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OPENING PRAYER

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair at 1.00 p.m

MADAM SPEAKER (N. RATTLE): Honourable Members please be seated.

We would like to extend our humble appreciation to our Reverend this morning, the President of the Cook Islands Christian Church for conducting our opening prayer this afternoon due to the absence of our Chaplin who has gone overseas.

Kia Orana, greetings and welcome to each Honourable Member in this Honourable House at our very first Sitting for 2018. I also extend a very warm welcome to the people of the Pa Enua and Tumutevarovaro.

Also present with us here in Parliament today is Debbie Angus who is our consultant in supporting us in the review of our Standing Orders and we extend a very warm welcome to Debra Angus. I also extend a warm welcome to our friends in the gallery this morning.

Honourable Members, I want to thank those of you who attended the workshops that were conducted for the Members of Parliament last week on the Bills that have come to the House today. And also for the workshop that was done on the review of the Standing Orders that was held here in Parliament.

Before we carry on with the business, I would like to send our best wishes to our Pacific friends in American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga. I am not sure if you are aware that the Parliament of Tonga has now fallen over. Many of us have been to the Parliament in Tonga, beautiful icon of the country has fallen over.

I would also like to extend best wishes to Fiji as we have just been to Fiji Parliament the week before and I hope that they will be spared of the cyclone that is circulating the Pacific region.

Honourable Members, we have now come to Orders of our business for the day which is now on Question Time for half an hour.

QUESTION TIME

The Honourable James Beer had the Floor first and I shall give you the Floor Honourable Angene after that.

Honourable Member, you have the Floor.

MR J. BEER: Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to us all.

Madam Speaker, referencing your point about storms, my question is to the Minister of Transport.

Can the Minister please advise this House whether he has received any notice, any response or any concern raised by his Secretary in relation to the Tiare Taporo not being able to exit the harbour as ordered to do so by the Harbourmaster on Friday at 5pm last week?

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Prime Minister. You have the Floor.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings everybody and Happy New Year.

Thank you Honourable Member for the very good question. I have a very short answer for you. No, I have not heard anything but in any event there would be no need to have this matter referred to the Minister. The Ports of Authority has all the powers and needs to deal with that matter.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. Do you have a supplementary question?

The Honourable James Beer.

MR J. BEER: Madam Speaker, a supplementary question to the Minister of Transport.

Can the Minister advise this House whether he was concerned enough to be able to ask from the Secretary that very same question?

HON. H. PUNA: Madam Speaker I do not like where this question is heading. The Member is obviously introducing an element of speculation into his questioning. But the truth is, I will respond to a situation or to an issue or concern if it was put to me but as I answered in my first answer, I have not been made aware of the situation. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I give the Floor to the Honourable George Angene.

MR G. ANGENE: Kia Orana Madam Speaker and to all of us.

I have a question to the Honourable Prime Minister and there is no intention in this question but for me and the wide public to hear and confirm the response to my question.

My question Honourable Prime Minister is concerning the Marae Moana. The question is, what benefit our country will receive from the Marine Resources Bill that we are yet to debate on.

MADAM SPEAKER: Are you asking a question on the current Bill and not the Marae Moana.

MR G. ANGENE: The Marine Resources Bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Honourable Member for the good question. I want to inform this House and to our people listening in that the Marae Moana Act that we passed last July is now being enforced by the Marae Moana Council. The Marae Moana Council have a lot of work to do in order to achieve the purpose of the Bill.

However, because the Bill is very important for our country which also incorporates the views of our people not only for today but for the future, the Marae Moana Council is working hard to fulfil the intentions of the Bill.

The main purpose of this Bill is to conserve our ocean. The Bill does not include the controlling of fishing in our ocean. However, maybe there will come a time when the two Bills, the Marae Moana and the Marine Resources Bill before the House will come in conflict. That will need to be clarified should these two Bills contradict each other.

The Marine Resources Bill is an important law for our country. This morning the Council of the Marae Moana met and the topic we discussed with the Head of the Marine Resources is this Bill before the House. Some of the main points captured from this meeting is that the Marae Moana Council is still part of the Bill presented but the Ministry of Marine Resources will be responsible for running the fishing industry in our country.

The Council asked for me to present this Bill to our people so they can put their ideas into this Bill. I believe Honourable Member I have answered the question that has been asked and thank you for the good question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Prime Minister and May I also say that was the purpose of running the workshop last week so Members of Parliament were to come to the workshop so they will understand what the Bill is that we have before us today.

So, you and the Prime Minister have wasted time talking about this and if you had been present at the workshop you would have gained knowledge on the Bill. I see the Honourable Tangata Vavia, you have the Floor.

MR T. VAVIA: Thank you Madam Speaker. My question really is a supplementary to the question that has been asked by the Member James Beer.

The question that has been asked by the Member is a question that has been of concern in the public arena for quite some time in as far as this particular vessel is concerned.

My question to the Prime Minister may not be answered today, it could be tomorrow or in the days to come. Under which legislation does the Harbourmaster have the powers to direct the ship to be moved out of the harbour and what are the consequences in the event that that direction is not followed. Because I view that as quite a relevant question, in the event there could have been an accident in that harbour. Those are my questions, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Madam Speaker, may I take the question on notice and come back with a complete answer tomorrow.

I am wondering where this kind of question is leading to because a question is being asked about something that has not happened and I am waiting for them to ask what is happening to Tapi's boat that is in the harbour in Nassau. It has already happened, it is a real danger to navigation and an impediment to the work of the harbour of Nassau. I am waiting for the Members of the Opposition to ask questions about things that have happened and not what has not happened yet.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable James Beer.

MR J. BEER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands.

Prime Minister, on November 30th last year you responded to a question raised by my friend the Honourable Tama Tuavera in relation to the United Nations and dual citizenship.

In that response Prime Minister you stated that you had perhaps not made the broadcast, you were not completely certain by that but you went on to say that in Donald Trump's position this would probably be called fake news.

Prime Minister, can you then advise this House whether or not the position stated by the Minister of Finance a months earlier on Radio New Zealand on the United Nations and dual citizenship is a perspective provided for by the government of the Cook Islands or is it his own personal perspective.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Madam Speaker, the questions from the other side of the House is getting more and more mysterious. I mean the Honourable Minister Brown is here sitting right next to me, the question should be directed to him and besides really the question does not make sense. That is the answer you are not making sense and if you want ask the Minister directly.

The question on dual citizenship was never officially discussed with anybody even with New Zealand much as you might not agree with that James but may I just say that because you are the one that is harping on about it, it is just a figment of your imagination.

MR J. BEER: Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

MR H. PUNA: Sit down I have not finished.

MADAM SPEAKER: What is your Point of Order?

MR J. BEER: Standing Order 209, relevancy to the answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Well it seems to me that the Minister Responsible for the comment that was made is sitting in the House so why is the question asked to the Prime Minister instead of the Minister responsible.

MR J. BEER: The question was asked of the Prime Minister on November 30th, he responded as to say that the news that the Honourable Member from Ngatangiia had raised was a fake question.

MADAM SPEAKER: And the Prime Minister has answered that this discussion has not happened with anybody officially.

MR J. BEER: Madam Speaker that was not the question. The question was whether or not he had spoken to New Zealand but the question that I raise now was whether or not he knew the position given by the Minister of Finance on Radio New Zealand on the subject of the United Nations and dual citizenship to which he has said in this House that, that was a fake news broadcast.

HON. H. PUNA: It is fake news.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Minister Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker. Perhaps I can put the Honourable Member out of his misery.

I recall last year Madam Speaker in a media conference that I held in my office the issue of how could the Cook Islands attain United Nation membership because of the constraints around our current New Zealand citizenship. In my discussions with the media on that day, Madam Speaker we mentioned a number of United Nation member countries who also had dual citizenships and suggested that possibly one avenue we could look at and this was in my statement to the media at the time at the media conference was whether it was possible to for having dual citizenship with the Cook Islands.

And this is what has been taken forward by the Opposition Members as being government policy when it was in fact a statement made in a media conference as a suggestion for avenues to gaining UN membership.

I think the more important question Madam Speaker is that the Honourable James Beer explains to this House under oath the letter that he wrote in the Cook Islands News outlining that he received information from a New Zealand Minister about what discussions took place with the New Zealand Government and our Government last year in New Zealand.

He stated in black and white that, that was news he received from a New Zealand Minister and I ask the Member now in the House under oath, who is this Member of Parliament, New Zealand Minister no less that was present at the meeting that gave you this information.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and see the Honourable Member James Beer.

MR J. BEER: Madam Speaker I think everything in this House should be under oath. However I find it constraining that the Minister should be asking us question when today is our opportunity to ask them questions. Therefore Madam Speaker I have a question to the Minister of Finance.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think it has been a practice of this House that both sides have been asking each other questions since we have been sitting.

Let me say though that the question is also very clear, as in our Standing Order is very clear that when a question is being asked that the person you are asking the question to have a responsibility for that matter.

Therefore the Honourable Member James Beer is not responsible he has written about in the newspaper as you state Honourable Minister. There has to be other means to have that question extracted as per your question.

Can we move on and off that question? Please, not the same question Honourable Member.

MR J. BEER: No, Madam Speaker. My question to the Minister of Finance. Can the Minister please clarify...

HON. N. GLASSIE: Point of Order.

MADAM SPEAKER: What is your Point of Order, Honourable Minister?

HON. N. GLASSIE: Standing Order 162, No Member can speak twice to a question.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is my understanding that you Honourable Member is going to ask a different question.

MR J. BEER: Madam Speaker if the Minister had given me the opportunity to ask the question he would have found out that this is not a question on the same matter.

HON. N. GLASSIE: Madam Speaker it makes no difference, we are following the Standing Order as being stated by the Standing Order. It is the same question and you cannot ask a question twice.

MR J. BEER: On the same matter!

HON. N. GLASSIE: No, on such matter.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Minister if you look at that clause it is under the rules of debate and we are on question time.

Standing Order 162 refers to rules of debate. Honourable Member please ask your question.

MR J. BEER: Can the Minister please provide precisely to this House, what core tax you propose to write off in your announcement to that effect on Friday 2nd February. Is it to do and only related to the Amendment Bills that was brought before the House relating to Income Tax and Value Added Tax or is it to do with all taxes, Minister.

Can you please clarify that position for the public?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Minister Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: I was expecting these questions earlier on in question time Madam Speaker to give me time to speak more on it. As we running out of time, three minutes left to go, I guess the time will be lovely.

In answer to the question. The announcement by the government in terms of the additional amnesty provisions we have put into place and will come into place. Meaning a total of almost \$19million in total outstanding tax will be waived for tax arrears as accrued from the 31st December 2009 going back.

And of this Madam Speaker the additional or penalties accrued to \$13.8million and the core tax is \$5.1million. And this affects 1,433 entities which includes companies, individuals, estates, charitable organisations and societies, national sport teams and other tax entities.

In looking at this date where we drew the line, Madam Speaker it was apparent and clear to the government that this was the date that would have the most impact in removing and waiving penalties whilst at the same time minimising the core tax that would be affected.

Madam Speaker when the government looked at it, we looked at it as a way to help Cook Islanders get this burden off their back. This is what a good government does. As opposed Madam Speaker to the persecution and prosecution...

MR J. BEER: Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: What is your Point of Order, Honourable Member?

MR J. BEER: My question was, whether it included all other forms of taxation or was only tied to the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill and the Income Tax Amendment Bill.

Can the Minister for the sake of clarity, clarify to this House precisely what taxes is he writing off?

HON. M. BROWN: Absolutely,

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister being aware of the time limit please.

HON. M. BROWN: For the benefit of the Honourable Member, Madam Speaker and all of our people, it includes all taxes, not just the VAT.

So you can breathe a lot easier now, James. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member. Question time is over and we will go to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

We will go now to presentation of papers.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

I now call on the Honourable Prime Minister to present Paper 135 and Paper 138.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present:

Parliament Paper 135: Heads of Department Selection Panel (Remuneration of Members) Order 2017, Serial No. 2017/14 and

Parliament Paper 138: The Annual Report of the Public Service Commissioner for the year ended 30 June 2017.

I now lay these on the Table.

MADAM SPEAKER: I call on the Honourable Minister Mark Brown to present Paper 137.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker, It is my pleasure to present to parliament:

Parliament Paper 137: Public Expenditure Review Committee and Audit (Appointment of Director) Order 2018, Serial No. 2018/01

And I, now lay this on the Table.

MADAM SPEAKER: We will go to the Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Second reading of the Marine Resources Bill. And I call on the Honourable Minister responsible for the Marine Resources Bill to move the Motion on the Second Reading of the Bill.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Marine Resources Bill 2017 be now read a Second time

Madam Speaker before I speak on the Bill before the House I seek your approval for me to speak to our people.

Kia Orana to all our people listening in to our Parliament today. To the three sectors of our nation and to all our people on Rarotonga and the Outer Islands – God's Blessings on all of us.

As this is the first Sitting of Parliament for the New Year it is fitting for us to greet each other and our people.

First of all to you Madam Speaker and all your staff and all Honourable Members of this House – greetings in the Name of the Lord. The Honourable Members of this House from all three sides greetings in the Name of the Lord. To our people listening in to our deliberations, greetings to all of you in the Name of the Lord. I extend a very special greeting on this New Year. We know the outcomes of this New Year, the blessings and the unfortunate events we went through may the Lord bless us.

Madam Speaker this is a troublesome time for us in the unpredictability of the weather we are experiencing. However, it is heart-warming to know a tradition that this country has adopted in November every year where we have a combined prayer service at the National Auditorium asking for the Lords guidance and protection over our country. This is also our belief during this troublesome time that He will hold us in His hands during the last few weeks of the cyclone season.

The Government and together with the people of our country would like to add on with your compassion remarks conveyed earlier on to our people in Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga. Cyclone Gita have done a lot of damages to Apia in Samoa. The hotel that accommodated all the Leaders of the countries during the Forum last September which was recently opened was damaged by the flood during the last couple of years.

I also heard last week that the same hotel was covered by sea water reaching up to the second floor of the building. Up to today, it has been reported that the roads are like the river. It is deep and the flow of water and sea water is very strong. The good thing Madam Speaker is that there are no lives lost during the cyclone.

We all know that Tonga was struck by the cyclone at mid night last night but there is no current update about the damages done to Tonga. I will update our people once I receive an update about the situation in Tonga.

The cyclone is moving to the south side of Fiji and our greatest wish is that lives are not lost and although we will lose other means in life but we are very hopeful that it will not be the lives of our people.

Secondly Madam Speaker, please bear with me Honourable Members, but I would like to make mention about our people in Kiribati. We know that two weeks ago, a ferry sunk in Kiribati and about eighty people were lost. I attended the 50th Anniversary of Independent for Nauru and the President of Kiribati was not at that occasion due to the tragedy.

In our country today Madam Speaker is the Minister of the Crown from Kiribati and his delegation and the purpose of his trip is to sign an agreement with us to allow their people in Kiribati to work on pearl farms in Manihiki. This is the first time such an agreement is put in place. However, this does not mean to say that they have open access to Manihiki. They are now in consultation with the Tourism Authority and maybe they will be able to help us in that area. We will wait for any future developments regarding this issue.

The good thing Madam Speaker is that we have two Kiribati living in Manihiki and they have taught the people in Manihiki new ways of fishing. Maybe those who will come from Kiribati will also teach our people in Manihiki some new ideas.

Thank you Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity to make those remarks.

I will now change language and speak English.

Madam Speaker, the Marine Resource's current Act was enacted back in 2005. Since then, development in the Marine sector nationally, regionally and internationally has been rapid and far reaching. Even domestically Madam Speaker, there have been some major developments.

All these developments have been lumped together and therefore the need for new legislation has become obvious to accommodate these developments and enable the Ministry of Marine Resources to discharge its management responsibilities more effectively.

The Bill has been the subject of legislative reviews and drafts and widespread consultations among our people over a period spanning six years. Although much of the existing Act will remain in force, it will be more prudent to repeal and replace it with a new Bill.

The Bill includes new definitions to deal with emerging technologies and priorities. I am so please Madam Speaker that Honourable Members of this House and the staff of Parliament have had the opportunity to discuss this Bill in detail with our technical people before today.

The current Act was passed before certain events took place within the region. For example, the Tuna Commission otherwise referred to as the WCPFC, Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission based in Pohnpei came into effect after this current Bill was passed.

Madam Speaker, the Bill will enable conservation and management measures of these regional fisheries bodies to become legally binding in our waters also. The Bill will provide clear guidance on the establishment of marine reserves and parks and the establishment of sanctuaries to protect, conserve and manage marine life in line with the Marae Moana Act.

The Bill also establishes the framework for our quota system and removes references under the current Act that might assign fishery rights in perpetuity as is currently the case in New Zealand. But I have to acknowledge Madam Speaker we have drawn on the New Zealand fisheries quota model for guidance on these matters.

The Bill provides provisions for administrative penalties to allow fines for minor offending to be applied more efficiently. It also includes a new provision which will provide a structure approach for a settlement agreement to be made in the case where prosecution is not pursued.

This proposal has come from Crown Law because they have been very involved with negotiate settlement particularly over the last eighteen months. As a matter of interest Honourable Members, we have last year earned about \$800,000 from these settlements.

One interesting development that arouse under the current Act was that CIIC, its powers to manage Crown property on the seabed was inadvertently removed but this Bill will undo that repeal Madam Speaker.

Most importantly the Bill now includes the amendments introduced by the Marae Moana Act 2017 and it confirms that the Ministry of Marine Resources also has the responsibility of supporting the objectives of the Marae Moana under the Marae Moana Act 2017.

More importantly, Madam Speaker in the event of any conflict between the Marae Moana Act 2017 and this Bill there is no doubt whatsoever that the Marae Moana Act must prevail.

Madam Speaker, fellow Parliamentarians and people of the Cook Islands, the passage of the three key pieces of Marine Legislation namely the Marae Moana Act 2017, the Maritime Zones Act 2017 and the Marine Resources Act 2017 signals to the world that this little country is serious in its intentions to commit to best management practices and conservation of our ocean space.

In closing, Madam Speaker we can be rightly proud that we have a sweet of the most comprehensive and updated package of legislation which confirms our efforts as world leaders in the protection and management of our ocean. I commend this Bill to this Honourable House, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister and I look for a seconder? I see the Honourable Mona Ioane.

Seconded by the Honourable Mona Ioane

MR M. IOANE: Madam Speaker, I wish to give my views on this Bill but before that Madam Speaker may I be allowed to give my greetings to our people. We have just come through the holiday period and this is our first sitting of Parliament this year. Although this is the second month of this year, I would like to greet the people of the Cook Islands and say, Happy New Year to you all.

I will combine all of us to include the Northern and Southern Group as one; to the people of the Cook Islands listening in, greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Madam Speaker, I will come back to the Bill before the House today. Last week we held a workshop to go through the Marine Resource Bill. I myself was very happy that we had this workshop. The workshop gave us the opportunity to go through the Bill and has enabled me to understand the Bill and what is it all about.

I salute the head of the Ministry of Marine Resources, Mr Ben Ponia, and all his officers and also the staff from the Crown Law Office. Madam Speaker, this is not an easy task. Maybe we Honourable Members think this is an easy task to carry out. I understand the hardship that the staff have gone through to ensure a Bill is drafted so that our ocean is protected. So, I applaud Ben and his staff and also the staff at Crown Law Office for the work they have carried out for this Bill.

Madam Speaker, last week I tried to follow the explanations given on this Bill and like what the Prime Minister mentioned earlier on the principles and merits of this Bill. I think we will find this in the first part of this Bill and the powers of this Bill will enable conservation of our ocean and to protect our ocean and every living and non-living resources in our ocean. These are the important factors that I have picked up from this Bill.

The explanations given by Ben Ponia is that there has been some amendments included into this Bill that has not been included in our previous laws. I am happy with the amendment because it enables this Bill to be applicable in our present time today.

When I look at this it seems that there are about 14 new sections included, not 2 but up to 14 new provisions. This is a lot that has been included into our new Bill. These were not included in the old law so the time is right to improve or make amendments on this Bill. This is the same that we are doing to the Crimes Bill and we are doing the same with this Marine Resources Bill.

Maybe this Bill will be referred to a Select Committee and if it is going to the Select Committee I hope it will not be too long. There is a plan for the Crimes Bill to be taken to the Outer Islands and to save some dollars maybe this is a good time that these two Bills should be taken at the same time to the Northern and Southern Group. That is why I am supporting this Bill.

On another matter for us on the Outer Islands especially on Aitutaki we have had a workshop last week on the issues of conservation of our ocean. I was happy with the workshop held on Aitutaki as the College students were included in this workshop. It

is important to include our young people into workshops like this as they will become leaders in the future.

In regards to the Outer Islands, I am happy because when this Bill is passed it will give power to the local government to pass bylaws for each island to protect their islands sea areas. This is a good thing because it is empowering the Outer Islands and I speak especially for my island Aitutaki.

This is a good provision because it will give us the authority to manage our own seas and empower us to make our own regulations and bylaws to protect our lagoon. We have previously set our own bylaws but having this in the Bill enables us to establish this bylaws.

Another thing I want to share with this House and it may be directed to the Minister of Environment and maybe the Minister of Marines. I am aware that previously there was a bylaw made both for Aitutaki and Manuae but I am unsure whether these are passed and enacted. I would like to request that this bylaw for my islands be passed by the Executive Council because this is an important bylaw for Aitutaki and Manuae. All the Motu of Aitutaki will be included in this bylaw, all traditional method of fishing and of course the Raui will be part of this law.

This island bylaw is important because it will be tied with the Marine Resource Bill. Madam Speaker another thought I want to present came from a workshop held in Aitutaki regarding the whales. I thought the issue of whales will be included in this Bill, maybe this House will consider this as an important issue. I would like to propose that we amalgamate all these related Bills into one single Act. In my understanding there are many Acts which are all related to our marine area and its management.

I think all marine related Acts should be merge into one manageable Act, so we will not be running around to search for the right law. I am thinking to manage our marine and ocean rights it should be in one main Act.

These are my views Madam Speaker to show my support to this Marine Resources Bill. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Ngamau Munokoa – welcome back.

MRS N. MUNOKOA: Madam Speaker, all Honourable Members and all our people listening in to our broadcast – Kia Orana.

I extend special greetings to our Clerk recuperating at home, to the leader of the Opposition and all Opposition members – Kia Orana.

Kia Orana and condolences to those who have loved ones that have passed away recently. Happy New Year to all our people listening in to our broadcast, to our traditional leaders, religious leaders and of our course the government – Kia Orana.

Madam Speaker I stand to show my support to this Bill because it is set to bring good things for our people and nation. Looking through the Bill from the beginning to the schedule I only see things that will benefit our nation.

I support the views of the Prime Minister and the Honourable Mona Ioane and the thoughts that they have expressed regarding this Bill. I am speaking for myself and our lagoon in Nikao that we have not managed and conserved our sea life properly, even with the Raui.

Traditionally the Raui is respected and the mana is recognised and the sea life thrives, for example in the past the trochus is everywhere in our lagoon from Blackrock to Panama. But when the people started picking and collecting these it disappeared. That is the reason I am saying that in the past there was an abundance of sea life in our lagoons but today it is scarce. People from other parts of the island are coming to our area & depleting our lagoon – they are saying that the Nikao community are lazy that is why they are picking the abundance of our lagoon.

Personally I believe we should take from the sea what we can consume in our homes and not to sell and make money for ourselves. I have our markers at home and when I tried to place these in our lagoon for the Raui, I was questioned as to why I am setting the Raui and what am I conserving. This has stopped me from setting the Raui for Nikao.

We are fine in Nikao but it is the people from outside of our district that is spoiling our lagoon life. You are coming in to take our sea life to make money for yourselves.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member I am going to interrupt you now as it is our time to have a break. When we return we will come straight back to you.

Parliament is now suspended until 3.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 2:27 p.m

Parliament resumed at 3:00 p.m

MADAM SPEAKER: Please be seated Honourable Members. Parliament is resumed. Before we suspended we had the interruption of the Second Reading of the Marine Resources Bill with the Honourable Ngamau Munokoa on the Floor and you may have the Floor again.

MRS N. MUNOKOA: Greetings again to us all this afternoon. I was talking about us here in Nikao and about our Raui. Perhaps this year we will look at starting to Raui our area of the lagoon at Nikao and Panama. I am mindful this Bill might affect us and we have to pay a penalty for breach of this law.

We have to help ourselves in preserving this area for our children for times they want to have seafood. Madam Speaker, as I was not here while the workshop was on last Monday I believe that those that attended the workshop understood this so I do not think any of us will stray away since we know what was presented in the workshop.

If we look at the laws or views that are presented I believe these are all good on the preservation of fish, quota and if properly enforced by the Marine will be a good Bill for the country. To you doing the work and to foreigners coming in with their licence into our country you have to be careful in what they are taking away and what they leave behind for our benefit. Madam Speaker this is enough in supporting the Bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank very much Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Selina Napa. You have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: Firstly Greetings to you Madam Speaker and to all of us in this House in the Name of the Lord. And to the people of the Cook Islands listening to our deliberations this afternoon, greeting to you all.

Before I express my views with regards to the Bill before the House, I would like to thank our Parliamentary Service for giving us the opportunity to deliberate over this Bill through the workshop last week. As mentioned earlier by former speakers that they support this Bill, I too support this Bill but I would like to express my views on some areas of this Bill and maybe it will help us to further improve this Bill in the future.

Firstly, I would like to talk about Part 3 of this Bill. In regards to Marine Reserves and Parks. When we deliberated over this Part during the workshop, we observed that the Marine Restricted areas which is the Raui was not covered in this Bill especially the lagoon area. We were uncertain as to who was responsible for the Raui area, whether it was the Ui Ariki or the Marine Resources or the traditional leaders in the villages on the islands.

One area that I was very much hoping for it to be included in this Bill is not so much the fish in our lagoon but the conservation of our sea cucumbers. We know of a case last year when some Chinese tourists came to our country and harvested so many of our sea cucumbers with the intention to export them.

We were unable to penalise them because we have no law in place to do so. Maybe the Ministry of Marine Resources, the Ui Ariki and Koutu Nui will consider this and include it in our law so that our fish including other sea life in our lagoon are protected.

I will also talk about Part 5 of our Bill which relates to Licensing. I notice that a lot of powers in this Bill have been given to the Minister and also to the Secretary of Marine Resources. For example, the license for Cook Islands fishing vessels must be issued by the Secretary and also the license in respect of the foreign fishing vessels is issued by the Minister of Marine Resources.

If we look at the quota management system, the Secretary of Marine Resources is responsible for that area. The Minister is also responsible to electing an Advisory Board Committee for the Ministry of Marine Resources to look into activities that falls under this Bill and especially in the Ministry of Marine Resources.

There are other powers vested in the Minister and the Secretary of Marine Resources. For example, the Minister or Secretary can refuse to grant an application if there has

been a failure by these foreign fishing boats to satisfy our laws. To avoid problems involving the Minister and the Secretary, maybe the Minister should consider giving the power to the Advisory Board Committee to scrutinize fishing licenses before they are granted.

The Marae Moana Act which we passed last year has Board members set up to look at areas concerning the Marae Moana and maybe the same Board members can be utilised to look at issuing fishing licenses because it is also administered by the Marine Resources. That Committee comprises representatives from all sectors of our community.

One other area that I would like to touch on is the laws under the Environment which is in relation to EIA which is the Environment Impact Assessment. EIA does not have the authority over activities performed in our ocean. I think it is appropriate that there is an involvement with the Environment Impact Assessment whereby we assess the way they fish in our ocean, and the things they do in our ocean.

When you actually look at the EIA process within the environment it is an ongoing process of identifying impacts from a development activity assessing the consequences of those impacts, putting in place management measures to deal with the impacts, monitoring and evaluating the management measures and making changes to the development.

If this EIA is attached to the activities that we see unfit that they perform in our ocean, this EIA will become a helpful tool for us as a solution. I believe the Ministry of Environment and Marine Resources can work together whereby some of the activities inter-twine that can be looked at again or maybe the EIA can be used as well to assess the activities by the fishermen out there.

Those are my thoughts in support of the Bill, the main thing here is for us to support the Bill because there are new amendments to the Bill like climate change, changes likely to happen in the future, so these needs to be inserted in the Marine Bill. Those are my thoughts on the Bill, Kia Orana.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much and I see the Honourable Rose Brown you have the Floor.

MRS R. TOKI-BROWN: Kia Orana, and greetings Madam Speaker and to all Honourable Members and staff Members of this Honourable House. Madam Speaker, I stand to share my own thoughts and support in regards to this Bill and to give thanks to you Madam Speaker and to UNDP for organising our workshop last week.

As mentioned by the Member for Titikaveka, it is right for us to share our own opinions in regards to this Bill before the House.

Madam Speaker, if I can be given some time to convey my greetings to my people. Firstly to all on the island of Enuamanu, the three pillars, greetings in the Name of our Lord. And to my constituency Teenui/Mapumai greetings to you all.

To the Paruarangi Tribe greetings to you all and to Papa Ernest and to all the people of Enuamanu and to the people of the Cook Islands with the sudden passing of our Chief Aida Rongomatane. I would like to give my full support for the new Ariki that has been vested for the chiefly role and it is the son of our late chief, Nicholas Nicholls.

Special greetings to my family the Ngati Toki Family who recently lost a loved one may the warmth of the Lord be among us all, and to the Rangi Isaaka family may the love of our Lord be upon you all.

Coming back to our Bill before the House which is to improve our Marine Resources. I first of all thank the specialist who worked on this Bill. I believe that this Bill started way back in 2013 and many new things have been added into this Bill and the spirit of this Bill is to conserve our marine resources.

We also believe that this Bill will go hand in hand with the Marae Moana Act. Madam Speaker I know that our ocean is the food basket for our people and so we should look at this properly so that this will be there for our people in the years to come.

I am also happy to see that a Committee will be formed and that is the Fisheries Advisory Committee and they will work closely with the Ministry of Marine Resources to look carefully and make sure things go as planned.

I am also happy to say that our Marine Resources office in Rarotonga has been renovated to house all the different equipment which contains all the TV and computers that monitors the resources available in our ocean. We are told that any foreign fishing vessel that comes into our ocean this E-monitoring equipment will be able to see the unlicensed fishing vessels in our ocean.

I would like to acknowledge the Ministry involved and the staff involved for creating such Bill that will monitor our marine resources area. Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much and I see the Honourable Tama Tuavera you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Kia Orana Madam Speaker, Kia Orana to all Honourable Members in this House today. Kia Orana to our people listening to our debate today.

A special thank you to you Madam Speaker for arranging such workshop to allow us to look into these Bills. My own view is that we all understand the Bills that was presented last week at our workshop in Arorangi. We went through this booklet last week and we asked questions that will assist us in terms of understanding it.

Madam Speaker in October 2016 the Purse Seine Fishing Select Committee was established and the members of the committee had the opportunity to visit the monitoring centre at the Ministry of Marine Resource to see for themselves the large screen monitoring system that monitors the movement of fishing boats operating in our ocean.

Madam Speaker I believe that this Bill has been properly scrutinised by the Ministry responsible. At the monitoring centre of the Ministry of Marine the full information on a particular ship on the big screen can be shown on the screen simply by clicking the mouse on the dot indicating the ship or boat. As mentioned by the Honourable Rose Brown today at the centre there are new screen installed. We have been invited by the Secretary of Marine to visit the centre and I want to go to see the new display at the centre.

The other issue I want to speak about is on the issuing of fishing licenses. The Marae Moana Act have a governing Board and I wish to ask the Minister responsible to also consider forming a Board for our Marine Resource and this is for their protection both the Minister and Secretary of Marines.

I would like to touch on aquaculture, Madam Speaker. Our fisherman today are claiming that our fish population are low. This is another way for us to provide our people with fish and I would like to ask the government to setup aquaculture farm establishment. In Australia they have the tuna wranglers who go out in the ocean to catch tuna, it may be blue or yellow fin and they bring it back to the farm made of big nets to feed and raise them in these aqua farm.

These men are called wranglers because what they do with the fish is similar to the men that catch cattle. When sharks are caught in the wranglers net they release them and not kill them. I am not restricting our aquaculture to tuna there are other good fish in our ocean that we can farm for our people to consume.

This Bill is supported by the monitoring centre at the Ministry of Marine to ensure it is administered appropriately.

One of the questions raised at our workshop last week is the power of arrest. The question was posed to the Secretary of Marine. I was pleased with his answer when he told us that he will consider carefully as how they will give this authority to the monitoring person on the boats. The sad thing about this kind of work Madam Speaker is that only one person is involved in carrying out this task on each boat.

This person has to act like a lion because he is one among the whole crew of forty on that fishing boat. There has been reports from Europe of persons working as a monitoring person on boats that have disappeared.

Madam Speaker those are my thoughts on this Bill and I give my full support to it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable George Angene and you have the Floor.

MR G. ANGENE: Kia Orana Madam Speaker and to all your staff members. Kia Orana also to all the Honourable Members that have been elected by the people to be their representative in this House.

Special greetings to the Prime Minister. I wish to ask your permission Madam Speaker if I may be able to speak to the people of my constituency as this is the first time we sit in this House in this New Year.

Kia Orana to my people of Tupapa/Maraerenga the people that have given me this honour to represent you in our parliament. To all the people in Tupapa-Maraerenga those with titles right up to our children – greetings to all. Special greetings to my One Cook Islands constituency committee. Greetings also to the two other political party and your committee in my constituency.

Madam Speaker I have special greetings to convey to other specific people that I will name. These people have agreed with the bible scripture - “Blessed are you when people hate you... on account of the Son of Man.” Thank you to these people for writing about me in our newspaper as I now have come to a conclusion that I am a popular actor. I encourage these people to keep writing about me.

Madam Speaker there are many thoughts that I wish to share with this House which people have expressed to me however before me now is a different sheet of paper, which is the Bill before the House today.

On the Bill before us today, it only applies to some of the people in my constituency because not all the people in Tupapa/Maraerenga are fishermen. My committee and I have gone through this Bill last week when I received my parliamentary papers. The members on my committee are mostly fishermen and they fish in our lagoons and in the ocean.

I wish to convey their full support to the Bill that the government is bringing to parliament that will be of benefit to our people. I will not say more for now but maybe tomorrow I will have other things to share.

Kia Orana and thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Willie John, you have the Floor.

MR W. JOHN: Kia Orana Madam Speaker and all your staff and to all the Honourable Members of this Honourable House. Kia Orana to all our people listening in to our broadcast.

Madam Speaker I wish to convey greetings to my people before I speak on the Bill before the House. Kia Orana to my island people, to the Church Ministers on the island, Council members, Mayor, Deputy Mayor and everyone on the island greetings to you all today. I believe we all enjoyed the festive season during the Christmas, the New Year period and the extra events we had including the closure of the Pure Epetoma. These were enjoyable times on our island.

We are currently experiencing cyclones circling around our islands and it has brought some problems for us in the past week. I was told the harbour is damaged and the breaking of waves has moved closer inland, this is not a good thing and we can only ask for God’s protection.

Government can look into this and assist especially our lives in the Outer Islands during these times. I believe most all islands in the Northern group during the past

weeks has been affected by waves and I think this should be looked at and assistance should be given to our people.

In the pass weeks we had relatives suddenly passing away, condolences to the families, and I note they are youths ranging from 30 years to 50 years. Families from New Zealand arrived to bring messages of sympathy and comfort. Where do we run? We run to the Almighty who will comfort us.

Madam Speaker I now come back to the Bill before the House. I strongly support this Bill and I believe this is not a new Bill. These are old issues going back to 2005 where the Marine Act was passed and has been used up to this day. What we are doing is improving it, insert some positive ideas in it to govern and protect our people.

The Honourable Member for Nikao, Aunty Mau commented on the Raui that was enforced in our area of Nikao. We worked together with Aunty Mau and I saw the benefit of the Raui. During those times as Aunty Mau has mentioned about trochus where the people of Nikao reaped its benefits from the sea.

Not only the trochus but the abundance of fish in the Raui area in Nikao. I myself experience this when I go out fishing just across from where I stay. So, I am in support of this Raui and maybe talk to those in this Ministry as to how we bring this back again.

I talked in our workshop on the benefits obtained from fishing licences given out to foreign fishing vessels to fish in our ocean because this is one issue that this committee has raised in the Marine Bill especially for us in the Northern Group. The important thing as explained to us that day is what benefits can our islands get from the licences in fishing in our ocean? The fishing is concentrated around our islands and it is only fair for our islands to get a portion of the benefits.

Madam Speaker, we have spoken about the *Te Kukupa* because the crew working on it are enforcing the laws and will be responsible for the implementing of the Bill that we want to pass. I have asked in this House Madam Speaker, what is our reward for the crew working on this vessel? It is just like I am talking to the wind.

I believe those in the House supports the good work this crew are doing, can we at least increase their salary, this is what I am supporting. We have to look at improving them, if they are looked after the law will also be better enforced. They are the ones working and protecting our ocean as well as boarding foreign fishing vessels. I also shared this with Ben Ponia to look at areas where our people will benefit.

I have spoken about this several times on the shortage of shipping to the Northern Group, when there is not enough flour or rice to eat. There is an alternative as we can see foreign fishing vessels in our ocean especially Koreans because at times, they will run out of food supplies and they want food off the land.

They want to come on land to buy pork and they can bring ashore rice, sugar, flour, coffee, even cigarettes as this I believe is one of the important foods on our islands. I asked this son of ours Ben Ponia to look at a legislation to allow these vessels to come to the islands and buy food from ashore.

Those are my thoughts Madam Speaker, I am speaking on behalf of us on this side as they have approved me to do so. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Tangata Vavia and you have the Floor.

MR T. VAVIA: Thank you Madam Speaker and I sympathise with the request by the Honourable Member from Mangarongaro on the salaries of the crew members on *Te Kukupa*. I believe he should turn around and talk to his colleagues and they will give that assistance.

Greetings to you Madam Speaker, to our staff in the House, greetings to our Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Ministers, Members of the Government. Greetings, also to us in the Opposition, our Leader and to all of us sitting on this side of the House this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, I believe this is an important Bill for the country. This Bill is to protect an important asset for us in the Cook Islands which are the fish in our ocean. We are a proud nation and when we attend international meetings together with the big nations, we tell them this is how big our ocean is and we own the fish in that ocean.

So, on this I support the thoughts of previous Members in supporting this Bill. This may be an advantage to our lives and may also be a disadvantage to our lives.

When we look at other countries, they have fishing vessels going out on their oceans to fish even to the point of coming into our ocean. We should be wary in having a closer look in what we are doing in giving out licences to these fishing vessels. I will look at three sections in the Bill which I want to spend my speaking time on.

I support most of the clauses in this Bill in that it is for the protection of this resource of ours for the future. One particular Part in this Bill that I would like to focus on is the issuing of fishing licenses. Under Part 5, Issuing of Licenses, it says that “Licenses for Cook Islands fishing vessels must be issued by the Secretary and licenses in respect of foreign fishing vessels must be issued by the Minister”.

I have no problem with this, however, my observation is that the law is not firm enough with regards to the issuing of licenses. I would have thought that this is one area that Government would have emphasised on and make the law firm to protect our country because this area have been tested and it has failed. It was easily broken. This should have attracted the strongest protection so that the Minister or the Secretary is protected.

I am sure we have heard of the history of boats and nations who fish outside of their oceans. The carrot they use is millions of dollars or hundreds of thousands of dollars to get into other nations fishing areas. They are prepared to throw money away to get that license. Do not ever think it will not happen here, it has and will continue to happen.

From my point of view this is the weakest link in this Bill and we are not looking at it seriously. Madam Speaker, I would prefer that government comes back and bring in an amendment that before a Minister issues a foreign fishing license, the Minister submits to Cabinet of those foreign licenses to be issued and for Cabinet to debate on it.

I would very much appreciate if that can be closely looked at by the Minister of Marine Resources because the Advisory Committee under this Bill their responsibility does not extend as far as the licenses, so they are out of the picture in as far as issuing of the license are concerned. What other measure is there to protect that Minister?

Secondly, Madam Speaker I will come back again to the fact that fisheries maybe the second earner of this economy apart from tourism. It could have been agriculture but agriculture has been neglected by this government but they have made some changes to the Marine Resources Bill which I am glad. I am glad that they have brought a lot of tightening in other areas of the Bill, of our rights to our ocean, of the resource in our ocean but I think they failed to identify the weakness in the Bill.

The second area that I am going to talk about is the Advisory Committee, I like the idea of the Advisory Committee to look at other areas of the fishing industry locally but if we think that they have something to do with the issuing of licenses I do not see it in this Bill, it is not there.

The third area that I would like to talk about is the duty of confidentiality in the Bill. Who decides an information is confidential is left to the Secretary but I guess maybe I am jumping the gun?

Maybe there will be Regulations, regulations to be made to regulate which information of the fisheries are confidential and which are not. In my view, we do not know as to what the Secretary considers an information confidential and this section might impact on the Official Information Act. These two Bills and the Information Act will be fighting each other in my view.

During the workshop last week, I was made to understand that there is some information, maybe some business information that do not require to be put out to the public, and I accept that. But I do not like the fact that it is left to the Secretary to decide what is confidential and what is not in as far as the information are concerned. I believe as much information as should be possible should be allowed to the members of the public to have access to because of the importance of this resource.

To end my contribution to this Bill, I would appreciate if the Minister of Marine Resources would tell us later on, that there will be Regulations coming concerning this particular area of the Bill which is the confidentiality area. Thank you, Madam Speaker, if I do not hear anything later on, I will stand up again.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for the perfect use of your time and I see the Honourable Pumati Isaraera.

MR P. ISERAERA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There is no difference in these two names, they come from the same family, that is our genealogy his father and my

father. His mother is from Atiu and I am also from Atiu, my forefather is from Atiu but I do not want to give the genealogy as it will take a long time.

Firstly, Madam Speaker Kia Orana in the Name of the Lord and to all the staff of this House. Kia Orana to all Honourable Members of this House to the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Cabinet Ministers and Members of the Government. Kia Orana to the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy and all Opposition Members, and to all the people of the Cook Islands listening in to our broadcast.

I now, give special greetings to the people of Araura from the three Members of Parliament of Araura Enuā.

This is a new year and there is a new way. At the start of our meeting the Reverend for our opening prayer took us into the Bible, reading about the building of the House of God. How King David accepted that it was not God's plan for him to build it and that his son Solomon is the one to build the temple of God.

This afternoon we are looking at the Bill before the House and this is the food basket of this nation and that is the marine resource. Last year we completed the Marae Moana Bill and today we have the Marine Resource which will be of benefit for our people. I support this Bill that is before us today.

I have some views that I would like to share regarding this Bill. The Prime Minister earlier asked me, what is happening on our island of Araura. I told him that last week we heard that a cyclone will come our way and then pass on to Samoa. I told the Prime Minister that the current rage in Araura is that there is plenty of 'taraoa' and I hope that Parliament will end this week. So, that I can go back and fish for the 'taraoa'. At the moment there is good fishing and the food crops are also abundant.

On our island these days there is not much *paua* in the lagoon. During the Pure Epetoma week this is what one of the members said in church because we know that the theme of the Pure Epetoma for the CICC Church is "go back to God and renew your vows".

He said to the people in church, that if you are wanting the goodness of the past to return then go back to God. He quoted verses from the Bible and he said Jesus said when praises go up, blessing comes down. That is the spirit of Araura today to thank God for the blessings.

We want the ocean of Araura to be like it used to be in the past as we are celebrating the coming of the Gospel to our island in 2021. That is our thinking and we believe that miracles will happen until the year 2021 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Gospel.

We support this Marine Resources Bill like what the Member Mona Ioane has said, we have discussed this matter. We are trying to get our youth from the school to be involved. Last year we talked about the schools getting involved in growing crops again because agriculture has not been taught in the schools these days and that is why we want our school children to be involved and for them to see how important marine resource is. We know it will be good for them and for the future.

I want to support the suggestion by the Honourable Member for Penrhyn for a possible increase in terms of salary for the workers on *Te Kukupā*. The word of God says when you do good things you will be rewarded. Before I end I would like to encourage all to support this Bill for the benefit of our own people in our nation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Wesley Kareroa you have the Floor.

MR W. KAREROA: Kia Orana to you Madam Speaker and also to our Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers of the Crown and also to all our Members of Parliament. Kia Orana also to all our Members on the Opposition side.

With your indulgence Madam Speaker, I would like to convey my greetings to the people in my constituency because this is a New Year.

Firstly, I would like to greet our Kavana because the Bill we are deliberating today will involve you. I also greet the three pillars on our island, the religious side and everyone on our island, I greet you all. I would also like to greet the people in my constituency.

I will now come back to the Marine Resource Bill that we are deliberating before the House today. I would like to commend those who organised our workshop to help us understand this Bill. We learned a lot from this workshop and the New Zealand High Commissioner delivered the opening remark.

Two points he raised which I very much like is about accountability and responsibility. And I connect these two points raised by the New Zealand High Commissioner to the Bill before us. I now want to talk about our Marine Restricted Area which is known as the Raui.

Our discussions in the workshop on this issue were quite complicated. We know that Raui is a traditional rule and when you break the ruling concerning the Raui, you will be fined according to the law. But that fine will only require you to pay about twenty cents according to the old law and this is not a heavy penalty because the law has not been reviewed.

When I compare our regulations on our Raui with the Bill that is before us today, I feel like asking the people responsible for this Bill to help us with the law concerning our Raui. Maybe the officers should take over the enforcement side of our Raui. So, I would like to give my full support to this Bill.

Secondly, I would like to talk about the zoning area because according to the map presented by the Marine Resources they begin from the high water mark which is close to land. The map does not show the reef area except from the land to the ocean. This is an area I consider to be a disadvantage especially when the Bill is passed the enforcers will be confused as to where zoning starts as there is no reef shown but start from land extending out to the ocean. These are minor issues which I am sure can be corrected.

Looking at this Bill we are deliberating on, at this late stage I came to understand that this Bill will work together with the Marae Moana Act. I can see there is a disadvantage and I believe the two should be used separately. So I will give a reason to show my support to the Bill because there are people waiting for the Bill to be passed as they have other works that can be done. Another thing they are waiting for the Bill to be passed concerning the Exclusive Economic Zone and once it is passed they will attempt to claim 200 kilometres over the Exclusive Economic Zone so we have a bigger ocean area. Madam Speaker those are my thoughts. Kia Orana.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I can see the Honourable Minister Kiriau Turepu. You have the Floor.

HON. K. TUREPU: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to you and all the staff of Parliament. Kia Orana to us on the government side, our Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers of the Crown, Members of Government. Also, to the Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Leader, and all Members of the Opposition. Kia Orana to our radio listeners both in the Southern and Northern Cook Islands.

Madam Speaker, a special greeting to my constituency, traditional leaders listening in to our radio, today Kia Orana in the Name of the Lord. Government workers and various religious denominations, Kia Orana. Condolences to the Noovao family in the village, may the blessing of the Lord be upon you during this time of grief.

Coming back to the Bill before the House today, Madam Speaker Part 1 of the Bill talks about Fisheries Conservation and Management. I can see that the objectives of the Ministry of Marine Resources are explained under that Part in what they are required to do in order to improve this part of our marine. We have heard about the Marae Moana Act, there is a Select Committee under this Act.

I believe this Bill is run under the Marae Moana Act. Also concerning the seabed mineral this is part of that Bill. These are two areas under the umbrella of the Marae Moana.

I will come back to the Marine Resources Bill. I understand there are only 247 square kilometres of our total land area but our ocean is 1.97 million square kilometres. When you compare these two figures the land one square kilometre we have about 7975 square kilometres of ocean.

I always ask myself this question looking at this small land mass that has brought us economically to this day, the ocean has given less to us in this country it is the land that has given us the most which is really a small land area. It is time for the ocean to give to our nation, we have to look at what this vast ocean can give to the country today.

As Minister of Environment, I was sent an email from Te Ipukarea Society that highlighted 37 issues of concern they raised within this Bill. Some of these concerns from Te Ipukarea Society were tabled by some Members who had spoken before. For example the power of the Secretary and the Minister are some of the concerns. I am sure these issues were raised at the workshop and the Committee had looked at it. I

did not make it to the workshop Madam Speaker because I was not invited. I always attend the workshops that are held here. That is okay, lots of people I believe attended the workshop.

I am happy that this Bill is before us in the House and I believe we can pass this Bill today. Madam Speaker, I am surprised it has taken us twelve years in the making from 2005 until today and now we are actually talking about it. What took it too long? I am happy that this Bill is before this House.

One thing I have looked at Madam Speaker is the benefit we had from fisheries because one of my friends worked and managed the fisheries in the Cook Islands and went to work for the South Pacific Commission. I have asked him this question how come we did not get this kind of money from the fisheries in the past and it is only now that we are seeing the benefit from the ocean.

I do not want to answer this question because I know today we are moving forward and the development that is going on I would rather look at the positive side of what is happening than look at what has happened in the past.

I was happy with what the Honourable Member of Parliament from Vaivaitau spoke about when he spoke about the impact of Rauī, the conservation of the traditional or old ways of fishing to be revived again.

I was also happy when he spoke about their Island Government being able to form their own rules and policies to govern themselves.

Back in the day on Rarotonga there used to be a Vaka Council that governs each Vaka and today we hear about the problems with Rauī where people just go and fish as they please even if this area is under Rauī.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am going to interrupt your debate but be sure that you will be first on the floor tomorrow. We have come to the end of our Session today and thank you very much for the wonderful contributions to the Floor. Can the Honourable Member please say our closing Prayer?

CLOSING PRAYER

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Parliament is adjourned until Tuesday 13 February at 1.00 p.m.

Sitting adjourned at 4.57 p.m.