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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.

Thank you to our Chaplin this afternoon for the wonderful message for us before we begin the day.

Kia Orana to all Honourable Members in the House this afternoon. I am always happy including the staff members of this House to welcome you all to this Honourable House. This is a beautiful day for us and there is no rain, therefore I believe our business in the House will also be wonderful.

I do not have many announcements today except I know the Clerk is listening to the meeting as we sit today, as a message I got from him yesterday that he was listening so I would like on your behalf to extend our greetings and warm Kia Orana to the Clerk as he listens in to our meeting today from home.

To all the remaining people of the Cook Islands in the Outer Islands and here in Tumutevarovaro, we say Kia Orana to you all this afternoon.

Today also, I see the Secretary of Marine Ben Ponia and Myra Moekaa who are not strangers to us where the Maritime Resources Bill is concerned as we had their attention or they had our attention last week in our workshop, welcome. We very much appreciated your work on these Bills as expressed by the Members of Parliament yesterday in our sitting.

May I please ask that the Standing Orders Committee Members, if you can please remain for a meeting tomorrow afternoon to go over the Standing Orders review that we have completed for your further direction and where we go from there - please.

We are now going to Question Time and may I just say that please use the half an hour as well as you can and yesterday, we allowed the Honourable James Beer to speak three times asking a question.

Let us begin by understanding that if anybody else has a question please make your intentions known because everybody should have the opportunity to speak. If you do not indicate that you want to put a question, and you are slow and another Member stands, then whoever takes the Floor will have the question. No questions to

Members who are not responsible for any business of Parliament, for any business of Bills, for any business that has been conducted in this House.

So we will begin the Question Time for half an hour and I see the Honourable William heather you have the Floor.

QUESTION TIME

HON. W. HEATHER JNR: Madam Speaker I would like to direct my question to the Minister for Police. I was actually asked Madam Speaker to raise this question in this House.

We in this House have passed the Helmet Law Madam Speaker which have an effect on ages between 16 to 26 years, the question I received from this young lady then is, would you please explain why you consider the life of a 16 to 26 years old, worthier than others?

Secondly, should not every life on a cycle be worthy of a helmet law?

These are the questions that this young lady has asked me to raise in this House.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Minister of Police.

HON. T. HEATHER: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

Please bear with my voice as I have a bit of the flu today.

To answer the question Madam Speaker as to why the life of a 16 to 26 years old is worthier than others, when we debated in this House about the Helmet Law issue, we were provided with true statistics about accidents on the road. Without this information, we cannot form our views and pass laws. The Ministry of Health provided us the statistics with the assistance of the Ministry of Police and these were the age group that the statistics confirmed had most accidents on our roads.

Therefore we based our conclusion on these figures and the law provides that when you turn sixteen, you can get your driving license. We all know that our young people have immature thinking until they grow up and become mature.

We know that in the pass years the Government of the time passed a law that the wearing of safety helmets should be compulsory. When this law was taken around the island our people raised a concern, that we should not punish others especially those that are abiding the law in terms of the age limit.

Madam Speaker the passing of this law is for the safety and protection of our children as they start to drive and a protection for them on head injuries when something goes wrong. A safety helmet is for protection and this does not stop anyone who wants to wear a safety helmet for protection, this is your call.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, and I see the Honourable George Angene.

MR G. ANGENE: Thank you, Madam Speaker and greetings to all. I have a question for the Minister of Parliament. Yesterday I asked a question on the Marine Resources Bill because I thought that the Marine and the Marae Moana are the same and that is why I mentioned the term Marae Moana because there is no Maori name for Marine Resource.

I want to thank you Madam Speaker for explaining the term Marine Resource and the Maori name for Marine Resource is 'Manea o te Moana' so there is the Marae Moana and the Marine Resource.

This is the question for the Minister, could there be a proper interpretation for the two Bills, Marae Moana and the Marine Resources Bill.

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

HON. N. GLASSIE: Madam Speaker, Kia Orana to all of us in this House this afternoon.

Concerning the question from the Member for Tupapa, I am not sure whether I am the one to answer this question because the Bill before the House is for the Prime Minister but on the point of the interpretation into the Maori language, I believe that this will be given back to Parliament and they will put this right but I believe the answer will come from the Prime Minister who is the Minister of this Bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: My question goes to the Minister of Infrastructure Cook Islands and the question is on the main road from Muri going on to Titikaveka and this is to do with the work carried out by Te Aponga Uira. When Te Aponga Uira dug the road up, it was understood that when their work is finished then ICI will seal the road.

Can the Minister tell us what is happening with the road and when will our road return to the stage before the road works started. This concerns all the other roads in Titikaveka which have been worked on but not sealed yet. Not only just Titikaveka but other places I have seen and with the rain it has created more pot holes so please tell us when will road be sealed again especially from Muri to Titikaveka.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Minister of Infrastructure Cook Islands.

HON. T. HEATHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker and thank you for the question that has been asked. We know Madam Speaker since last year this is the first time, we have experienced rainfall like this. When this work commenced last year and approaching the area at Tikioki we noticed the changed of weather pattern at that time.

The Honourable Member from Teimurimotia and those in the Opposition knows that the best person for tar sealing roads is their Leader today. ICI workers has been working on the road but with the heavy downpour they can only do their best to reduce the potholes as we see it today.

Madam Speaker, that is the problem over there and their Leader should be able to say that you cannot seal roads in the rain. Madam Speaker, that is a good question but as we have seen with the rain it has created a lot of problems and hindered the work on the roads, accept the apologies. But now we see the weather is improving and it is our belief to continue on with the road works soon. Kia Orana.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Tama Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Kia Orana, Madam Speaker and Kia Orana to all Members of this House. I will point out that in our local paper today there is a picture of a car without a wheel, maybe the wheel fell in a hole. Maybe it is one of my colleague's car.

My question, Madam Speaker I think will be directed to the Minister of Finance because he has talked about fixing our roads. He has told us last year that work will start in January or February this year but it is nearly the end of February. This is the question from Ngatangiia when will our road be tar sealed just as he did for his constituency of Takuvaine.

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

HON. M. BROWN: Yes, we are waiting for the new Member for Ngatangiia.

MR J. BEER: You will be waiting a long time.

HON. M. BROWN: The work has already started digging the road and laying the cable however work has been hindered by the wet weather and today we are covering up the road.

The plan for the road is improve on the sides of the road which has been dug up and the holdup is that some places landowners' properties such as fences or hedges extends close onto the road.

So, this is the next step, Madam Speaker is to meet with landowners to ensure that their property, their fences, their hedges are taken care of before we complete the sides of the road that need to be reconstructed and also addressing those issues around drainage.

I am sure, Madam Speaker that the Deputy Prime Minister will be able to elaborate even more on this issue with the roads because as the appropriate Minister who is doing the implementation that is what is happening now.

My role Madam Speaker is to ensure that the appropriate funding is available for these works to be carried out. But from what I believe I saw in some of the news that the bitumen truck has been through Ngatangiia, has laid down some seal to cover those parts of the road that have been dug up. So, the work is carrying on, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and a gentleman's agreement?

HON. H. PUNA: He has already had a turn.

MR J. BEER: I have not spoken this morning.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable James Beer and if you are quick you can both have a go at asking a question, so it is up to you to be quick.

MR J. BEER: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Infrastructure Cook Islands. Minister can you advise this House whether or not the shiny bitumen truck that is now parked at ICI is the very same bitumen truck that was eventually cancelled as a result of a company in New Zealand going into receivership or is this bitumen truck a new truck ordered through a different budget allocation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON. T. HEATHER: Madam Speaker I would like to thank the Honourable Member for Murienua for posing this good question.

To the first question the answer is no. There is an ongoing problem on this bitumen truck that was identified at the time for the country and we have not resolved the issue.

And the second question about the new truck whether this is for ICI? I wish to confirm to everyone that this truck belongs to a private company but ICI is using it in the meantime. The government bitumen truck is still in Aitutaki as there is still some road sealing work to be done in Aitutaki.

MADAM SPEAKER: You have asked a question. [Speaking to Mr J. Beer] I will give the Floor to the Prime Minister.

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Speaker. I do not have a question but I am standing to do the right thing because I took a question on notice yesterday and I want to give the answer today.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON. H. PUNA: This was in connection with the shipping vessel in the harbour, the *Tiare Taporo*, who obviously encountered some difficulties in being moved when there was a high sea warning last Friday.

Madam Speaker I have made further enquiries through my office from the right people that should know and I am pleased to say that the brief answer I gave yesterday is in fact the correct answer. And that answer is that I as Minister of Transport have no authority to intervene in matters relating to the ports security. Every authority is vested in the Ports Authority that is an asset of government that has been vested in them by law and they are responsible for its management and up keep.

They have all the powers necessary to enforce any orders either by the court or by the authority itself. So I want to make it very clear in this Honourable House so Members

do not ask questions related to those issues again, that the port is the total responsibility of the Ports Authority.

However it is a matter of concern that despite court orders in order to seek some clarity and actions from the owners of the vessel in terms of its mobility in times of crisis such as last Friday, that there has been no positive response from the owners. As to what they have to do I cannot pre-am that Madam Speaker and Honourable Members that would be highly improper of me. But I believe that the Port Authority has access to the best legal advice on the island and they will be guided very well by any advice from their legal advisers.

In closing Madam Speaker, I noted on the front page of the newspaper this morning, "Questions about ship anger PM". I can see our reporter friend in the gallery is smiling because this was his article. All I ask Madam Speaker is that if there is any report of proceedings from this House that it be accurate in the future.

Mr Kumar I was not angry about the questions about the ships and even your article supported that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. It is important that what happens in this House is what is reported outside and the people of the country are listening in.

Honourable Member James Beer I want to know are going back to the supplementary question.

MR J. BEER: Yes, the supplementary question I want to ask the Minister of Transport.

MADAM SPEAKER: It was brought to my attention yesterday, once you pass that question that is passed. Is there anybody else who wants to take the Floor before we finish. And as there is nobody else standing the Honourable Member will get a second chance.

You go ahead Honourable Tama Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Madam Speaker. Before I ask my next question I would like to answer the Minister of Finance question. He is looking at the next Member of Parliament for Ngatangiia and the next Minister.

Madam Speaker I ask the question for him to tell the people of Ngatangiia when our roads will be fixed, will be tar sealed like the one in Takuvaine and he did not answer that question. He went around the bush and merry-go-round and then sat down.

I want him to give an answer to my people in Ngatangiia. When is our road going to be tar sealed because they have already promised in this House that that road will be tar sealed this year? January is gone and February is about to go.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member that would be exactly the same question that you have asked before. You can only ask a question once.

MR T. TUAVERA: He never answered it. He never answered it Madam Speaker. Instead he got cheeky.

MADAM SPEAKER: And the question was referred to the Honourable Minister. Deputy Prime Minister you have the Floor.

HON. T. HEATHER: Thank you Madam Speaker. I just want to respond to the question raised to the Minister of Finance regarding the roads of Ngatangiia.

I believe Madam Speaker I have responded appropriately to the first question raised by the Member for Titikaveka. I will now respond to the question raised by the Member for Ngatangiia.

We are all aware of the situation in Ngatangiia that is hindering the progress of the road works and the problem is to do with the waste storage. New Zealand recently have withdrawn its support to the WATSAN water, waste and sanitation programme.

We are reconsidering the road works for Ngatangiia and there are new initiatives that are coming through from the recent meetings of the Prime Minister in Samoa with funding possibilities. We cannot confirm a time frame for this road up grading programme for Ngatangiia but rest assured the government is working on this.

HON. M. BROWN: Point of clarification Madam Speaker if I may.

MADAM SPEAKER: Our time is actually expired.

HON. M. BROWN: Yes, it is not a question, it is a point of clarification.

MADAM SPEAKER: Alright.

HON. M. BROWN: The Honourable Member for Ngatangiia pointed out that I had stated in this House that we would asphalt the roads in Ngatangiia this year. I will be obliged if the Honourable Member could provide the Hansard records where I actually stated that.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Members our Question Time is over. Is there any Ministerial Statement Mr Prime Minister this morning?

HON. N. PUNA: Not at this stage Madam Speaker, not ready for that statement, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much and it is good to clear that and we will go to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Interrupted debate on the Second reading of the Marine Resources Bill 2017. And I call on the Honourable Minister Kiriau Turepu who was the last speaker on the principles and merits of the Bill to continue.

You have six minutes Honourable Minister.

HON. K. TUREPU: Can I borrow the time of those who did not make it to twenty minutes.

Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us in the name of our Lord. I know I have said my greetings yesterday so I will not go over my greetings again I just want to continue speaking, so to all of us in the House, Government side, Opposition side, Kia Orana to us all in the name of the Lord.

Madam Speaker, when I go back to the end of my speech yesterday I was talking about the position of the Vaka Council in assisting with activities in the lagoons in order to preserve it as previously mentioned by some Members. I believe the Vaka Council can assist with any activities in the villages, unfortunately the Vaka Council has been phased out. I would say especially for Honourable Members on Rarotonga to cautiously look at bringing back the Vaka Council and by enacting the law for Rarotonga.

The reason I am saying this is because I have observed the running of activities in the villages in the past. I know there are a lot of responsibilities burdened on the Members of Parliament today. In some villages I understand that some committees are set up to do the work in the village and these committees are just a voluntary group.

So I am asking us Members of Parliament on Rarotonga to look at this and perhaps we can bring back the Vaka Council, Mayors in the Vaka, Village Committee to carry out the work in the villages on Rarotonga. If we can bring them back then these people can look at what problems are taking place in the lagoons and address those issues as well as working together with the Member of Parliament in ironing out the problems.

I would leave this as food for thought for the Members of Parliament on Rarotonga as we journey forward during these days.

In Matavera I have formed the Matavera District Committee and this committee is responsible for any work in Matavera. As a Member of Parliament I believe when I am in Parliament and also when I am not a Member of Parliament this committee will still remain.

Madam Speaker, I will now come back to the Bill before the House, the vision in my head still remains concerning the equivalent of the land area to the ocean, which is 1 square kilometre of land is equivalent to 7975 square kilometres of ocean. I want the Honourable Member from Mitiaro to understand this shows to us how vast our ocean is. There are resources in our ocean today hence our deliberation on the Marine Resources Bill. I also want us to deliberate on the Seabed Mining because I believe if we can develop this, our country will reap millions of dollars.

I have run out of time. I support this Bill and acknowledge the Head of Ministry of Marine Resources Ben Ponia and your Assistant Myra Patai for this wonderful Bill before the House.

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

HON. N. GLASSIE: To you Madam Speaker, and all of us Kia Orana this afternoon.

Before the custom of greeting our constituency when we stand up I want to greet our friends in the gallery first. Kia Orana to the Secretary of the Ministry of Marine Resources and his assistant Myra and also our media reporters in our presence this afternoon.

Madam Speaker before I convey my greetings to the people of Enuamanu, I would like to bring to us some news that I heard over the radio early this morning.

Early this morning, over the radio it was reported that Cyclone Gita is in Tonga and Samoa. The news reports that the most powerful wind that hit Tonga particularly on the island of E'ua was 275km/hr. And, the communication with that particular island of Tonga is cut off. It is also difficult for any boat to travel there and back.

Further destruction also happened on the island of Tongatapu. The news goes on about the devastation in Tonga and therefore Madam Speaker I would like to make a plea of the Cook Islands in this Parliament to offer our condolences and help to what is happening in Tonga and Samoa these days.

This similar devastation also happened in Fiji in February 2016 where the damage, the pain, the hurt and the trauma still continue in Fiji today. Therefore, our prayers are with the people in Tonga, Samoa and other parts that have been hit by Cyclone Gita. It is also our plea to our Tongan, Samoan and Fijian communities all here in the Cook Islands that in the event that they would like to do some fundraising for the relief, we will be most welcome to contribute and to support such worthy causes.

Finally Madam Speaker, these devastations did not go unnoticed in the eyes of our Government. In Cabinet this morning, Government made some positive discussions in the event that we will help these countries that are devastated.

Thank you and I will now talk about my people in Enuamanu. To the three pillars on our island of Enuamanu, I greet you all this afternoon. To all the people in the five villages on our island, to the old people right down to our children, Kia Orana to you all in the Name of our Lord.

I would like to bring to us some news which concerns our people in Enuamanu. Firstly, to the two bereavements that happened on our island. Ngati Paruarangi asked me to thank our Government for their support during the passing away of our Ariki Ada Rongomatane. The same goes to the Ministry of Health because it was Government and the Ministry of Health who paid the chattered flight to return Ada Rongomatane Ariki's body back home. This was an honourable moment for our people on Enuamanu during the passing away of Rongomatane Ariki.

In addition, we would also like to thank His Excellency the Queen's Representative and his wife and also the Prime Minister's wife who accompanied us when we travelled to Atiu to return Rongomatane Ariki's body.

Secondly, I would also like to convey our appreciation to those who supported us during the passing away of our mother Mama Mareta who is also known as Mama Puku. I would like to say thank you to all the families who came to support us during our time of bereavement.

I would also like to convey the same words of appreciation from Bob and Helen Williams whom Mama Puku resided with during her time here in Rarotonga. My wife also travelled to Atiu to represent us as I was busy during the time when the body was returned to Atiu.

My next announcement for Atiu is to give an update on the project that is happening on Atiu now. To explain to us all, in terms of the power and the water projects on the island of Atiu, I am very happy along with our Member for Teenui/Mapumai the Honourable Rose Brown to announce that about 80% of that project is under completion. What is focussed on now is to work and try and get the projects done is the teeing of the connections to some of the homes that are far away from the main roads.

And of course I want to thank the boys that have been working hard in hot suns, rain and in mud for the hard work they have done over the past many, many months. I rephrase my comment, this is from us both including the Honourable Member for Teenui/Mapumai. Thank you to Boy Kea and all the boys that have dedicated themselves in working on these projects. And to Ngateina Rani of the Office of the Prime Minister for Project managing this project on Atiu.

In terms of the solar energy project on Atiu, I am pleased to announce that they are in the process of building the battery house and they are now doing posts construction ready for the establishment of the panels these days.

Thank you to the staff from Christchurch, New Zealand who are helping our boys get this project under way.

Lastly, I want to say that on Sunday the 19th February the barge will be transporting some of our machines to Atiu in readiness for the quarry work on the island. Therefore, I acknowledge the Minister of ICI the Deputy Prime Minister and the staff for putting pressure so that the work on the quarry on Atiu will be ready in order to start the airport work as soon as we possibly can.

Madam Speaker, I better come up to the Bill because that is the purpose – I am here to stand to completely support the Bill 120 percent. I noticed that the Members of the Opposition are feeling a bit unease because of the good news I am announcing about the projects on Atiu. They are looking for weaknesses in our policy, they did not realise that we are way ahead with all our projects on the Outer Islands and more so on Atiu.

Quickly, Madam Speaker only two points, one a small point the other one is a big point in terms of the Bill. I want to refer very quickly to Part 1 of our Bill. Over the many debates that was offered by all Members of Parliament there is a strong focus on the living things in our waters but the Bill clearly stated that our three key roles that I can read and understand, is conservation, management and the development of this Bill. But we seem to be focusing on the living things in our waters but in the Bill, it talks about non-living things that are in our waters.

My understanding is this Bill will have a clear overlap on some of our other Bills such as the Seabed Mining Act. But what I want to emphasize, Madam Speaker is really Part 8 of the Bill. In essence this part of the Bill in my view is showing a close relationship between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Marine Resources.

It is very important that the Marine Resources Bill will also include a new position under Part 8 as I mentioned that will establish the competent authority to issues of health sanitary certificates. This provision of the Bill has been developed by the Ministry of Marine Resources in co-operation with the Ministry of Health which indeed the Marine Services issues of seafood export health certificates under a Memorandum of Arrangement with the Ministry of Health. And of course this provision will allow for a legislative changes or equivalent to meet international trade standards.

Madam Speaker, the objective of the competent authority is to ensure that all Cook Islands sea food exports are fit for human consumption. This provision also apply to sea food that will be exported so that we are clear that the Ministry of Marine Resources has no jurisdiction over the domestic sales of sea food which continue to be managed under the Public Health Act.

The competent authority will require government to upgrade its laboratory facilities to include food safety testing and in the future perhaps the Ministry of Marine Resources and the Ministry of Health can co-operate and work together on health matters such as the monitoring of the ciguatera fish poisoning or testing of the histamine and heavy metals for sea food that is sold on our local markets or in the restaurants.

Therefore the relationship between healthy living and non-communicable diseases and the nutritional value of having fresh fish and sea food in our diet is very important. The bottom line, Madam Speaker being that if the Marine Resources Bill will help conserve and manage our marine resources then ultimately the health of the people will stand to benefit overall.

My time is up, Madam Speaker and I thank you kindly.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I see the Honourable Tai Tura.

MR T. TURA: Thank you Madam Speaker and Kia Orana to you, the staff and both sides of the House today. To our people listening from the Outer Islands and on Rarotonga as well, greetings to you all.

Madam Speaker, before I express my views on the Bill if it is possible if I can convey my regards to my people in Mauke. To all our people on Akatokamanava, greetings to you all and to the three main pillars of the island.

I want to associate myself with the Member from Atiu. I would like to acknowledge my boys who have gone over to Atiu from Mauke to work on the solar system. I am very impressed with the work that you have carried out and I have also learnt that you will be going to Mangaia to do the same work. This is great news for our people in Akatokamanava. I was going to say a chant for you but it is not appropriate at this time.

Referring back to the Bill, firstly I would like to show my full support for this Bill.

Secondly, I would just like to apologise for not attending the workshop last week as I stayed on in Akatokamanava. Good things have been said about the workshop but I will say that the workshop was a waste of time. Some bright people were present at the workshop to explain the Bill but come to this week there are still many questions raised in the House on the same Bill. There are still doubts and distrust among the Members and that is why we are still asking many questions.

I personally believe that after the Members workshop things will be clear and we will not ask any more questions and we will pass this Bill smoothly.

I would like to propose that we take the Bill back to our Marine authorities to be reviewed and amended. And when it is resubmitted to this House it will only take us two minute to pass it.

I want to raise another issue and this is on how to manage our Raui system. This starts in the home where we can teach our family as what to do especially our traditional way of respecting the Raui, our people today are not recognising our traditions.

Regardless of what our advisers have given us our children will come afterwards and say their ways are better. I would like to ask all of the Outer Islands people to respect the Raui system on Rarotonga. Leave these poison sea foods for the people of Rarotonga to consume themselves.

I still feel there are discrepancies in this bill and it should be reviewed properly. I would like to acknowledge the hard work put into this Bill by the Secretary of Marine Resources and his staff and also the office of Crown Law, thank you very much for doing this for us.

I am glad to hear about the good things planned for our ocean. I want to say that I am happy with the work carried out for this Bill because there were people who came from overseas saying that we cannot source any income from our ocean and here our own people are saying that it is possible and we can do it.

I would like to ask the three Members of the Opposition not to follow the footsteps of these foreign advisers. And to our people listening in there are many good things that

we can look forward to that we can get out of our ocean. It is those people who does not get their feet wet that are making negative reports about our marine resource.

I would like to make a plea to this House that we support this Bill. Those are my thoughts Madam Speaker – thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. It is nearly our break time and perhaps before we go to our next speaker, we will suspend the Sitting and return at 3.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 2.22 p.m.

Parliament resumed at 3.00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Members please be seated. Parliament is resumed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Interrupted debate on the Second reading of the Marine Resources Bill, however before we begin with that business I now give the Floor to the Prime Minister for his Ministerial Statement.

HON. H. PUNA: Madam Speaker, Thank you very much and special greetings to you and your staff. Special greetings to our Honourable Members of this House and also to our people listening in to the broadcast.

We also express our condolences to our two families that has gone through bereavements since yesterday. To the family of Papa Errol Young in Nikao and also to the family of Mama Tetauru in Avatiu. It is our wish that when it is time for the funeral services for these two family, this House will provide the opportunity for Members to be able to attend the funerals.

Thank you, Madam Speaker and Members, for giving me this opportunity to make an important Ministerial Statement.

Madam Speaker as many of you would have been aware the peoples of American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga has been left reeling in the aftermath damage and devastation brought about by Cyclone Gita over the last couple of days.

Yesterday, I gave an assurance to this Honourable House and to the people of this country that I will advise them of development and updates as they come to hand. Madam Speaker that is the purpose of this Ministerial Statement.

In American Samoa and Samoa, schools have been closed and emergency teams are working around the clock to restore power and running water to thousands of households. Severe flooding, particularly in the capital Apia area bring fears about sanitation and the outbreak of dengue. Aggie Greys where we were accommodated at last year for the Forum Leader's Meeting was flooded badly.

In Tonga, all airports remain closed due to the damage and disruption and a state of emergency has been declared to help prevent lost of life and damage to property. The capital Nuku'alofa has been severely damaged, power turned off for 75,000 residents in Tongatapu, their Parliament House was blown over and Gita has been called the worst storm to hit Tonga in 60 years.

In Fiji, as Minister Glassie has indicated earlier, some communications have been cut to some of the Outer Islands, which have been hit by winds up to 275km/hr and storm surges.

In short Madam Speaker and Honourable Members – the damage and devastation brought about by Cyclone Gita will mean months, even years, of rebuilding for our Pacific neighbours. And the assistance from the international community including ourselves will be integral to rebuilding efforts in the months ahead.

People of the Cook Islands, all of us will have experienced the devastation that come to bear on our Pacific communities in the aftermath of natural disasters of this magnitude. And at this most difficult of times for our neighbours, our thoughts and prayers of strength and resilience are with them as the clean up gets underway and they look to the future.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, I am pleased to therefore announce that Cabinet this morning unanimously supported the allocation of NZ$50,000 from our contingency funds to support recovery efforts for our neighbouring Pacific countries affected by Cyclone Gita.

It is the view of Cabinet endorsed no doubt by all the Honourable Members of this House that it is incumbent on us to give support as our financial means allows us to support our Pacific neighbours during this most difficult time.

As has been the practise of our community in years past, we hope this contribution will be supplemented by our community through their generosity and Government stands ready to support Cook Islands Red Cross co-ordination of assistance to our Pacific neighbours. It is also our hope Madam Speaker that this gift of $50,000 will help inspire our people to come together to give generously.

I am please to learn that Cook Islands Red Cross have confirmed Thursday next week for a radiothon on Radio Cook Islands and I am confident our people will give generously as they have always done so in the past. Cook Islands Red Cross continues to liaise with their counterparts in neighbouring Pacific countries affected by Cyclone Gita and the message is the damage and devastation has been significant, assessment are still being undertaken but the most valuable assistance that can be provided now is cash donations which can be channelled via Red Cross.

Police Commissioner Maara Tetava has continued to liaise with his Tongan counterpart and our vessel *Te Kukupa* remains on standby should assistance be called upon in the coming days. At this time, Tonga has indicated they have sufficient resources on hand, the New Zealand assistance is already being delivered through the air force so *Te Kukupa* remains on standby. It is most heartening to see the strong

regional working relationships that exist between our officials come to the fore in difficult times such as this.

As of now as far as we are aware, there have not been any loss of life caused by Cyclone Gita and for that we are extremely greatful. But perhaps Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, the challenge now is this, having withstood the strength of the cyclone, it is how to rebuild and how to best interact with development partners to support the rebuild that must happen in the coming months.

I am pleased to inform everyone that our little country will have a role to play in this because as some of you will be aware the Cook Islands is the headquarters for PACRAFI, the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative. This initiative implemented by the World Bank and ultra-multilateral and bilateral partners was conceived by our own Forum Economic Ministers during their 2015 meeting here in Rarotonga.

PACRAFI provides insurance cover against natural events such as cyclones, tsunamis and earthquakes with the primary objective of providing Pacific countries with immediate budget support to respond when a natural disaster occurs.

Madam Speaker, it is so heart-warming to see initiatives like this come to the fore when it is needed the most.

Tonga has previously accessed PACRAFI in the aftermath of Cyclone Ian in 2014 and my prayer is that PACRAFI will once again be able to assist our Pacific neighbours in the difficult recovery and rebuilding journey that must now be undertaken in the aftermath of Cyclone Gita.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, people of the Cook Islands, I know we all stand in support and solidarity with our Pacific neighbours and our Government will continue to engage with their respective Governments to give whatever support we might be able to give in the coming months ahead.

Te Atua te Aroa, Madam Speaker. I now lay this on the Table.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Prime Minister. We will now go back to the Orders of the Day on the Second reading of the Marine Resources Bill and I see the Honourable William Heather you have the Floor.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HON. W. HEATHER JNR: Firstly, Kia Orana to you Madam Speaker, and to all of us in this House. To the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Cabinet and our friends on the Opposition on that side and all of us on this side. I also give greetings to our Ui Ariki, the Kaumaiti Nui and all our Arikis all over the country. To my constituency, Madam Speaker from Tuoro to Toreaiva. I would also like to give my support and acknowledgement to our Spiritual leaders.

Before I express my thoughts on the Bill presented I would like to say thank you to every person who have bought raffle tickets from us the Ruaau Democratic Party. I

would like to say that we have managed to raise a lot of funds from not only the democratic side but also the government side.

I want to thank the Police Department for informing us of the proper procedures of what to do for these types of things. We have done everything accordingly and we believe that they were happy for what we have done.

The only problem, Madam Speaker is that the time set for the drawing of the raffle was not done at that time. As we were waiting for the Police to arrive for the draw they were called out for an emergency in Tupapa. We waited for half an hour we received updates that they tried to get to Arorangi but when they got to the weather station the seawall was flooded.

That is what happened, Madam Speaker and it was nearly ten o'clock before the raffle was drawn. Madam Speaker, I was happy because we achieved nearly 95 percent of sale of the raffle and we made a good profit for what we did.

Just coming back to the Bill before us today. Madam Speaker, I just want to raise the point in regard to licensing for those wanting to fish or to source income from our ocean.

As mentioned by previous speakers, Madam Speaker if we do not review this very carefully we will go through some further problems later on. I believe that this will be a useful tool for these people to be able to purchase sales within our ocean. These people have money and they will be able to use it to bribe people managing these area.

I think the Minister should look into this further and maybe form a Committee to review this properly. And Madam Speaker in terms of the right of appeal we can see with this Bill the Minister or the Secretary may be able to settle it. Madam Speaker there are temptations that I see and maybe it is a good approach for the Minister to form a Committee to review these properly before granting the license.

Madam Speaker, there is also a quota to consider in terms of issuing licenses for these applicants. In my observation, Madam Speaker the licenses that is issued it seems like as if they are used for them to report back. These licenses reflect to the reports received when they enter into a port to offload and they report the weight of their catch.

However I am proposing that before we issue the license we are to determine how much catch weight should be permitted to be extracted from the ocean. In reflection of what the Leader of the House, Honourable Willie John mentioned yesterday about the many fishing boat that are visiting our islands in the Northern Group without the knowledge of our headquarters in Rarotonga.

This could add more problems to our people especially if we do not know what may be carried on these fishing vessels such as diseases, criminals and drugs which may be a big problem to our island people. So, far there are no big problems affecting our Northern group islands and I thank God for watching over our people. Madam

Speaker it is therefore a good thing for a committee to be formed to look at these matters carefully.

I would like to ask our Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers to approve that this Bill be referred to a Select Committee to be scrutinised properly as there may be areas in this Bill that needs to be addressed properly. If we do not do this it will raise more questions as has been in the young ladies letter read today. This is a special request to the Prime Minister and Cabinet to refer this to a Select Committee and at the right time to bring it back to the House.

Those are my views Madam Speaker on this Bill before the House. Thank you.

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

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker, just allow me to excuse the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for my little breach of protocol normally the leaders of both sides are the final speakers on Bills before the House but he was too quick to get up before I got up.

Before I speak to the Bill in hand Madam Speaker also let me allow sometime to pass on a word of condolence to the family Mr Errol Young who has been a long time residence of Takuvaine for many years and to the family for his passing yesterday. And Errol has been a long time servant of the Cook Islands working for many, many years for the Housing Corporation in particular as a builder. And there has been many buildings in the Cook Islands both private and government that Errol has been involved in during his long career and his long life. The condolences go out to his children to Ina, Daisy, John, who are here in Rarotonga and Teariki in New Zealand.

And condolences from our constituency of Takuvaine/Tutakimoa to those other households that have been touched by the deaths and passing away of loved one these pass days.

To the Bill at hand Madam Speaker, it has been mentioned by a number of our previous speakers, that our country is made up of 99.99 percent ocean. It is to be expected Madam Speaker that we would look to the ocean for our resources and our prosperity and our livelihoods.

It is therefore in that spirit Madam Speaker that I support this Bill that is before the House. And it is just a further continuation of our countries management and stewardship of this vast resource that we have as part of our country. I recall in my first year as a Minister in 2011 attending a joint ministerial meeting of finance ministers and marine and fisheries ministers.

At that meeting Madam Speaker 7 years ago, it was pointed out by the pacific island countries that our returns as a region was less than 5 percent from fisheries and less than 5 percent of the value of the fish caught in our waters.

It was at that meeting that the collective decision by pacific countries was to take every effort that we could as a region to try and increase the revenues that we collect

as a region from the fisheries in our waters. That we deserve a fairer share of the fisheries revenue that is taken out of our waters. In that time Madam Speaker the fisheries management frameworks have been changed and treaties had been renegotiated and renewed.

Pacific countries have taken on a more stronger leadership role in determining access into our fisheries and the Cook Islands has been a leader in the region Madam Speaker in leading these efforts to ensure that all pacific countries receive a fairer return and a better return for the fish taken out of our waters.

We have seen this in our own returns Madam Speaker to the Cook Islands revenues whereas fisheries would earn less than $2million a year from licensing to today that licensing over the last three years is average close $18million. At the forefront of the pacific efforts Madam Speaker was not just to increase the value of our fishery but to ensure the sustainability of our fish stocks. And in ensuring the sustainability of our fish stock meant that we have to have very strong access agreements into our waters but also very strong monitoring.

We have seen with the vessel day scheme for Purse Seine fishing around the Pacific Madam Speaker, the allocation of days to Pacific countries including ourselves has done two things and the first is increase the value of returns to Pacific countries but the second is to improve and significantly increase the surveillance and monitoring of our fish.

By limiting the number of days that these boats can fish in our waters Madam Speaker, we put a measure of control over the amount of fish that can be taken out. But this was not enough for us Madam Speaker, the Cook Islands took it another step further and introduced the Quota Management System into our own Fishery in the Cook Islands to lead the way for the Pacific.

So in the new licenses that have through and particularly the purse seining that we have agreement with the EU not only is there agreement for access into our fishery but its limiting the amount of tonnes of fish that they can take out. The true measure of sustainability and being able to control your fish stock Madam Speaker is by limiting the tonnage on the fish that will be taken out and we hope that these measures will be adopted by other Pacific countries.

In December 2016 Madam Speaker, new regulations were put in place for the Quota Management System for our long line fishing. So, as was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, that when you do get a licence to come and fish in our waters, you do not just take out what you can. You are limited to quota tonnage once you buy your long line licence.

And already Madam Speaker, we are seeing the benefits of this with increase revenue from the licenses for long lines that we have issued out for this year compared to last year. We can do more Madam Speaker in the new initiatives that will be supported by this legislation in this Bill to try and improve the value of our fishery and ensure a better return for our people for their resource. And always at the back of the mind of Government in these Bills and what we have captured in there are the three principles

of a fair return for our fish, a sustainable management system and a compliant surveillance and monitoring system.

We all heard Madam Speaker the talk over the last year about our country graduating to develop nation status and how current development assistance that we enjoy now may no longer be available to us in future years. It is therefore Madam Speaker that we look at new ways of doing business, look at new ways of earning revenue for our country and our people in order to fill this gap.

Our ocean Madam Speaker provided one such opportunity for us not just through our fishery but through also the potential of our minerals. Because one thing is for certain Madam Speaker, our people do not want to go backwards, they want to go forward. They do not want our standard of living to decline, everybody want our standard of living to increase. And the ocean provides us an opportunity Madam Speaker for all of our people to be able to benefit from the bounty that is within the ocean.

Looking thorough some of the concerns of the Members of the Opposition in terms of appeal processes that they would like to see within the Bill, I can see there are provisions for appeal on various aspects of the Bill that are contained in here. I think the Bill and the systems that we had currently are strong enough and robust enough to contain some of the concerns raised in particular by the Leader of the Opposition over concerns of corruptions and bribery. And rightfully raised by the Leader of the Opposition as one former Leader of the Opposition was caught up in this corruption scandal.

However, we should have faith Madam Speaker that our systems that are in place are robust enough to be able to capture any instances of potential corruption.

MR J. BEER: Point of Order Madam Speaker.

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

MR J. BEER: The Minister of Finance casted aspersions on the Opposition Party in relation to a criminal case that occurred last year in relation to a former Minister of the Crown. But he used those aspersions and cast those aspersions as the former Leader of the Opposition and therefore it is my concern that the Minister is misleading Parliament and the public in relation to the exact procedure and the occurrence of that particular incident that he mentioned in his statement Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, he should be asked to withdraw the statement regarding that matter and apologise to this House for doing so.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not think there was anything new that was mentioned in that that is not being out in the media. Besides, that has nothing to do with the Bill that we are talking about. I think you should get back on the Bill and debate the Bill as on the Floor please.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker for that point of correction on the Member for the Opposition.

I was merely supporting the statements made by their current Leader of the Opposition in regards to his concerns over potential corruption and bribery allegations against officials. Because Madam Speaker the part I was also referring to was Part 12 of this particular Bill which is the sale, release and forfeiture of retain property. The maximum penalty is a fine of a million dollars that has been put down here. And it relates to any property used in respect of the Commissioner of any offense.

There are provisions in this Bill Madam Speaker that relates to general offenses and penalties that maybe taken into account. I also further support the recommendation by the Leader of the Opposition that this Bill do go before a Select Committee. Because it is in that Select Committee Madam Speaker, the Members of the Committee will have an opportunity to hear submissions and make recommendations to the House on any areas of the Bill.

And it reinforces again Madam Speaker the importance of our ocean to our country because if we look at other countries around the world Madam Speaker, in the Pacific and also in the Northern Oceans in the Atlantic and so forth how they maximise the revenue or the returns from their resources in their oceans. We can learn a lot by how they use technology in order to increase and maximise the revenue from the fish that they catch.

We have seen the delegation that went to Iceland Madam Speaker to look at the fisheries in Iceland and how they maximise their revenues of their fish.

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

HON. T. HEATHER: With your indulgence Madam Speaker, I would like to move:

That the speaking time for the Honourable Member be extended

Because I could see that the Members of the Opposition are wide awake.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is there a Seconder for the Motion?

Seconded by the Honourable Toka Hagai

I will put the Question that:

The Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You may continue Honourable Minister.

HON. M. BROWN: May I thank the indulgence of the House for the extended time.

As I was mentioning the delegation that visited the Arctic Circle Conference in Iceland were able to tour through and view the fisheries processing facilities in Iceland and look at the latest technology being utilized and employed by these companies to maximise the revenues from every fish that they catch.

Every part of the fish from the skin to the meat, to the bones is utilized. In fact, the highest value part of the fish that came out of this particular processing plant was the skin of the fish which was used in cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries and it is by this exposure, Madam Speaker that our people have to look at these other countries, to these other technologies that we can help ourselves.

So, even though the Members of the Opposition moan and complain about the various meetings that the government Members attend, there is a purpose behind these and they should refrain from getting down into grubby little gutter detail politics and they should support the efforts of Cook Islanders trying to advance the way and the cause of Cook Islanders. Support your people, do not drag your people down.

If we look at our ocean, Madam Speaker nearly 2 million square kilometres of beautiful pure ocean and in this ocean, Madam Speaker there is only 236 square kilometres of land, literally dots of land in our ocean. Those little dots of land though, Madam Speaker earn this country over 400 million dollars in GDP. A GDP that has grown significantly by close to a hundred million dollars in the time of the Cook Island Party Government.

So, if we look at the potential of the ocean, Madam Speaker it is like a garden and it is a garden, Madam Speaker that if we use technology correctly we can seed this garden and we can grow the crops which is the seafood in this garden and we can sell the fish and the returns from in this garden to those countries that are wanting our fish.

Just like our growers seed their gardens on the land and sell their produce at the markets this is how we should look at our ocean, Madam Speaker seed our ocean and sell those fruits to the market because when we graduate, Madam Speaker it is those fruits from that garden in the sea that will pay for the way our people want to live.

So, we must be bold and look forward and embrace innovation because if we are going to rely on the Opposition's plan to grow tomatoes, we will be eating tomato soup every day.

Therefore, Madam Speaker I take into account the comments that have been provided by the Members of this House, very productive comments apart from one that was a waste of time and I support its progress through the House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is in the afternoon and I guess we have to go through this to keep everybody awake but remember the interpreters need to hear what you are saying so they do not say the wrong thing. I just allowed a bit of fun to go on but let us get back to business. I see the Honourable James Beer.

MR J. BEER: Firstly, Madam Speaker with the indulgence of this House I would like to concur with the speech the Prime Minister delivered in relation to the devastation that has occurred in Tonga and all its outlying islands as well as Samoa.

Madam Speaker, can I also just point out that this indulgence that I seek from the House is not the time that has been allocated to me in relation to my response and my thoughts on the principles and merits of the Marine Resources Bill.

So, I would ask whether or not the Clerk would please stop the clock from running because it is about the speech provided for by the Prime Minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I would have to seek leave because there is no Standing Orders that allow you to do that so you may seek leave from the rest of the Members if you are able to have that time. Let us do it this way.

I will put the Question:

That leave be approved for the Honourable Member to make the remarks as per Prime Minister's speech this morning regarding the devastation of the islands.

Is there anybody who objects to the leave?

HON. T. HEATHER: This is no objection, Madam Speaker in moving that forward we would like to sort of a time limit for the Member for Murienua.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not hear any objections so you will get the leave so shall we give you ten minutes to have that time.

MR J. BEER: Thank you, Madam Speaker that is more than enough.

MADAM SPEAKER: Leave is obtained for the Member to continue.

MR J. BEER: Madam Speaker and to our Members of Parliament the speech provided for by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of the Cook islands is one in which the Opposition applauds.

It is obvious and as he has adequately pointed out Madam Speaker that the devastation that has occurred in those islands is at this particular time, at this particular junction, severe. Unfortunately for some of the most powerful countries in the world at least for their leaders they do not recognise that climate change is affecting and making these cyclones and these hurricanes much more severe.

I would have really loved to have heard all of the Prime Minister's speech but I was called away very briefly and unfortunately due to whatever constraints Parliament has, the speaker in the corridors of the House are inoperative for Members of Parliament to be able to hear such an important address.

But I have to assume Madam Speaker that when the Prime Minister made a speech on those matters while I was absent from the House there was and I hope a lot of concurrence from all Members of Parliament as to the devastation and the seriousness of the plight of those people in those islands.

Although the Cabinet has agreed to give $50,000, in most measures it is a small token but it is a token nonetheless in relation to whatever assistance this small country has and can give those islands.

I personally have spent a little bit of time in both Samoa and Tonga and I can say with in particular to Tonga just how susceptible they are to high tides and even more susceptible to sea surges originating out of cyclones.

Madam Speaker, Tonga is a flat land and particularly Nukualofa the main province of Tonga unlike perhaps the Vavau's which a much steeper in height they have the ability to be able to allow people to seek shelter on higher ground.

So, I take this opportunity Prime Minister and congratulate you on your foresight and also the generosity of our Government towards this particular situation that has caused that much devastation in those islands.

In time, it is not a matter of if but a matter of when we also will be struck with cyclones of the magnitude if not greater than those that have hit Samoa and Tonga and it will be important for all of us to look forward to ways and measures that we can be able to secure our lives, our property and be able to maintain ourselves and sustain ourselves in the event of that kind of catastrophe hitting the Cook Islands.

On that note, Madam Speaker I would like to say thank you once again for the opportunity and for the Deputy Prime Minister for the motion to allow me to speak for the ten minutes even though it is now before ten minutes, I did say that I would like to speak with no more than ten minutes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, are you going to debate, yes. You have not debated to the Bill so I see the Honourable James Beer.

MR J. BEER: Thank you, Madam Speaker I rise to speak on the principles and merits of the Marine Resources Bill before the House.

If I may Madam Speaker to start off, I would like to pass on my congratulations to the vast improvement of our two young interpreters and also to our honourable friend although he is not a Member of Parliament, he is still an honourable friend in my eyes, Tangata Vainerere for his guidance and counsel for these two young up and coming interpreters for the Cook Islands parliament.

Madam Speaker we spent some time looking at this Bill at the Crown Beach Resort just recently and I find myself concurring again with my Honourable colleagues, Wesley Kareroa because the speech delivered by the New Zealand High Commissioner delve in those two words – responsibility and accountability. And in the same vain as we have just heard from the Minister of Finance saying that this Bill will go to a Select Committee or recommended to go to a Select Committee this is the kind of responsibility that the Opposition party and the Opposition adheres to and loves to hear.

One of the things that the New Zealand High Commissioner spoke about Madam Speaker which you may recall was about his time as a Police Commissioner when facing Select Committee and in those Select Committee hearings Madam Speaker he made mention to those Members of Parliament and to the staff of parliament and to other government officials how anxious and how nervous he was when it came to dealing with questions arising from those members on the Select Committee.

It is in that same vein that the responsibility of all members of parliament particularly in dealing with a Bill of such significance needs to be heard and adhered to in my opinion. I also want to take the opportunity Madam Speaker to congratulate the Secretary of Marine Resources and his staff and Crown Law in giving assistance to the Members of Parliament in being able to understand the finer points the more salient points of this Bill.

I have to say with some respect Madam Speaker that the Prime Minister in his delivery on that statement gave me slight dismay if I can say so because he did not deal with the very important points contained within the Bill. But I guess when the time comes for the Prime Minister to wrap up, he will be able to point to many of the aspects that this House is raising in relation to the Bill before the House.

At the National Auditorium last year when the former Prime Minister of New Zealand made a speech during the visit of the New Zealand government and Opposition officials. He spoke briefly about the assistance that the New Zealand government had offered and gratefully accepted by the Cook Islands government particularly referencing the Minister of Finance on the quota management system that New Zealand has applied in their jurisdiction that they would like us to adopt here in the Cook Islands.

Tongue and cheek Madam Speaker I refer to my honourable friend the Honourable Minister Nandi Glassie on his very, very short speech on the actual Bill itself. Madam Speaker we must apologise but when we laugh it is not because it is a forced laugh but it is a laugh that comes out like a sneeze you cannot stop it.

But we had the opportunity to be able to listen to all the campaign measures that the Member for Atiu was proposing for this coming election.

I want to refer to some of the points that the Honourable Minister Kiriau Turepu also raised in his address to Parliament on the Bill. My apologies in advance Minister if I miss quote you but I recall you saying that it is time for the land to be overtaken or time for the ocean to provide more than the land. The problem with that is that there is no defining number of how we can calculate exactly what the land provides and what the ocean provides and this is what I mean.

If much of the land-based economy is tourism, we have not taken into consideration that the oceans, the beaches and the lagoons that tourist visit the Cook Islands or the colourful brochures of such a beautiful lagoon in Aitutaki that draws tourist to come to the Cook Islands that is measured probably from a land-based economy point of view.

I doubt very much Madam Speaker that we have actually a true comprehension of how much money the ocean is providing for us now. We are only measuring it at this stage based on fish sales and those of which we can exploit or extract from the ocean.

There are many ocean based economic activities that probably count as land based economic return. We do not know how much money that fishermen and charter boat fishermen who take out tourists to go and catch fish where they spend that money afterwards. For example the Cook Islands Game Fishing Club based out in Pue has a

huge alcohol bill because of some of the fishermen's income generated from fishing activity.

So, there are many other areas in which the land-based economy measurement includes indirectly income generated from the ocean. But I get the point Madam Speaker, I know what you are trying to say. We also have to take into consideration the import substitution that the protein that we get from the ocean, import substitutes those proteins that we import from overseas like beef, lamb and poultry.

It is curious Madam Speaker that hindsight and reverse is what we are basically doing here in relation to this Bill has some serious opportunity for us to make major changes on such an important document. But before we can be able to truly make a document that is able to give us true ideas of where this economy is in terms of the ocean. We need to understand and know for certain some of the critical data involved in this industry.

For example the University of British Columbia produces many papers on IUU, which is Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing. They value the total number of fish caught under the IUU banner which is Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated at between 10 and 20 billion US dollars which is almost double with the New Zealand currency. The University of British Columbia also goes on to say that IUU capture goes on mostly to the detriment of developing countries.

It is countries like the Cook Islands that face the greatest risk when it comes to that kind of unlawful, illegal, unreported fishing. Madam Speaker for the sake of clarity that amount of between 10 and 21 billion dollars is the global IUU estimated catch.

Madam Speaker I am going to now point to the Bills more salient points.

And I know that even if I am given an extension of my time I doubt very much that I will be able to cover all of it. The first one Madam Speaker is to do with the Advisory Committee, it lists the Advisory Committee responsibilities but on the area of licensing it is mute and deaf in that regard and would appear based on the current version that we have before us that this document does not listen to the concerns raised by many people in the public over many years in terms of the licensing.

The licensing provisions is too discretionary but only to too few people and even as the Minister of Finance says that it is robust enough nothing can beat the robustness of more people with more eyes on it.

I would have thought Madam Speaker that this Bill so important to the future of the Cook Islands would take into consideration the viewpoints, the concerns and the previous scandals this country has had to face in relation to the issuing of licenses. And I hate to say it that there will be innuendo and speculation in the public and it will continue to do so unless this House makes robust changes to the area of the issuing of fishing licenses.

The other part in which I want to bring notice to this House is the area in conservation. Just recently as of this year the European Union Parliament voted overwhelmingly of the 600 member seats in the European Union Parliament 550

called for a moratorium on seabed mining activity. Although we see very little reference in the Bill to seabed mining there are some points in it which I want to draw the attention of the Members of Parliament. Although the moratorium was non-binding, it was to create an understanding of what could occur to the environment as a result of that activity.

Madam Speaker, the next part I want to draw the attention of the Members of Parliament is page 23 of the Bill. Once again it gives discretionary powers to the Minister to be able to bring about a designated fishery. It does not give enough information, if there exist any information to the processes prior to that other than words that the Minister may have regard to certain areas including scientific, social economical and environmental.

That is not to say that the Bill is not doing something but it does raise questions as to the robustness of the processes leading up to that decision.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Your time has expired and I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

MRS S. NAPA: Madam Speaker I rise to stand and move a Motion:

That speaking time be extended for the Honourable James Beer

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Is there a Seconder to the Motion?

Seconded by the Honourable William Heather Jnr

I will put the Question that:

The Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

You may continue Honourable Member.

MR J. BEER: Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you to the Honourable Selina Napa and thank you to the Members of Parliament for their support.

The Bill is properly entitled, The Marine Resources Bill. So, it deals rightly with all resources from the marine resource, from that area. It deals with living and non living. The concern I have with this particular Bill in relation to that Madam Speaker is that it allows also for discretionary powers for the Minister to grant access agreements for exploitation and exploration of non living resources.

It does in some sense duplicate the Seabed Mining's Act of the Cook Islands. It says quite clearly that the Minister may grant access, exploration and exploitation of non living resources in our Marae Moana. I am also certain that it also says the same thing in the Seabed Mining Act.

The concern I have is that the potential duplication particularly in the Marine Resources Bill does not take into consideration or mention this, it is silent in mentioning the Seabed Mining Act. The Bill in that respect does not allow in my opinion for the Seabed Mining Act processes to be part of the process before an access agreement is agreed to by the Minister.

And to give some backing to what I have just said, I spoke to more than one lawyer in relation to how law is applied. I was told by these two gentlemen that it does not matter what the intention of Parliament was nor does it matter what the Explanatory Note say about an Act or legislation. The Act is the Act, the law is the law and the court who interprets it as it is provided.

We heard the Minister of Finance make great gains about the Quota Management System and he is quite right to say that quota management systems are there to make sure that the resource is not over exploited and that it is sustainable. Unfortunately, the quota management system in my reading of the Bill is limited in respect of those current agreements that we have with the European Union.

Quotation Management System can certainly apply to licenses that are issued on an annual basis. I doubt very much in my opinion Madam Speaker that agreements between the Cook Islands and the European Union spanning eight years up to my calculation 2023 will be able to introduce the quota management system.

The Quota Management System as the Bill reads also suggests and stated mandatory requirement by the Secretary of Marine Resources to put together a fishing plan in order for any designated fishery before the quota management system.

That is an area I believe that the Cook Islands Parliament Select Committee on this particular matter if it does proceed is able to gain from that further information and further understanding of what the Bill says.

The other area which I want to talk about is the area in terms of endangered fisheries or endangered species. I would like to get a greater understanding as precisely how that will work particularly in a purse seine situation. We are aware that big eye tuna are endangered or nearing endangered levels. How would that apply when caught in a purse seine net?

I am sure the Prime Minister in his closing address will be able to deal with some of those issues if not hopefully the Select Committee may.

The Minister of Finance spoke about the Cook Islands leading the way in terms of the quota management system in the hope that other countries will be able to adopt those practices and I would have to agree with him that the quota management system is a system in which it is probably the best practice at this current stage and for that reason, Madam Speaker I wish to endorse what the Minister of Finance has stated.

We are not here to play politics, we are not here to try and get one over the other. This really is about one of the most important Bills this country has had before this House. It has been a long time coming, Prime Minister and I think this is the kind of

engagement with the public, particularly with the Select Committee will relish the opportunity to be able to give their thoughts on such an important Bill.

In closing, Madam Speaker we would be most grateful if the Prime Minister in his closing speech does send this Bill to a Select Committee because as I alluded to earlier there is so much more things within the Bill that I would like to be able to talk to and address that need to go to a Select Committee for it to be able to give the fullness of debate and transparency.

Madam Speaker, if I can also say that I am grateful and all the Members of Parliament are also grateful to the assistance provided by the New Zealand Government and the United Nations Development Programme in being able to assist Members of Parliament have a greater understanding of such an important Bill before the House, Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member are there any further speakers? I see the Honourable Toka Hagai on the understanding that we have five minutes to go. You have the Floor.

MR T. HAGAI: Thank you, Madam Speaker for giving me five minutes and I think I will sing to use up that five minutes.

Firstly, I would like to greet you all and wish you a prosperous New Year especially as we continue to make laws for our country. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity at the workshop last week to study and discuss the Bill before us.

I would also like to thank our two advisors in the public gallery who spent a lot of time looking over this Bill helping us to understand it. Also, guiding us on issues which we can do in improving this garden in our ocean. I also believe there were other people involved in putting this Bill together and I also extend my thank you to you all.

I also would like to extend my appreciation to the Government and the Opposition for the workshop that was held last week in which I believe is a way forward and will become a benefit to our nation in the future.

Madam Speaker I believe this Bill was started while I was still at Rakuraku Primary School, it looks at conserving our ocean especially for us in Rakahanga. During those years' politicians came to visit the island to show us what we can do to gain from the ocean and how we can protect it. It has been 50 years and nothing has happened.

I believe the people in those days were told that the officials will go away and will return to the island to make what the people wanted a reality. When these officials left, they never returned back to Rakahanga. Now, I am a Member of Parliament and it has come up again. I have told my people that I will try and ensure that this happens for them. Now, as I stand here as a Member of Parliament, I am happy to talk about what the ocean will give us in the future.

When I look at this Bill it gives us a lot of positive aspects to gain from the ocean especially for us in the Northern Group. In our ocean we have witnessed large ships come through during the past. I used to wonder what these ships were doing in our ocean and close to the reef. I do believe in those days there was no technology to monitor the movement of these ships but today I am happy when I went to the Marine Resources office to learn that they can track the movements of these ships. And this tells me once these vessels breach our laws they a liable to be arrested.

It was during the time I was on the Purse Seining Committee that I was able to witness all these things at the Marine Resources office.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I will interrupt you because our time is up. I will ask you to say our closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

MADAM SPEAKER: Parliament is adjourned until Wednesday, 14 February at 1.00 p.m. and Happy Valentines everybody for tomorrow.

Sitting adjourned at 4.58 p.m.

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