands, so that that good may be a benefit for all the people; he does not seek good for our side only—no, but for every person.

During his period the wireless was established, the schools for our children were established, the telephones were established, and very many other good things that are of real benefit to us. During his time of office schools were firmly established in each settlement. This work is a great and useful work that has been established on our island, and at Mauke, Mangaia, and Aitutaki; and we heard he also established a school on Palmerston Island, and he has done all he can to assist the education of the children of the other islands of our Group. He also opened the door for our children to obtain greater knowledge in New Zealand. Some of our Boys have gone to learn at St. Stephen's Maori College at Auckland, and others have gone to learn trades at