

Administration, and it is nothing to me. But I kept the orders down. I saw the possibility of such a charge being made, and surely enough it came. In order to prevent the suspicion of any preference at all, I decided, after that attack was made on me, to send all orders to headquarters in Wellington and let them send them anywhere they liked. Since that has been done a better proposal still has been made—that there should be in Wellington a central office for supplies for all New Zealand and all the Pacific islands in which New Zealand is interested; that central office to indent each year sufficient supplies for New Zealand's public offices and hospitals, and for island public works and hospitals. That, I presume, terminates the whole question. As to the rest, I want to make one acknowledgment. When the Natives came to me and said they expected the help of the Government because they had offered their fruit at 5s. per case and the traders demanded that it should be traded to them for 2s. 6d., and when they said, moreover, that they could not get cases and could not get space, I went to the traders and said, "Is it true that you will not supply these people with cases?" They said, "Yes, it is quite true." A deputation of the traders told me that. I said, "We expect you to supply them with cases, just as you sell them, say, meat." They said, "We will not supply them with cases." There was one exception: it was Mr. Ambridge. I saw him, and he said, "I will supply the Natives with cases." When the Governor-General was here I stated publicly in this hall that Mr. Ambridge's firm had expressed its willingness to supply the Natives with cases, and I was very grateful to him, and we had got quite a number of cases from him. So Mr. Ambridge is mistaken when he says he has never heard of any public acknowledgment. As to the rest of the charges and innuendoes, I pass them by: I am getting used to them now; they used to hurt me, but they do not now. I push straight onward to the mark—namely, the happiness and prosperity of the Natives of these islands. I care not a snap of the fingers for the innuendoes that I am capable of mean actions in asking meetings behind closed doors to stop Europeans from going on the Council, and so on. I pass them all by. If you like to believe them, well, believe them. I say that the policy of the Administration is to stand for the Native when the interests of the Natives as a whole conflict with the interests of the traders or any other European body. I want to put it to you that the position of the Resident Commissioner here is not an easy one. When Mr. Seddon was here twenty years ago similar complaints were made to him regarding the then Resident Commissioner, Colonel Gudgeon—one of the best Commissioners, I suppose, that ever occupied the position. But they had the same tale against Colonel Gudgeon, and when Mr. Seddon had heard it he said, "The Resident Commissioner is here to stand between the white community and the Native islanders." That is the position I take up, and I cannot please both. I regret very much the attitude of the traders. I have explained to them that what I have done since I have been here has been done as a matter of duty; it is not done to injure them. I have no antipathy to the trader. I know his use. All I ask him to do is to come and trade here and be satisfied with the legitimate profit one way—by the sale of his goods to the Natives. I make no charge against the traders at all, and I have not gone out of my way at all to make charges against them in the Press—quite the contrary. I am assailed with letters in the Press. In my report I said what the complaints of the Natives were to me, and if I were to read the letters sent to me from the other islands it would strengthen the case immeasurably. There are complaints all the time from the outer islands at the treatment the Natives receive at the hands of traders. But I want the traders to understand that there is no personal feud on my part. I have a conception of my duty which I shall stick to, whatever any one may say or do, until the end of my term. I trust that the traders will understand that there is no feud with me, that if they come to me and I can do them a good turn I will do it willingly; but they must not think that anything I do is done for their detriment. Incidentally it may be to their detriment, but it is done for the good of the Native islanders who are placed in our charge.

Mr. LUKE: In your opinion, would the working-out of the policy of the New Zealand Government—that there should be full opportunity for the Native—be promoted if there were elected Councillors along with the Commissioner?

Mr. PLATTS: I have no objection at all to elected Councillors—none whatever.

Mr. LUKE: Do you think it would promote the best interests of all concerned?

Mr. PLATTS: I am not sure that it would. The Natives are in tutelage. They are not yet ready for the free institutions of New Zealand.

Mr. HARRIS: I should like to ask Mr. Browne whether this photograph that has been placed in our hands is a true copy of the petition written by him, and whether he and the other signatories, as far as he knows, understood its full purport.

Mr. BROWNE: It is quite true.

Mr. HARRIS: And it does include a request that Europeans should be allowed to sit on the Council?

Mr. BROWNE: It does, and they knew what they were signing.

PA ARIKI stated that the request was made to them and they never agreed to it; it was never finished. From the time of Colonel Gudgeon this matter had been brought up for them to consent to the inclusion of a European member, and they had never agreed to it.

Mr. ISITT: How does Mr. Browne explain the statement that when he proposed this resolution there was an understanding between himself and the Arikis that they would support it?

Mr. BROWNE: There was a meeting at Makea's palace. There are several gentlemen here who were at that meeting, and they agreed to everything—to a white member being on the Council.

PA ARIKI: We signed our names to something else—not to this.

Mr. HOLLAND: When the document was presented to the Arikis for signature was it written in English or in Maori?

Mr. BROWNE: In both. They did not sign the English copy, but the Native translation.

Mr. HOLLAND: Did they read it?