



FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Hansard Report

49th Session

Fifth Meeting

Volume 5

THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 2019

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair at 1.00 p.m.

OPENING PRAYER

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER (T. TURA): Please be seated Honourable Members.

Kia Orana Honourable Members. I would like to offer my appreciation to the Assistant Minister for conducting our worship today. I truly believe this is the type of duties he is designed to do.

Greetings to our people listening over the radio, from the Southern Group Islands to the Northern Group Islands. To the three sectors; the Land, the Church and also Government. Greetings to you all.

Greetings to the Members of Parliament of our country, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, all Cabinet Ministers and all the Members of the Government. Greetings also to the Opposition, your Leader, your Deputy Leader and the Members of the Opposition. God bless us all.

To Madam Speaker and all your staff, greetings to you all.

It is now Question Time and this afternoon, Question time is for one hour. I see the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana Deputy Speaker. Kia Orana to all Honourable Members in this House. Greetings to every one of us this afternoon.

I rise to seek permission from the House for the absence of the Member of Parliament for Ruaau, William Heather. I believe a medical certificate has been presented to the Speaker but it is only proper that I seek an approval for him, not being able to be here this week.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Can you move a Motion for that please?

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I move:

That leave of absence be granted to the Honourable Member, William Heather

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call for a Secunder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member for Titikaveka, Selina Napa

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

We will now go to Question Time.

QUESTION TIME

I can see the Honourable Minister Vaine Mokoroa. You have the Floor.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Firstly, greetings to all us this afternoon. Greetings to the Opposition, to the Leader and all the Members on your side. All of us on this side, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and all the Members, greetings this afternoon.

Greetings to Madam Speaker, the Clerk and all the staff. To our Interpreters, who are doing a great job interpreting, greetings to you all this afternoon.

Deputy Speaker, I recall there was a question raised yesterday by the Member Tama Tuavera concerning the Warrant for the Police Volunteers. I was hoping for the Leader to move a Motion to excuse this question, but to answer to the question, I would like to request for the answer to be given tomorrow, as he is not in the House.

If there is just the two of us tomorrow, then I will talk to him. However, if the Sitting is on Monday then Monday it shall be.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

Now I can see the Honourable Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, the Honourable Henry Puna.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. Greetings to you and all the Members of this House today. Kia Orana.

Deputy Speaker, I rise to interrupt the Question Time pursuant to Standing Orders 87 and 88 to make an important Statement here in this House. It is not bad news. It is in fact excellent news and I have just received it from the right people.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, leave is granted.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Deputy Speaker.

Now some of us here in this House may have heard this good news. Cook Islands Red Cross Secretary-General, Fine Tuitupou Arnold was successfully elected yesterday in

Geneva, to the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The Standing Commission is the permanent statutory body of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the highest deliberative body of the Movement, between the meetings of the Council of Delegates and the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

This is a historic achievement, not only for our small nation but for the region and the people of the Pacific. I understand this is the first time a Pacific Islander has made it on to the Commission and Fine joins a small handful of women, to have successfully done so in a historically predominantly male forum.

We should all be proud of this achievement and in many ways, we feel that we have a special connection to this achievement through the previous work of Madam Speaker, who was Head of Cook Islands Red Cross.

I believe this is the culmination of two years of hard and earnest work by Fine and Cook Islands Red Cross, with their campaign supported by the diplomatic machinery of Government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration and others.

I know this outcome is the culmination of Fine's excellent credentials and experience, in International Humanitarian Law and Disaster Law and the work of our Cook Islands Red Cross community of recent years.

I also want to acknowledge here and place on record this outcome, as also standing on the excellent reputation and contributions of our Cook Islands Red Cross community over decades, to humanitarian efforts here at home and abroad including during your leadership Madam Speaker for many years in an era of predominantly volunteer effort by Cook Islands Red Cross.

I also want to place on record at this point in time that Red Cross Cook Islands has offered to step in and help with the fundraiser for Samoa tomorrow.

We extend our warmest congratulations to Fine and Cook Islands Red Cross and look forward to supporting in the coming months, the important work of Cook Islands Red Cross, including Fine as a member of this August Commission over the four-year term on the standing Commission. Kia Orana e Kia Manuia and thank you Deputy Speaker and Honourable Members.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. Now I see the Minister for Parliament the Honourable Rose Brown.

QUESTION TIME CONTINUES

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Deputy Speaker and greetings to all of us in this Honourable House.

I stand to reply to the question that was raised yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition. She asked about the definition of "sending messages" under Standing

Order 385. The English word is “shall” and our Maori word for it is, “kia”. In my discussion with the Clerk of Parliament, he advised me that the definition of the word “kia” covers the spectrum of the work we are doing today.

Our Sitting is being broadcasted to the outer islands and also to the rest of the world, over the internet (via livestream) and also to our islands that are able to catch the radio signal. Under the Standing Order, there is no defining factor of how the message or broadcasting is to be delivered but that; the message is transmitted or given out. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Member of Parliament from Tamarua, Honourable Tetangi Matapo.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker and greetings to us all. I stand to reply to the question that was asked by the Honourable Prime Minister on Tuesday. Even if the question is not appropriate, I think he should ask a question like, how is the place I am residing at, here on Rarotonga. Anyway, here is my explanation for the last trip I came to Rarotonga.

On Tuesday 29th of October, I came to Rarotonga because it was the only available seat on the plane to come for the Crimes Bill Select Committee meeting. Both myself and the Member of Oneroa needed to be here, he is on the PAC committee, but he gave me his seat on Tuesday and he stayed for the flight on Wednesday.

On the 1st of November the Crimes Bill Select Committee had the meeting. On the 3rd of November, we departed for Brisbane for the Women’s Parliamentary Meeting. On the 8th of November, I returned back to the Cook Islands from Brisbane. I was then told that the Crimes Bill Select Committee will be having another meeting on Monday the 11th. The meeting was held on the 11th, I was booked to go back to Mangaia on the 12th but during our meeting, there was phone call to say that we were having another meeting on the 12th of November. I was asked by the staff organising this meeting to remain therefore did not return on the 12th. Therefore Prime Minister, I want you to hear what I am saying, as you do not listen to what I am saying.

I told the lady responsible, if I had a return seat to Mangaia then I would stay. I was then able to get a seat on the 13th which is the date I returned to Mangaia. I want to remind the Honourable Prime Minister that there are three flights to Mangaia on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. However, today it has increased. So those are my explanations for my last trip to Rarotonga.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Tamarua, your ei is beautiful. I can see the Leader of the Opposition does not have any. I can see the Honourable Member for Teimurimotia, Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you very much Mr Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Parliament. In her speech yesterday, that did not though reach the end, she commended the assistance of Melanie Tuiravakai that came through the Pearl Project.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can you ask your question please?

MRS S. NAPA: So that the Minister will understand, I was explaining that Stan Walker went to Atiu through the funding from the Pearl Project. Can she explain exactly where this Pearl Project came from, whether it is from the Green Climate Change? If she can explain, before I pose my question?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Minister Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you. To answer the question from the Honourable Member, this is through the Adaptation Program managed by the Climate Change.

MRS S. NAPA: My supplementary question is; how did the Pearl Project happen to pay for the singer's fare? Did he meet the criteria under the Pearl Project for his fare to be paid to Atiu or is it part of the Green Climate fund and what is the reason for his travel to Atiu?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you for the Supplementary question. To answer this question, I just want to explain that this program will start in Atiu but will roll throughout the Cook Islands. The reason why we asked for him to come here is, this particular person is hard to bring here and there has to be a very good reason for him to just come over here, as he has a lot of work to do.

He has contributed to programmes like this, helping youth with suicidal risk tendencies and mental illness. He works in this field in New Zealand, educating and finding ways to assist the youth to better their lives and to stay away from thoughts of taking their own life. Through his work in this field, we found out that he has Atiuan linkages whereby we thought it be appropriate he starts in Atiu. We might all remember not too long ago, maybe about a year, a young person on Atiu took his own life. This therefore was our strong desire for this to be taken to Atiu in the hope that our youth do not take their own lives.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. Now I see the Honourable Member for Ngatangia, Tamaiva Tuavera and you have the Floor.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister Mokoroa. In our last Sitting of Parliament, I asked him a question regarding the old age pension payments. I feel there is some discrimination with this arrangement because, when you consider the categories of the 70 years and the 70 plus years, I feel they are the same.

I recall my friend sitting to my right made a presentation to this House which was a proposal to Parliament, a raft of payments to these pensioners. When you consider the 70 years and below they are collecting \$500 a month. The 70 years and over are collecting close to \$700 a month.

My question to you Honourable Minister is, why are these categories different and not combined so that all the old age pension benefits are the same?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. The Honourable Minister was going to answer your question yesterday but you were not in the House. He can do it now.

Honourable Minister Mokoroa you have the Floor.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. Kia Orana to our Member from Ngatangia. Thank you for your question yesterday and for your question today.

Your question yesterday was in regards to the delay of the warrant for the volunteer policemen of Takitumu. I have raised this matter with the Commissioner of Police and this is his reply. He withheld the renewal of the warrant for the voluntary policing because, there were three incidents in Takitumu that the Police Department can be taken to court for.

These incidents are still under review and investigations by the Police; it is by no means to stop the volunteer policing program in Takitumu. There is still ongoing discussion by the Commissioner to continue volunteer police program for Takitumu. He is also looking at the appointment of more fulltime Police Officers in Takitumu to increase the numbers of police in that district. At the same time, appoint some Supervisors to supervise the volunteer policemen. I hope you will be happy with that reply.

Never mind, I shall report to the Commissioner that you are not happy with the answer and he will reconsider this matter.

On the second question why the old age pensioners of 60 years category does not collect the same pension level as those 70 years of age? I would like to announce in the House today, over the last few months, the Internal Affairs Department worked closely with the UNICEF as well as consultants from South Africa.

The purpose of these consultations are to evaluate the social welfare system and programs in the Cook Islands. They are reviewing five areas; first is the old age pension, the child benefit, the grants for new mothers, the disabled payment and the old age pension.

In this review they are looking at how much is it costing the nation for these areas and the projection for the next 20 years. We all understand that in the New Year, we will be promoted to the “Developed Country” status. This report will serve to assist us in adjusting our benefit payments from next year and onwards.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, on my desk right now is a draft report. In January, these consultants will return to finalise the report seeing that this is a big report of over 90 pages. They will be having discussions and consultations with many Government agencies and as well with the Opposition Members, so the processes and proposals that is contained in the report are made known to all concerned.

As mentioned by the Member Tama Tuavera, our returning old age pensioners from New Zealand and Australia, are collecting close to \$1,400.00 and when we compare that to what our local old age pensioners, they are only collecting \$500.00 a month.

So the question here is; do we pay our local old age pensioners the same amount and whether the nation can afford to do so.

On top of this, our pensioners from New Zealand and Australia are collecting their medication from our local pharmacies with the same charged fee as our local pensioners. They are also asking for assistance from Internal Affairs for the old age pensioners. The question here is, whether we should allow the \$5,000 allocated to assist the local old age pensioners with their home access improvements be offered the same scheme to those that are collecting the old age pensions from New Zealand and Australia?

Deputy Speaker, there are many, many issues concerning our pension that needs to be reviewed and this report will serve to help us gauge our welfare system for the future. I have no doubt the proposal by the Honourable Member for Ngatangiia regarding the 60 years will be included in this report. The request here is to all Honourable Members, when these consultants from South Africa return in January next year, please make yourself available and put forth your submissions.

That is my answer for that question. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I see the Honourable Member for Vaipae-Vaipeka-Tautu. You have the Floor.

MR K. MANUELA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us this afternoon. My question is directed to the Honourable Minister Mokoroa. I heard from his report talking about pensioners and our children but I did not hear any report about widows/widowers. I remember at one of our previous Sittings I asked this question. I remember asking the question whether we have any allocation of welfare for our widows, under the age of 60 years. I did not hear any positive answer from him. What I heard him say was “we will look into it.” Please, can I have an answer for this?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Minister and he will assist with your question.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker.

Thank you Member for this question. I do remember in our last Sitting when this question was raised to ask for assistance from the Internal Affairs for our widows.

If you think that they are pretty, there are a lot of widowers in Nikao, give me their email and their address and I will contact them to contact these widowers.

Within the Ministry of Internal Affairs there is an allocation for the infirmary, destitute and hardship. I know there are some mothers who have been abandoned by their partners and they have 3 or 4 children with no permanent income. In fact, the partner of this lady is in prison. With an application made by the Government through the Internal Affairs, we were able to give some financial support to look after her children.

I do understand in New Zealand, there is welfare allocated for solo mothers and solo fathers. Our country does not have a strong foundation to offer financial assistance to our solo mothers and solo fathers. I believe, it is now the best time with the assistance of these consultants of review panels to diligently look into setting a foundation to care for our elderly widows or elderly widowers. The final decision though is made by our Minister of Finance.,

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I see the Honourable Member Nooroa Baker. You have the Floor.

MR N. BAKER: Thank you Deputy Speaker.

My question is directed to the Minister of Culture because yesterday, when the question was asked, it was asked to the Prime Minister and not to the Minister of Culture, concerning workers during the 50th anniversary celebration. The question is, which companies were paid and which companies were not paid? So, I would really like to know which companies were not paid. That is why I am asking this question to the Minister of Culture as he is the Minister today also whether he was the Minister during that period when this happened?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Honourable Minister George Angene.

HON. G. ANGENE: Kia Orana Deputy Speaker and Kia Orana to the Honourable Member from Akaoa.

In regards to this question, who were the companies that were paid and those who were not paid? I am not too sure about this but I do remember the question from the Member of Parliament from Ngatangia concerning payments for individuals that have worked.

Nevertheless, I will meet and speak with the Secretary of Culture and ask him who were the companies that were paid and those that were not paid and upon my return next week, I will let you know where we stand with this.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I see the Honourable Member Tetangi Matapo from Tamarua.

MRS T. MATAPO: Thank you Deputy Speaker.

I would like to direct my question to the Minister of ICI.

Yesterday, a question was asked about unpaid staff members who worked for Culture. Here is my humble question to the Minister. If the Minister can let us know, when will the accommodation cost for the workers that worked on the water project in Tamarua be paid? Also when will the people that cared for the Government workers, be paid? Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I see the Honourable Minister Tapaitau.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Kia Orana Deputy Speaker.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Kia Orana.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: This is a strange question. You are the Member for Tamarua. You should be following this up. I do not think it is proper to ask this question in here. Maybe it is best to come and see me in my office or with the Head of Department of ICI, Diane Puna. The way I have always answered this question is, all of you on the Opposition, if you need any issues addressed, come and see me. To this day, no one has been to see me. How am I supposed to address your issues if you do not come and see me? Do not approach me when I am eating or anywhere else, I do not want to see you then. We are mature and responsible therefore, we should come together and talk.

The question is, how long have you known about this and you did not come to see me? If it is a month, two months, three months, a year, you could have addressed this a week after you found out. I am a Minister who likes to grab the bull by the horns. I want to do my job properly and I do not like to see any problems in the portfolios I hold.

I am a Minister (of ICI) who works and I will do my work but if I do not know what problems you have, then I will not be able to help you with the problems you may have. So, come and see me and we will sort this out.

Before I take my seat, yes I would like to acknowledge that you are wearing beautiful head eis but I am not sure whether it is yet legal to wear them in here. Kia Orana.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

Now I can see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo.

MRS T. MATAPO: A Supplementary Question Deputy Speaker.

Thank you Minister for your answer.

Yes, I am the Honourable Member from Tamarua and it is only rightful that I follow-up whether the accommodation and the feed for the workers has been paid in the last six months. Deputy Speaker, the thought here is, maybe you the Minister is not talking with the Head of Ministry as there is continuous emailing to her. So herein is the question whether you are aware of the updates directed to your Head of Ministry from us?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Minister.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Thank you for your Supplementary Question. Was the question that whether I can see what is happening at ICI?

MRS T. MATAPO: I am referring to the correspondence that is coming through to ICI.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Okay. Easy answer. From you as a Member then to me as the Minister.

When you are a Minister you have staff running errands for you. Those queries should go to them but you should come to me so I will know that six months has lapsed and these issues has not been dealt with. When you come to me then I will talk to my workers as to what to do. Do not tell me that I do not know what is happening, I know what is happening. So it should be directed from you to me, as a Member of Parliament and as a Minister of the Crown. So, if this is appropriate for you, tell me. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I think you two can solve that problem at lunchtime. Now I see the Honourable Member from Ngatangia, Tamaiva Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. I am going back to the answer from the Honourable Vaine Mokoroa.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is that a supplementary question?

MR T. TUAVERA: Yes. The Warrants for the Volunteer Police expired in May, it was not terminated, but expired. We started to indicate the interest to renew the Warrants from then. However, the reply from the Minister was, he is reviewing this along with the Commissioner of Police, as there have been three incidents within Takitumu.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member you are right. Can you ask your question please?

MR T. TUAVERA: I ask my question with dread, six months have lapsed. This is the answer; just wait we are looking into this. This happened in May, when, as we are sick of waiting. Recently in our district, there has been two deaths due to a motor cycle accident therefore, maybe if there were Constables on the duty, they could have prevented these disasters by confiscating the motor cycles.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Minister Vaine Mokoroa you have the Floor.

HON. V. MOKOROA: I am not sure what the question is, what was the question?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, can you ask the question again.

MR T. TUAVERA: This is not a repeat question, the question is when exactly are these Warrants being renewed because this expired in May, it is now December and this is a celebration time for our youth.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. I thought it is more appropriate for me to answer this question because it really is a repetition of the question that was asked earlier.

The Minister was very clear in his response earlier on, that three incidents arising out of these group of people has occurred which might impose some liabilities on Government and the Police. That process Mr Deputy Speaker must be allowed for completion, so that we know exactly what the situation is. It would be wrong of the Police Commissioner to proceed to renew the Warrants, without knowing what the full implications of those actions might be, on the Police and also on this Government.

I would add that it would also be highly irresponsible of Takitumu to insist that something be done to renew those Warrants, while this question is still pending. So my request is, allow the process to take its course. If there are improvements in the appointments of these Volunteer Officers, then that needs to be identified and put into place. But we cannot and we should not go ahead and renew the Warrants while these issues are still outstanding. That is my official position as Head of this Government.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I see the Honourable Member Tamaiva Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: First of all thank you Prime Minister for your explanation. If we were given the reasons and explanation as to why we are not being given the warrants, then I will not stand today. Because this occurred in May and there never has been any correspondence why there was a stoppage. So thank you for your reply as we are now aware that due to the three incidents, this was then withheld. Thank you very much.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. Now I see the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Tina Browne. You have the Floor.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Before I ask my question, I would like to acknowledge our Interpreters and job well done. My only concern is, at our last Sitting, we had two women, but today there are only men but I understand that they have gone further up. This is what is good about our womenfolk, when they move they do not move sideways but upwards.

Yesterday I was happy with the reply that was given by the Honourable Prime Minister about the staff that was not paid at the Ministry of Culture. He has spoken to the Chief Executive Officer of Culture and I believe that the period has been shortened from a month to a week. This is just a phone call from the Prime Minister.

My question is; may I ask the Honourable Prime Minister to ring the Minister of Marine Resources to ask for the wages for Bill Marsters of Palmerston as he has not been paid since June. Maybe when you make the call, the payment will go through quickly.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I now see the Honourable Prime Minister Henry Puna.

HON. H. PUNA: Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for this very simple question. You are saying for me to ring the Minister. I have just finished talking to myself, so that is not a problem but the point here is this. If there are issues such as this and like the Minister beforehand have said, do not sit on it. We do not know everything and anything that is happening in our Ministries. You certainly do not have to wait to come here so people will hear you complaining about it, on air.

We are concerned about delays like this, because nobody deserves this and we certainly take a very hard line on officials that make things like this happen. I am happy with the question posed by the Member of Ngatangia and at the same time I gave a reply to him and that problem has been solved.

Here is the request for the Member from Tamarua, we have had an encounter at our Parliament concerning a similar incidence, which was about your bus. Here is the request; do not sit on these problems, come and see us. There we go, the bus has arrived and maybe that is the reason why you are wearing your ei because you are happy that the bus has arrived. This is one area that we can all work together. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I see the Minister of Corrective Services. You have the Floor.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker and all of us. I am a bit unsettled listening in this House with the talk about Culture whether people has been paid. I want to assure this House, that next week, the leftover four people that has not been paid, will be paid. Several times my name has been mention, I want to remind the Opposition that I was not the Minister of Culture then. The Minister at the time was Teariki Heather during 2015. His Secretary was Sonny Williams, our Interpreter.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, thank you for that. I would like to remind all Members of this Parliament that we are not to mention names for those people outside of this Parliament. Thank you very much we have come to end of our Question Time.

PAPERS FOR CONSIDERATION

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Paper 18: Remuneration Tribunal Queen's Representative and Members of Parliament Salaries and Allowances Order 2019 Serial No. 2019/01.

If there are no speakers, then the Paper is received.

I see the Honourable Member for Matavera, Vaitoti Tupa. You have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much Deputy Speaker. I rise to give my full support to this Remuneration Order. My request though this afternoon is, there the arrangements has been proposed for us by the Queens Representative. I have a request to the Minister of Finance, which I know will be a benefit to all Honourable Members and our Constituencies. Minister of Finance, I am referring to the allocation for the

Constituency Funds, as I believe that all of Members of Parliament in this House benefit from these funds and also serve to assist our people within our constituency.

I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for the increments to this funding. However, I still believe that it is still not quite enough. That is the reason I mention of the constituency funds which we all know that we collect to the amount of \$10,000 annually. The good thing about this fund is, it goes directly to our people. I have looked at the allocation grants for Members of Parliament in other pacific countries.

I thank the Speaker and Clerk for giving me the opportunity to travel on Parliamentary meetings overseas which gave me the opportunity to learn about their arrangements for constituency funds. To shorten my talk this afternoon, I want us to support the passing of this, during our time. Maybe the Minister of Finance should look into increasing this funding, but not too much. I am asking to consider not too much, just adequate to assist our people maybe about \$50,000 to under \$100,000 as these funds are not for the benefit of the Members of Parliament, but our own people.

I believe through this funding we will be able to complete what we intend to accomplish in our own constituency. These funds we know are transparent because it is not coming straight into our pockets but it is going straight to our people. A small example to mention today is, it is difficult for me to trim the trees in my constituency before the cyclone season. However, I have reached deep into my pockets to assist with this task.

These are my thoughts but I will leave it to the Minister of Finance to consider the right time to address this proposal, through this House. Mr Deputy Speaker, in doing so, I give my strong support to this Paper.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. Now I see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker.

I move:

That Paper No.18 be received

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I seek for a Seconder?

Seconded by Honourable Minister, Vaine Mokoroa

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 19: Infrastructure Regulations 2019 Serial No. 2029/02

If there are no speakers, I will call the Minister. I can see the Honourable Member for Teimurimotia, Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. I would like to give my thoughts on this Paper 19 in regards to the Infrastructure and the Infrastructure Managers. I consider ICI a very crucial part for our society especially on the island of Rarotonga as there are a lot of assistance required in our villages.

To specify whether, we should be making our request to the Infrastructure Manager, Head of Ministry, or to the Minister. Concerning an urgent job that is required to be carried out in the villages, the request here is to deal with this quickly as we will not just randomly make the request to the ICI, unless there is an urgency for a job to be completed. This especially is, with trimming trees in our villages as well as the bridges, where the foundation has been swept away by the floods.

If the responsibilities of the Infrastructure Managers involve, going around the islands to inspect the damages to the roads and the bridges whereby there is a need for us to ring them. At times when you bypass the people that are responsible for this area, they are not too happy. I follow the right channel of communication and start from the workers, to the Managers and if there is no success, the final step is the Minister responsible.

I have noticed the big work conducted on our main roads and our bridges. My main concern is the state of our crossroads as some are in very bad conditions whereby it is difficult for residents to get home. I have contacted Infrastructure, concerning the banks on some of the bridges in the backroads, have been eroded away by the floods. The response and excuses includes, not enough man power, no machineries or simply not enough funds.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am going to interrupt you Honourable Member. Our break time is upon us. We will suspend our Sitting until 3:00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 2:30 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.00 p.m.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: May you all be seated.

Parliament is now resumed.

Before we took a break, the Honourable Member of Parliament from Titikaveka, Selina Napa had the Floor. You now have the Floor.

MRS S. NAPA: I will go come back to the issue about the Infrastructure Managers, in particular the roles and responsibilities they have in developing and maintaining very important sectors of our society here on Rarotonga and the islands.

Under the Code of Practices, there are regulations and stipulations on the standard of work to be done. This should be clarified promptly for those who require work and development on their roads to ensure they comply with these. Not just some of them...

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would like to interrupt you Honourable Member.

At this point, there is no provision to debate the Papers before the House Numbered 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 25. So I beg your patience that this has been clarified now.

However, the Ministers for each of these Papers are required to stand, to move a Motion that these Papers be received.

So for now we are going to Paper No. 19: Infrastructure Regulations 2019, Serial No. 2019/02.

I call the Minister.

HON. R. TAPAITAU: Thank you Deputy Speaker.

I move:

That Paper No.19 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Minister, Vaine Mokoroa

I put the Question:

That Paper No.19 be received?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 20: Remuneration Tribunal Queen's Representative and Members of Parliament Salaries and Allowances Amendment Order 2019, Serial No. 2019/03.

I call upon the Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: I move:

That Paper No.20 be received

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka

I put the Question:

That Paper No.20 be received?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 21: Welfare Benefits and Pension Rates Amendment Order 2019, Serial No. 2019/04.

I call the Minister.

HON. V. MOKOROA: Thank you Deputy Speaker. Before I move a Motion, I want to make a short explanation.

The intention here is to increase the allocation for the pensioners seventy years and over from \$660 to \$700. This is surely a beautiful and just avenue for the Government, for our elderlies. On top of this, a bonus of \$50 will be paid for our pensioners 60 years of age, for this month. This is a way for the Government to bid Christmas greetings to the elderly at this time of the year.

Therefore, I move:

That Paper No.21 be received

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I call for a Secunder.

Seconded by the Honourable Minister, Rose Brown

I put the Question:

That the Paper be received?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 22: Employment Relations Minimum Rate of Pay Regulations 2019, Serial No. 2019/05.

I call upon the Minister.

HON. V. MOKOROA: I rise to indicate that the reasoning for this is to increase the wage from \$7.60 to \$8 and this increase will commence on the 1st of July 2020. This level in comparison across the Pacific region. The countries that have high minimum wage are Australia followed by New Zealand and followed by the Cook Islands. Therefore, we should be celebrating this level that has been attained by our small country.

I move:

That this Paper be received

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I call for a Secunder?

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana

I put the Question:

That the Paper be received?**Motion agreed to**

Paper No. 23: Seabed Minerals Act Commencement Order 2019, Serial No. 2019/06.

I call upon the Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker.

I move:

That Paper No.23 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. Can I call for a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Minister, Rose Brown

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?**Motion agreed to**

Paper No. 24: Seabed Minerals Transitional Provisions Regulations 2019, Serial No. 2019/07.

I see the Honourable Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker.

I move:

That Paper No.24 be received

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

Can I call for a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana

I put the Question:

That the Paper be received?**Motion agreed to**

Paper No. 25: Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Asian Development Bank Order 2019, Serial No. 2019/08.

I call upon the Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker.

I move:

That Paper No.25 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 26: The Annual Report of the Financial Supervisory Commission on the Cook Islands 2018/2019.

Are there any Speakers on this Paper? I call upon the Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker.

I move:

That Paper No.26 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana

I put the Question:

That the Paper be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 27 (b): The Annual Report of the Ombudsman Te Mato Akamoeau for Period 2018-2019.

I call upon the Minister.

HON. V. MOKOROA: I move:

That this Paper be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can I call for a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 28: Companies Act Commencement Order 2019 Serial No. 2019/09.

I call upon the Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker.

I move:

That Paper No.28 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka

I put the Question:

That the Paper be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 29: Companies Regulations 2019 Serial No. 2019/10.

I call upon the Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Paper No.29 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka

I put the Question:

That the Paper be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 30: Income Tax Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information Amendment Regulations 2019 Serial No. 2019/11.

I call upon the Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Paper No.30 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana

I put the Question:

That the Paper be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 31: Personal Properties Securities Regulations 2019 Serial No.2019/12

I call upon the Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Paper No.31 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister.

I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka

I put the Question:

That this Paper be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 32: Incorporated Societies Regulations 2019 Serial No.2019/13

I call upon the Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Paper No.32 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka

I put the Question:

That the Paper be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Paper No. 33: Personal Properties Securities Act Commencement Order 2019 Serial No. 2019/14

I call upon the Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Paper No.33 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka

I put the Question:

That the Paper be adopted?**Motion agreed to**

Paper No. 34: Incorporated Societies Amendment Act Commencement Order 2019 Serial No.2019/15

I call upon the Minister.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Paper No.34 be received

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka

I put the Question:

That the Paper be adopted?**Motion agreed to**

Paper No. 35: Ministry of Education Statistics Report for the Period 2018-2019

I call upon the Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Paper No.35 be adopted

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. I call for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable, Tingika Elikana

I put the Question:

That the Paper be adopted?

Motion agreed to

Thank you Honourable Members we have gone through all the Papers and that is the end of the Presentation of Papers.

Now we are going to Private Members Business and I would like to call upon the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Tina Browne to make your Maiden Speech.

My apologies Honourable Leader of the Opposition, it should be the Honourable Agnes Armstrong, it is just a typo error.

MRS A. ARMSTRONG: *Te vaine o te turuki 'au
Te ra oa o 'avini
Te 'avini o te ati po
Te 'avini o te ati ao
Te 'avini turia e te 'anuanua
Rurua metua e nee
Tei anau ia revareva
Tei pu ake ia nga ivi e rua
O ngariki i maru~ei
Na kora ra e au tariki
Kai ai to vainga pu
Nga taringa 'anu, naku te tara
E 'akarongo
Ie-ko-ko*

Tangi Ke, Tangi Ke, Tangi ke rava. Greetings to all my people of Ivirua; to our Kavana Papa Teti and Papa Raki and your wives Mama Ra and Mama Topa, greetings. To our Reverend Papa Maa and your wife Mama Taro. To the Assistant Reverend Papa Rere and Mama Marian, greetings.

To our Ui Rangatira and the two Council Members, greetings. Our little children to our youth. Our people living between the boundaries of Karanga to Matie Kura, Kia Orana to you all in the Name of the Lord.

To all our people living on the Island of Auau, Kia Orana to you all.

Greetings Deputy Speaker, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and all Honourable Members in this House. All those in the Public Gallery and all the staff and workers in the House and to all our people listening in to this broadcast, Kia Orana.

I stand here as a proud Cook Islander; a humble daughter, wife, sister, mother, grandmother, aunt and a friend to many. It is various experiences from these important

roles in my life, that I bring to this new responsibility, as the Member of Parliament for the people of Ivirua. I thank the people of Ivirua for having the faith in me; to be their voice in Parliament, to represent, promote and safeguard their best interest at all times.

As their Member of Parliament, their concerns, their worries and their struggles are mine. Together, we are working for the betterment of the people of Ivirua, Mangaia and the Cook Islands. I believe what is good for the people of Ivirua, has to be good for the Cook Islands despite the separation by our Moana-Nui-o-Kiva. We are and always will be, one people who have much common ground.

I count the many blessings and give praise to our Heavenly Father for His Guiding Hands in this wonderful opportunity given, to serve our people. I would also like to acknowledge those *tane toa* who served before me. I pay homage to a pioneer of Politicians from Mangaia; the late Papa Aberahama Pokino, his son the late Papamama Pokino, my husband and best friend, the late Anthony Armstrong. The former Prime Minister Jim Marurai who lives in his home village of Ivirua, I extend sincere Greetings.

I follow in the footsteps of their combine legacy, conscious that I have a huge responsibility. I am determined to walk firmly and steadily many steps in the pathway that these men have cleared. There will be times when I need to take a deep breath, gather strength and forge new paths for the betterment of my people in Ivirua, in Mangaia and of course our beloved country.

These challenges I will rise to meet, secure in the knowledge that I have the support of my Ivirua constituency, that the Democratic Party has a strong forth thinking team and my family and friends will always be there to give me the support and advise I may need.

I would like to thank my family, my siblings, my dear friends near and far along with those in the wider community for their support and encouragements. I acknowledge my late parents, Malcolm and Vainenooroa Sword. I am the second of their eight children. Dad was of European and Fijian descent and mum hailed from Mangaia and Atiu.

The values my parents instilled in all their children have served us well. Hard work is honest work. Everyone working together will get better results. I have lived all my life here in this wonderful nation of ours. I am truly appreciative of the nurturing way and ease of our island lifestyle. A lifestyle that we must protect for our grandchildren and future generations.

Tony and I have four children and two grandchildren. I would like to think that we have instilled in them those same values my parents instilled in my siblings and I. Tony and I always worked hard, very hard and we worked two jobs each while raising our young family. It was not easy with bills and mortgages to meet. We all had to pull our weight to make ends meet. Even our children made their contribution and sacrifices and I acknowledge them today with unconditional love.

I am grateful for the great life we shared. Not a day goes by when I do not miss my Tony. I will never let him down in my role as Member of Parliament for Ivirua. I will

always uphold the values he held dear to his heart. Honesty, integrity, loyalty and respect. These are the values that we have always treasured and shared. These values will also serve to steward and shape my term as Member of Parliament for Ivirua.

I attended Nikao Side School and Tereora College, leaving after Sixth Form, to work in the family business, which centred around rental cars, accommodation, transport and cartage. It was during this time that I joined Air New Zealand, reaching the pinnacle of my 29 years career, as Airport Manager before retiring in 2006.

After leaving Air New Zealand, I joined Tony and our daughter Helena as Manager of our freight forwarding business. Together, we further diversified the family business, venturing into fishing and in 2016, established Karanga Orchards in Ivirua.

As a keen volunteer I have served on a number of school committees. I am a current member of the Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce and the Ipukarea Society. I believe in giving back to the wider community and am very supportive of a number of community activities, welfare and educational incentives, initiatives and other charitable organisations.

While completing the projects that Tony started and endeavouring to implement those that he had planned...

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will interrupt you Honourable Member.

MRS S. NAPA: Deputy Speaker, I rise to move:

That unlimited extension of time be granted to the Honourable Agnes Armstrong so she can finish her maiden speech

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I call for a Secunder?

Seconded by the Honourable Prime Minister, Henry Puna

Honourable Member, you are given an extended time of ten minutes.

MRS A. ARMSTRONG: Thank you.

While completing the projects that Tony started and endeavouring to implement those that he had planned are a priority, I also have my own visions and aspirations.

Projects that focus around family wellbeing, jobs and educational opportunities for our people young and old. I am a firm believer that you can teach our more mature people new skills. This is what keeps us active and engaged as a community.

Based on my long private sector experience, I believe there is a distinct lack of a level playing field, when it comes to business in the Cook Islands. In my opinion, the private sector is essentially monopoly driven with a few controlling the bulk of business here. I believe it is the role of Government to monitor this, to ensure that small businesses

are not excluded and have a fair chance at survival. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. The growth and survival of small businesses should be nurtured, encouraged and safeguarded.

Monopolies are not a good thing as this stifles growth for small businesses and their livelihoods are at the mercy of these big companies. Governments are supposed to look after all of its citizens; be fair, assist wherever possible and not go into competition with the private sector. As they fund Government with their hard-earned tax dollars. It is Government's responsibility to ensure that no one is left behind and that our people are our priority.

The voice of Ivirua will be my voice. Their needs are very much my concern and like all thriving families and businesses, we need to work together to achieve good outcomes. By "together", I mean everyone in this House; the Island Councils, Government departments and beyond.

Providing clean water for people is in the best interest of everybody. Providing employment for all those able and wanting to work is in the best interest of everyone. Keeping our youth focused, active and engaged is in the best interest of everyone. Having activities for our more senior citizens and caring for their welfare is in the best interest of everyone.

The provision for accessible health care is in the best interest of everyone. Accentuating tourism and agricultural efforts is in the best interest of everyone.

Preserving our heritage sites and our marine life and oceans is in the best interest of everyone. Sustainable fishing and taking greater care of our environment is in the best interest of everyone. Finding effective solutions to better manage our various waste streams and improving our recycling efforts is in the best interest of everyone.

As a small island nation, we all need to work together collectively for the benefit of our people and our nation.

I am optimistic that during my time in Parliament I will witness more evidence of progress towards the concept of, "in the best interest of everyone" and less of "in the best interest of someone or some people" in the work that we do here.

I believe it is an absolute privilege to be a Member of this Parliament. Each Member should be committed to carrying out their duties with integrity, humility, dignity, honesty and kindness. Our morals and ethics and the way we conduct our lives should set an example. If we truly believe in democracy, we should be inspiring younger generations to follow in our footsteps to want to be part of a Parliament and a Government that leads by example.

I believe Members should not be here merely to advance their own ambitions and interests and possibly those of their supporters, but to enhance the interests, ambitions and welfare of all Cook Islanders. I aspire to be a part of a Parliament that is true to itself and all its people.

This quote by an anonymous author resonates with me:

“Don’t worry so much about your self-esteem, worry more about your character, integrity is its own reward”.

Tangike, tangike, tangike rava. Kua matau oki tatou.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I am sure my son-in-law and daughter are moved by your Maiden Speech. Now, I call upon the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Tina Pupuke Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Kia Orana Mr Deputy Speaker. To the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament on the Government side, Independent, the Members on the Opposition, Kia Orana to all of us in the name of our Lord.

To the Queen’s Representative Sir Tom Marsters and your good wife. if you are listening in. To the President of the Are Ariki and the Members of your House, to the President of the Koutu Nui, Tearea Mataiapo, to the President of the Religious Advisory Council and your good wife, greetings to all of us in the mighty name of our Lord.

I will also like to greet my own people of Rakahanga, Tapuahua. The Leaders and Elders of the three Religious sectors on Rakahanga, your Ekalesia, greetings in the name of our God. To the Mayor and your spouse, Council Members, greetings also to all of you in the name of our dear Lord.

To the Government Representative and all the workers on the island of Tapuahua, greetings in the name of our Lord. To all the community groups on the island; to the Boys Brigade, Girl Guides, Brownies, the Women’s Groups, the Youth Associations, Kia Orana to all of you.

Greetings to all our people, menfolk, womenfolk, to the elderly, to the youth and to our children. Those who are unwell, greetings to all of you as well. I send to you my love, for placing your trust in me.

I stand before you all in this House today, as the proud representative of Constituency Rakahanga. The daughter of a man also dedicated to the people of the Cook Islands and especially the people of Rakahanga, Sir Pupuke Robati. I share with him our family tradition of love and service to our people.

I stand before you as a hard working business person contributing to our community and our economic future. I stand before you as a proud Member of the Democratic Party, committed to our principles of fairness and inclusion but mostly I stand before you, humbled with the honour bestowed on me by God, our people and my Party as the Leader of the Democratic Party and a Member of this Parliament.

I am excited to be able to take my place with you to ensure a strong future for our country. Our democratic process has brought us all here to this Parliament, to plan, debate and determine the future of the Cook Islands. It is inspiring and often a daunting mission with huge responsibilities and I know that I share an understanding of the importance of our role with all the Members in this House.

For me as a new Member, but one who has been involved in politics in one form or another all my life, I shall be guided by the voices of our people and by the principles of my Party, a fair system, a fair chance, a fair future and a fair deal. We shall work together as a Party both in and out of Parliament to ensure that those principles of fairness for our people and our country are achieved. This is an ethos that has underscored my personal and business life throughout my life.

I was taught that service to our people was the highest form of patriotism and that giving back to our family and our community was necessary, in fact not necessary, essential to living a good life. I aspire to live by these lessons laid down by my father and to lead our team in the same way.

The Democratic Party represents the largest number of Cook Islands voices, so we shall listen to our people and work to ensure their will and their best future.

As a woman, I am proud to represent my sisters and to add the unique perspective of women on the Floor of this House. As a dedicated and proud wife and mother, I know the challenges of running a household and a business, making sure that everyone is fed, dressed, educated and happy while also being the best I can be for my clients. The strength that women bring to any society is the huge capacity for multi-tasking and dedication to make it all happen in sync and with empathy.

This is not just a one off specialty, but a skill that we and our mothers and grandmothers and all women before us have been doing since the first man threw down some fish, looked to his wife to make something of it for dinner, which she naturally did while also wrangling the children and advising him on how he could extend the hut and bring home more fish in the future.

MR T. ELIKANA: Point of Order.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your Point of Order?

MR T. ELIKANA: Standing Order 159 Deputy Speaker, that the Member is reading from her speech, it is clear she is reading from her speech, she can have some speaking notes and refer to it but definitely not be reading from her speech.

Thank you. Can I ask the Honourable Member to refrain from that and continue your speech please?

MRS S. NAPA: Why didn't you Point of Order before?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may continue Honourable Member.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you. I want to join with my female colleagues in Parliament to bring that spirit; I am not reading from my message here. The spirit of Vaine Toa. To fight for all Cook Islanders; men, women and children just as we have always done in our villages and in our families.

Empowering our people can only help our country achieve more and from a purely selfish point of view, I want to create a strong economic base, to give to our country, to give to our children so they have reasons to come home after they have been educated, to contribute to a strong future for the Cook Islands. We know that every parent wants for their children to live like them and how much stronger will we be as a nation, when we have educated, energetic and dedicated young Cook Islanders taking their place in our society.

I have spent most of my life engaged in sport, particularly netball and that love of competition, the outdoors and activities has led me naturally to a dedication to health as well.

My father dedicated his life to the health of this nation and now more than ever, we need to re-double our efforts of creating opportunities for our people to live their best and longest life. We die too young and often unnecessarily here in our country. This seems to fly in the face of logic. We do not have issues of pollution or the difficult stresses that affect large populations. In the main, we have very strong family units supporting us and we spend much of our time outdoors in the fresh air. So what is it that is causing us to lose loved ones too early? I think it is our food and lifestyle.

I know that this has been recognised by others and is being addressed but I am passionately committed to seeing positive change in the health of our people and see it as a major priority for both myself and my Party, the Democratic Party. Good food prepared well, exercise at all ages to ensure continued health and care, but also through education and returning to our traditional ways of eating and working.

No, I do not mean to dispense with our cars, tractors and modern appliances but now and then to get up off our seats, even in this House and engage in a bit of exercise. Throw out the unhealthy foods and eat local and fresh as it is good for us and money for the farmers.

As Members of Parliament, we have such a responsibility to lead by example in all areas of our lives. There is a way in which we can show that first step towards healthy eating, exercising and living our best life. Maybe as a starter we Parliamentarians should establish a healthy eating habit.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have to please.

MRS S. NAPA: Deputy Speaker, I rise to move:

That unlimited speaking time be granted to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Tina Browne to enable her to finish her Maiden Speech

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I call for a Secunder.

MR T. ELIKANA: I second the Motion so she can carry on with her propaganda for the Democratic Party.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tingika Elikana

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: No more cakes.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You may continue Honourable Member.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Maybe during our afternoon teas, I know we just had afternoon tea, no more cakes, no white bread and no pancakes. (*Noise heard in the background*).

I am just so happy with the reaction. Suddenly everybody is listening to me.

It is true that we need to show our dedication with improving the health of our country and leading by example is also true of our need to be transparent. In all of our dealings, whether personal or in this Parliament, accountability is paramount. It is paramount to good governance and a good Government. We the Opposition will be asking the hard questions to the Government of the day as willed by my Democratic Party colleagues. We will continue to fight corruption and poor governance in Parliament and in Government. We will be the watchdog of all activities, as it is our role as the Opposition.

The law is fundamental to my life and I intend to ensure that it is respected and in turn means, our people are respected. I must say that respect for each other is something that is missing in this Parliament. We need to remind ourselves, if we do not respect others, all we are doing is bringing shame to our parents who I am certain taught each and every one of us to respect each other.

Respect is a principle that has been somewhat subsumed by modern life and somewhat crueller modern world led from elements across the globe, that is still having their effect on our wonderful homeland. I want to change that if I can, so that we ignore the ugly notions espoused in other parts of this world and instead, return to our traditional views of respect for our traditions, for our elders, for our Rule of Law, for our Ipukarea and for each other.

Our elderly must be protected by law and financially by the State and we should all be dedicated to making sure that no elderly in the Cook Islands dies in poverty or alone.

Our culture is precious and fragile but we should ensure its continuation for future generations, by supporting communities and upholders of those traditions so that we

remain a viable living culture, which is not just available for our visitors to enjoy at an island night. We are so much more than that.

We live in paradise and a glorious natural environment surrounded by our Marae Moana but again we know that our environment is fragile, has continued stresses on it with climate change, visitation, agriculture and the needs of a modern society. We must be dedicated to the preservation and, in some cases, rehabilitation of our lands and our ocean for our future.

I decided to stand as Leader of the Democratic Party because I wanted to play my part in our future. I was inspired by what has happened or been achieved in the past and excited by what could be achieved in the future. I carry this inspiration and excitement with me every day and dedicate myself to serving my people of Tapuahua, the Cook Islands and this Parliament to the very best of my abilities for as long as I am able to.

Thank you very much to my wonderful husband and children for supporting me with this ambition. I acknowledge those that have passed on, but were a huge influence in my life. My father, my mother Taiti Marekino, my other father; I had two fathers, Papa Marekino is one of them and my in-laws Pare and Kurai Browne. Meitaki maata also to my sister in Aitutaki who is listening to this broadcast, Moyra McBirney and my brother-in-law Andrew and to all my sisters and brothers and there are many of us. A very special thank you very much to my kopu tangata in Tapuahua who have been my rock in the last two years.

Finally, a very big thank you very much to my Party, the Democratic Party for having faith in me and returning me as the Leader at our recent Party Conference. I shall work every day to ensure that I am worthy of that love and faith.

May God give me the strength to achieve my dreams for a strong sustainable future for our country and our people and may God bless the Cook Islands. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member as you did not miss one of your papers. I sympathise with the Honourable Agnes; maybe that missing document is with her friend sitting to her left.

I can see the Honourable Member Tingika Elikana. You have the Floor.

MR T. ELIKANA: Mr Deputy Speaker, as you recall on Monday, we tried to seek leave from this Honourable Parliament following some issues raised which necessitated what I am just about to do and with that Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to move:

That so much of Standing Orders 260 and 261 be suspended so as to allow the Crimes Bill Select Committee an extension of time and to report within six months from the date on which this House grants the extension

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

I look for a Seconder.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Patrick Arioka

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

We resume Government business on the interrupted debate by adjournment of the Ministry of Corrective Services Bill, yesterday afternoon.

The Floor is open.

I see the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Brown.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Deputy Speaker. I rise to give some comments on this Bill before the House.

Before I put forward to this House the things that I needed to talk about on this Bill, I would like to say Happy Birthday to one of the gentleman elder from my tapere, Papa Maeva Karati at it is his 83rd birthday today. Yes, this is the original tough guy from when we were at school. So, I would just like to pass on to him our regards from everybody in the village, I know from the family as well, for those living overseas and those who are here, for him to have a very happy birthday today. We look forward to many more to come.

If I may refer back to our Bill that is before us Mr Deputy Speaker. I think it is very timely that this move made by the Government to separate Corrective Services from the Ministry of Justice is being undertaken. Those of us will recall back in 1996 during the economic reform period, a number of Government agencies at the time were joined together, to try and reduce costs that were on the Government. At that time, the Prison Services and the Corrective Services were a separate stand-alone department. I think 25 years later Mr Deputy Speaker, we have seen the growth of work that is involved within the Ministry of Justice particularly in the area of the land and also in the area of business and company registration.

All too often the, Corrective Services was the poor cousin of these divisions of the Ministry of Justice and for a number of years, was neglected. So it is timely now that we are seeing a lot more effort going into the Ministry of Justice, to upgrade land records and to upgrade as we see, the recent opening of the on-line Business Registry, that we looked into establishing a stand-alone Department for the Corrective Services.

So, I fully support this move that is being proposed and furthermore, I must congratulate the Minister responsible. This Minister of Corrective Services Mr Deputy Speaker, is to be commended because this is a person that knows the Corrective Services Department inside and out. Nobody can get away with any tricks at that place because the Minister is very experienced.

Furthermore, I would like to congratulate the Minister because this will be the first law under his authority that will be passed before this House.

Already Mr Deputy Speaker, we are starting to see the changes taking place in our Prison Service with the upgrades of the buildings and the infrastructure. The recent tragedy that occurred when a prisoner escaped a couple of years ago, has also led to changes in the way the Prison is operated and managed. But at the end of the day Mr Deputy Speaker, we are talking about people and the aim of the Corrective Services is to rehabilitate our people. Not just those in the Prison but also those that are on Probation; the intention being that once they have done their time, they are able to contribute to our society. What better example do we have of rehabilitation Mr Deputy Speaker, than our current Minister for Corrective Services.

I take my hat off for this man who has gone from the lowest of positions in our country, to work his way up to now become a Minister of the Crown, to win his seat in Parliament with the biggest majority for any Member of Parliament. A true story Mr Deputy Speaker of, rehabilitation gone right.

So I stand Mr Deputy Speaker, to give my full support and commendation to this Bill and look forward to its passage through Parliament. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. Now I see the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Tina Browne.

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Firstly, I would like to give my words of comfort to the family in Matavera, to Tai and Rupe for the passing of Papa Nito. I want to tell this House that I have a long relationship with this gentleman both as a friend and also his lawyer. So I would like to give my words of comfort to Tai and Rupe as we wait for his funeral arrangements.

Secondly, I have seen the Director of Corrective Services visiting the House in the past days but I do not see him here today. Maybe through the Minister, to convey my words of thanks because he joined us in the workshop last week, to present the Corrective Services Bill. He was accompanied by Catherine Evans from Crown Law to shed some light and ensure we understand what is going on.

I just want to give my thoughts on this, as some of us have given their views on this Bill. I understand the intention of this Bill. Yesterday, you mentioned that you were appointed as Minister on 9th of July 2018.

In our Budget Sitting in June, we discussed the Budget appropriation, for Corrective Services. I understand the plans during that time was, to separate the Corrective Services from the Ministry of Justice.

We understand the history of this department under the Prison Act, started under the Ministry of Justice, then assigned with the Corrective Services, reassigned to the Ministry of Justice and now reassigned back to the Corrective Services.

I am satisfied with what is being done because I have read of some work that has been done and if only this Bill had been passed then, the Warrants that you have signed for

the release would have been validated. For that reason, I want the work done in the Corrective Service as legal, therefore I support the Bill. Furthermore, the date of commencement should date back to 1st of July 2019.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I will now interrupt you. Leader of the House.

MR T. ELIKANA: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to move:

That Standing Order 54 (3) be suspended to allow Parliament to adjourn at 5.00 p.m. today, Thursday, 12 December 2019 and Parliament to reconvene on Monday, 16 December 2019 at 1.00 p.m. for the purpose of enabling the Members of Parliament to attend the National Prayer Service and the National fund raising event for the Samoa measles tragedy

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. Can I call for a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable Prime Minister, Henry Puna

Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Very briefly Deputy Speaker. I know you are anxious to get home. I want to thank the Honourable Members of this House, for supporting the Motion when I had approached them the other day, to ask that we agree to adjourn Parliament until Monday, so we can be part of the National efforts tomorrow morning and afternoon. It will be so nice if we can turn up tomorrow in our usual black and white or black or white and with the ladies wearing their beautiful head eis. I am sure if we did that, it will give credence to the comments from the Leader of the Opposition, that we need to be shining examples for our people.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Parliament is now adjourned. I expect to see all of you at the Church Service at 10.00 a.m. tomorrow.

CLOSING PRAYER

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Parliament is now adjourned until 1.00 p.m. on Monday morning.

Sitting adjourned at 4.59 p.m.