



FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Hansard Report

49th Session

Eighth Meeting

Volume 8

MONDAY 15 JUNE 2020

MADAM SPEAKER TOOK THE CHAIR AT 1.00 p.m.

OPENING PRAYER

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

Kia Orana to all the Honourable Members who have gathered in our Honourable House this afternoon. Firstly, my thanks and appreciation to our Reverend for the deliverance of our message today in assisting us with our deliberations in this Honourable House.

My greetings go out to our people in the Northern and Southern Groups and here on Rarotonga, listening to the radio this afternoon. I would like to say thank you to all the Members who accepted the invitation from a group, for their presentation to Parliament this afternoon. I thank all of you.

The first announcement this afternoon is that we are still under the COVID-19 rules. We are reminded to remain sitting when speaking and to speak from behind the barriers. To keep washing our hands with the hand sanitisers and to dispose of your used tissues in the bags provided. We will continue with this until we have further notice from the Ministry of Health informing us that we will no longer need to observe these measures.

Secondly, as requested and recommended by our audio and sound team recording our proceedings, so please when you speak, speak directly into the mic so your speech is captured accurately and clearly, for our record. The Leader of the House will move a motion before the House, to suspend Standing Orders, so we are able to follow the procedures for COVID-19.

With your indulgence, I would like to express our sympathy and condolences to a number of people that have worked for Parliament. The first one namely, Mrs Poo Tai, the late wife of the night watchman Chris Tai, of this House, our words of encouragement and sincere condolences to Papa Chris Tai.

Secondly, special condolences go out to the wife of the former Member of Parliament for Matavera, Mataio Aperau, whose wife Tereapii just passed away, so again have served this country in the House, our condolences.

Thirdly, our condolences to goes out for the bereavement of Mrs Mii Matapo, the wife of former Member of Parliament, Papa Tiki Matapo, who served in this Honourable

House and also the time they served in the High Commission Office in Wellington, New Zealand.

A special mention and condolences also to Papa Peri Vaevaepare, who was a former Member Parliament of this House. This is deeply saddening as he has returned to our country, under the COVID-19 quarantine and unfortunately he was not able to make it home, so our combined condolences and encouragement to his family.

I would also like to extend our deep condolences to the family of Mrs Sue Fletcher-Vea, a young lady who has been the President of Tourism Cook Islands. We are shocked to hear of her passing, as she is still young, but we express our sincerest sympathy to her family.

This includes also to all the family of the people of the Cook Islands who have experienced a bereavement. On behalf of the Members of Parliament, we would like to express our condolences to you all.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the media personnel in the Public Gallery today.

That brings my notices to an end and I would like to call on the Leader of the House to move a motion, please.

MR T. ELIKANA: Madame Speaker, I think you have been alluded to the matter that needs to be put to a Motion before this House, which is the requirement under Standing Order 155, for Members, when speaking in this House, to be upstanding when addressing in the House.

So in that respect Madam Speaker, I stand to move a Motion:

That Standing Order 155, making that requirement to be suspended, to enable the Members to sit down and speak from their seats, in compliance with COVID measures that has been taken by this House

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and I call a Seconder for the Motion, please.

Seconded by the Honourable Member, Tamaiva Tuavera

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Honourable Members, we will now go to Question Time.

QUESTION TIME

Question Time today will be thirty minutes and the Floor is now open.

MRS T. MATAPO: Greetings to everybody on this beautiful afternoon.

My question is to anyone who can give me an answer. During the last Sitting of Parliament in March, I was not able to attend the Sitting and I was not able to hear the proceedings of Parliament during that time due to telephone problems on Mangaia. My question is, how much longer do we have to wait before our radio or telecommunications are operating again so we can connect back to the radio in the Outer Islands.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I see the Honourable Mark Brown, you have the Floor.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you for this question. Madam Speaker, I believe many of our islands are able to hear the radio at this time. Vodafone Company is now trying their best to ensure that everything goes well with our telecommunications to the Outer Islands.

Government has put aside an appropriation of \$400,000 this year for the purpose of upgrading radio, television, internet and mobile on all of our islands. They have already started in the Outer Islands with the radio services but maybe it is best for the Honourable Member to go and see the Vodafone Company and ask them what is required for them to be able to hear the radio in the Outer Islands. The Members of Government from the Outer Islands had already been to see Vodafone and through the internet, the people were able to hear the radio broadcast on their islands. They were able to receive small pieces of equipment Madam Speaker to enable the radio to be broadcast and the TV to be broadcast on their islands.

You are on the island Honourable Member so I am sure you can go and see Vodafone and ask them what is required so the people of Mangaia can hear the radio on the island of Mangaia.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I see the Honourable Member Manuela Kitai, you have the Floor.

MR M. KITAI: Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to everyone in the House this afternoon.

My question is regarding the Island Council elections. My question is why are foreigners allowed to vote in the Island Council elections and yet they are not permanent residence and they are not Cook Islanders? My question is why are they allowed to vote. We have our own Act and I have not seen any Clause in the Act that permits them to vote. Can I be enlightened please? Thank you.

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

HON. H. PUNA: Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you to the Honourable Member for this good question. I can see that we have an Amendment Bill for Island Government before the House. I believe that is the right time Madam Speaker during the debate of the Amendment Bill to raise all the points as raised by the Honourable Member.

As we understand in the Parliamentary Elections, only Cook Islanders and permanent residents are permitted to vote. I do believe this is the concept the Member is basing his mindset on.

Just a brief explanation, the General Election for Parliament is different to the Island Council elections. They are like the election for positions in the villages and emphasis or weight is given to this election to those who reside in the communities on the islands. I think that is why the law is heading this way Honourable Member.

As I have said before, I think it is appropriate when we come to address this Amendment Bill before the House, it is the appropriate time to discuss all those thoughts. Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Member, Terepai Maoate you have the Floor.

MR T. MAOATE: Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to all of us this afternoon. I would like to refer to last Friday, I was able to listen to the Prime Minister and the Minister on radio discussing the issue of opening our borders and the return of our people as well as tourism from New Zealand in light of the need for economic development.

I fully support the notion of economic development and my question is to the Minister of Health. I have two questions. The first one is whether the Ministry of Health is ready for the opening of our borders in accepting travelers from New Zealand, Australia, ready in the testing capabilities that we have, the tracking and all the requirements that is required to ensure that we have the measures in place. Are we ready?

The second question is, whether in this Budget Appropriation, there was consideration to increase our Budget in order to provide the Ministry of Health the resources to prepare us in case there is another situation we face of COVID shutdown and so forth. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: I see the Honourable Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker and thank you Honourable Member. Greetings to everyone in the House this afternoon. Special greetings to our people listening in to the broadcast and to all Honourable Members of the House.

Thank you to the Honourable Member for Amuri/Ureia for the question that you have asked. We all understand that we do not make decisions without looking deeply into these matters. I wish to thank the people who have been leading our people during this time of COVID-19, our people on Rarotonga and also our people in New Zealand who are helping us.

We now have accommodations ready in case we get a COVID case but there are areas that needs to be improved. However, there are various ways that we are looking into to make improvements of the situation that we are in today. There has been a great improvement from the arrangements and organising by the Ministry of Health during this time, and we are well prepared in case this disease reach our country.

Our people has to understand that we are still in the situation where our borders are closed to the rest of the world. We will only be opened to New Zealand and Australia but they are required to go into quarantine for 30 days before they can come here. I believe this answers your first question.

Regarding your second question, I will not respond to this because we are still to deliberate on our Appropriation Bill maybe at that time it will be more appropriate to give you a response. Thank you.

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

MRS S. NAPA: My question is to the Minister of Parliament. As we are aware that Parliament have had three Sittings and there has been no appointment of a Clerk of Parliament. Can the Minister of Parliament explain as to when the Clerk of Parliament is going to be appointed? If there is no confirmation, then why is it taking too long for this appointment?

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Madam Speaker, before I answer the Honourable Members question, I have a bereavement notice to make to the Mama on Enuamanu.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, are you putting out a Point of Order?

MRS S. NAPA: Point of Order Madam Speaker. If we are going out of Question Time can the time be stopped?

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member perhaps we can do that at your very first intervention after Question Time.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker. To the Honourable Member for Titikaveka, my apologies, I will not respond to your question because this particular issue is not my responsibility. This is in the hands of our Madam Speaker who is the Head of our Parliamentary Services. Thank you.

MRS S. NAPA: To the Honourable Minister, if you are unable to respond to my question, maybe the Prime Minister could respond or are we going to wait for the Speaker to respond.

MADAM SPEAKER: Maybe I should intervene, in engaging the Clerk of Parliament, it is the Speakers responsibility not a Government or Executives responsibility. This is a Parliamentary responsibility and I can say that the process is in progress and it is not completed for various reasons and I would ask that you leave it at that.

I see the Honourable Nooroa Baker and you have the Floor.

MR N. BAKER: Thank you Madam Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Corrective Services. I see you are erecting a concrete wall around the prison in my village of Arorangi and I would like you to explain what you are doing here because I have a supplementary question to that.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you very much to the Honourable Member of Akaoa and the question as to what is happening at the prison premises. My answer to the Honourable Member is, partly the changes I am making at the prison is not only to change the look of our prison but I am also preparing these inmates for the times when they will exit prison and join our society in general.

Regarding the wall you mentioned, it is not to stop the inmates from breaking out of prison but the purpose of the wall is to protect the public passing on the road.

During my time in prison, I observed that some practices was that when people pass by on the road, things were thrown into the prison premises because there were no walls and this includes bottles of beer. Nowadays, it can be packets of marijuana. It led me to decide to stop this practice by building the wall. So, to all the Honourable Members and Madam Speaker the reason for this wall is not to punish the inmates but rather to protect them from all these intrusions into their space in prison.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Are there any further speakers? There's a supplementary question from the Honourable Nooroa Baker, and you have the Floor.

MR N. BAKER: Thank you Madam Speaker. My supplementary question to the Honourable Minister. My people in Arorangi are asking me about the Marae and I would like to ask the Minister to please explain to these people as to what is happening to the Marae in Arorangi.

HON. G. ANGENE: Thank you Honourable Member Nooroa Baker for your supplementary question as to what is happening to the Marae at Atupare and the shifting of this Marae.

On this question as to what is happening to this Marae, those who have been there know where the Marae is situated today. When events happen at the Marae, people sit at the back of the Ui Ariki. Today, it is overgrown and covered with plants and flowers and so I thought I should do something. Therefore, I met with the Aronga Mana and the Clerk of the House of Ariki and I gave them a proposal of what I intend to do and they were happy and approved the plan.

Therefore, I would like to confirm before this House and to the people, those are my intentions for the Marae and I have introduced some changes. I would like to mention in this House about the gossip that has been circulating that I should stick to my own Marae and not the ones in other villages. I just want to assure the House that this has been done and what I did at Atupare was for the House of Ariki of our country.

We need to understand how this is run and where there is a separation from the Chiefs of the Cook Islands to those from our constituency. Greetings to the Honourable Member, thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Members, we are about to run out time and we will finish this for now.

I now call the Leader of the House to move a Motion.

MR T. ELIKANA: Thank you Madam Speaker. I would like to move:

That Standing Order 224, which touches on the requirements regarding the introduction of the Bills into this House, be suspended, so as to enable the following Bills to be introduced today, which is the; Agriculture Bill 2020, Leases Restrictions Amendment Bill 2020, Cook Islands Amendment Bill 2020, Banking Amendment Bill 2020 and the Seabed Minerals Amendment Bill 2020

MADAM SPEAKER: Is there a Seconder for the Motion?

Secinded by the Honourable Minister, Rose Brown

HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE: I want a point of clarification Madam Speaker. I do not understand why we are suspending Standing Order 224, as the required notice has been given, with a one-day notice. Is that not so?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Bills need to be on notice for one day and this is our first Sitting day, so they have not sat for one day. So in order for us to be able to bring them as business of the day, we need to suspend that Standing Order. Is that alright? Is that clarification?

Thank you very much, so there is a Motion on the Floor and it has been seconded.

I will put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agree to

We will now go to the Presentation of Bills.

PRESENTATION OF BILLS

I call the Minister of Agriculture, for the Motion on the First Reading of the Agriculture Bill 2020,

ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE (J. DANIEL): Agriculture Bill 2020.

BILL READ A FIRST TIME

MADAM SPEAKER: May I ask the Minister the date and time for the Second Reading of the Bill?

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Forthwith, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Bill is ordered for the Second Reading forthwith.

We will now go to the second Bill, the Leases Restrictions Amendment Bill 2020.

ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE: Leases Restrictions Amendment Bill 2020.

BILL READ A FIRST TIME

MADAM SPEAKER: May I ask the Minister, the date and time for the Second Reading of the Bill, please?

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Following the reading of the Seabed Minerals Amendment Bill 2020.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Leases Restrictions Amendment Bill is called for the Second Reading after the Seabed Minerals Amendment Bill 2020.

We will now go to the next Bill, Cook Islands Amendment Bill 2020.

ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE: Cook Islands Amendment Bill 2020.

BILL READ A FIRST TIME

MADAM SPEAKER: May I ask the Minister the date and time for the Second Reading of the Bill?

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Following the reading of the Leases Restrictions Amendment Bill 2020.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Cook Islands Amendment Bill 2020 is ordered for the Second reading, following the Leases Restrictions Amendment Bill 2020.

We will now go to the Banking Amendment Bill 2020

ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE: Banking Amendment Bill 2020.

BILL READ A FIRST TIME

MADAM SPEAKER: May I ask the Minister the date and time for the Second Reading of the Bill?

HON. M. BROWN: Following the Agriculture Bill 2020, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Banking Amendment Bill 2020 is called for the Second Reading after the Agriculture Bill 2020.

We will now go to the First Reading of the Seabed Minerals Amendment Bill 2020.

ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE: Seabed Minerals Amendment Bill 2020.

BILL READ A FIRST TIME

MADAM SPEAKER: May I ask the Minister for the date and time for the Second Reading of the Bill?

HON. M. BROWN: After the Banking Amendment Bill 2020.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Seabed Minerals Amendment Bill 2020 is called for the Second Reading after the Banking Amendment Bill 2020.

We will now go to Presentation of Papers.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

I call the Minister Mark Brown to present Papers No. 49, 50 and 51.

HON. M. BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker. I have the honour to present:

Paper No. 49: Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) Order 2020, Serial No. 2020/10

Paper No. 50: Public Expenditure Review Committee (Remuneration of Committee Members) Order 2020, Serial No. 2020/11

Paper No. 51: Public Expenditure Review Committee (Appointment of Other Committee Members) Order 2020, Serial No. 2020/12

I lay this before the House.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I now call the Prime Minister Henry Puna, to present Paper No. 52.

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

Paper No. 52: Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities (Extension of More Favourable Treatment) Order 2020, Serial No. 2020/13

I now lay this on the Table.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I now call the Minister Rose Brown to present Paper No. 54

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you. I have the honour to present:

Paper No.54: Personal Property Securities (Transitional Matters) Regulations 2020, Serial No. 2020/14

I lay this on the Table.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that completes the Presentation of Papers.

We will now go to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Orders of the Day is the Agriculture Bill 2020. We will now go to the Second Reading of the Bill. I call the Minister to move for the Second Reading of the Bill.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Thank you Madam Speaker. I move:

The Bill be now read a Second time

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you and you may continue with your speech.

HON. R. TOKI-BROWN: Kia Orana to all of us in the name of our Lord. Madam Speaker, please allow me a time to offer some words of condolences to the families on the island of Atiu.

To our grandmother Mama Nga Hosea, who passed away just a few minutes ago before a question was asked to me in this Honourable House. I would like to express our words of sympathy to all the families on the island and to the people in the village of Areora for the sudden passing of our Mama this afternoon. Please accept our words of condolences from myself and from your Honourable Member for Areora/Ngatiarua/Tengatangi, to all of you, to our families and all the people on the island.

I would also like to add to the words of condolences expressed by our Madam Speaker earlier, to all the families who have recently lost their loved ones.

To all the families and children of Papa Tauu Porio, who recently passed away in Atiu. To the family of Ngatamariki Tiatoa I would also like to express our words of condolences. We have had three bereavements on Atiu within a short space of time.

On Rarotonga, to the family of Tereapii Matai, his wife and children, to Mama Vaine Rairoa who also passed away and to all the bereaved families on the island of Atiu and here on Rarotonga, we extend our deepest sympathy to you all.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to mention those former employees of the Ministry of Health who have passed on – the passing away of Dr Koekoe Mokotupu, the late Papa Peri Vaevae Pare and the recent passing of young Randolph George and Nurse Shirley Patia on the island of Mitiaro. To the families of these people, please accept our words of condolences for all these good servants of the Ministry of Health.

Madam Speaker, I will come back to the Bill before the House today. I would like to acknowledge the Head of the Ministry of Agriculture in the House with us today, Temarama Anguna, to all the workers of the Ministry of Agriculture here on Rarotonga and all the islands of the Cook Islands. I also acknowledge our Associate Minister, Patrick Arioka in the House today because, he was part of the development of this Bill for Agriculture before he became a Member of the House.

To all those of you that worked hard to put this Bill together, the officials including the Crown Law Office and anyone else that was involved in the developing and bringing this Bill to reality, I convey to you all my words of appreciation. May God Bless you all.

Madam Speaker, we all realise that as a result of this COVID pandemic that we encountered, there has been a new feeling and movement amongst our people. Our people have returned to utilise the land and the soil that has been gifted to us by God.

I extend my sincere appreciation to Government for providing emergency funding to help our people with their food resource as we go through this time, thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, Members of Parliament and our people listening in, with your indulgence, please allow me to present my statement in English as there was not enough time to translate it into Maori.

For 42 years the Ministry of Agriculture have operated under the Ministry of Agriculture Act 1978. Since then, there have been significant changes in the Agriculture sector and it is important that the legal framework that we operate evolves with the changes and also to address the legislative gaps over the last 42 years as provided in the 1978 Act.

Today, as Minister for Agriculture I have been very pleased to see many of our people here on Rarotonga and most importantly in our Pa Enuia return to planting our lands for food security as a result of the impact of COVID-19.

On this note my sincere thanks to our people of Atiu for hosting us and taking care of us on the island of Atiu about two weeks ago when we arrived for the opening of your Agriculture Nursery on the island of Atiu. So please accept my sincere thanks for your great hosting and the warmth that we felt with our people and all your wonderful thoughts and plans for the future agriculture of the island of Atiu.

I am also very grateful to see the increased participation of our schools in our agriculture school programmes.

I was also touched by the heartfelt decisions of those landowners that freely gave up sections of their land to our Pacific and International community groups, to plant for their livelihoods, and these are people who have made the Cook Islands their home away from home. Meitaki ranuinui.

This new Agriculture Bill provides for the functions, powers and administration of the Ministry of Agriculture under modern governance arrangements and aims to ensure that the Ministry can effectively manage the agriculture sector and facilitate its sustainable development into the future.

In summary, this Bill repeals and replaces the 1978 Ministry of Agriculture Act. The future proofs the Ministry to accommodate new functions that are encouraging sustainable agricultural production including the production of crops, livestock and pollinators, managing crop and livestock generic resources; protecting the welfare of

livestock and other farmed animals; formulating and implementing plans, policies and strategies for the agricultural sector. Formulating and implementing agricultural projects, programmes and initiatives, developing quality certifications schemes and value claims for the agriculture sector.

It provides for the appointment of data collectors and powers and procedures to collect data so that the Ministry can measure agricultural production; identify or measure a risk to agricultural production; take informed responses to invasive species outbreaks or other plant or animal emergencies.

It mandates that the requirement to produce information or records does not extend to commercially confidential or privileged information or records and the Ministry cannot use that information for the purpose of assessing or levying taxes.

It also provides for the appointment of Inspectors and powers and procedures to enter property to test, analyse, collect samples and take photographs of anything which may be reasonably considered to have an adverse effect on agriculture or the agricultural sector.

An Inspector may be required to investigate agricultural incidents by undertaking an assessment of damage caused by an agricultural incident, undertaking remediation of the damage, requiring the person's name and address or information or records about anything having an adverse effect on agriculture or the agricultural sector, making orders about anything likely to have an adverse effect on agriculture be removed, prevented or minimized.

And it provides for minor offences and penalties to an individual or a company for failure to comply. Importantly the Bill also mandates that the Ministry is to work collaboratively or in partnership with Island Governments.

This Agriculture Bill 2020 is timely as we face various situations regarding our agriculture sector.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry must be able to make informed decisions hence the collection of data and must be aware of anything that may or is likely to have an adverse effect on agriculture hence the appointment of Inspectors. And the Ministry must be permitted to issue fines and penalties against those who may or is likely to cause adverse effects against the sector, as a deterrent.

In closing, our agriculture sector must become more innovative and more adaptable to a constantly changing social, economic and physical environment and so must the Ministry and to support the sustainable development of the agriculture sector into the future so must the legal framework be amended to support that development.

The Government intends to form a Select Committee to present this Bill to the people to discuss and make them aware of the Bill for the future.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister. I now call for a Seconder for the Motion of the Second Reading of the Bill.

Seconded by the Honourable Patrick Arioka

Honourable Members we are about to have a break in about five minutes but if somebody would like to take the Floor before the break. You have the Floor Honourable Patrick Arioka.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you Madam Speaker for this great opportunity for the Agriculture industry of this country that we are now going through the presentation of the Agriculture Bill 2020.

Kia Orana to all Honourable Members of this Honourable House and to all the Heads and staff of our Parliamentary Service. Kia Orana to all our people listening in to Parliament and thank you for waiting for this Agriculture Bill to be presented to Parliament. I also extend special greetings to all those people responsible for putting this Bill together. If I may Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the Food and Agriculture Organisations of the United Nations, they were responsible for the funding to pay those that came together to put the Bill together for us to deliberate today.

The Minister and I would like to convey our appreciation to Fine Arnold and Mr Miles from Fiji who worked together to research and put the Bill together. I would also like to extend an acknowledgement to all the staff members and the many people involved in putting this Bill together. I would like to acknowledge all the different sectors in the Ministry of Agriculture, hydroponics, livestock, vegetables and others for their contributions to the Bill.

Therefore Madam Speaker, this is not all new, these things have been happening for some years but today we are seeing it brought back into the House for the Members of Parliament to look at it again. We would also like to acknowledge all those of our senior people in the past for their hard work in Agriculture and for contributing towards this Bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member may I please interrupt. Our time is up and when we come back from our suspension, you will be back on the Floor to continue with your speech.

Parliament is suspended until 3.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 2.30 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.00 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please be seated. Parliament is resumed. I believe there was lot of food out there, so we are trying to get as much food in us as we could. So, if you feel like dozing off, just get up and have a walk and then come back.

Before we suspended, the Honourable Patrick Arioka had the Floor and you may continue with your debate.

MR P. ARIOKA: Thank you Madam Speaker. I ended my speech by acknowledging our forefathers and our parents that contributed to the creation of the Bill. It is only right that on behalf of all of us, I acknowledge the former Minister of Agriculture that retired, former Member of Parliament, Kiriau Turepu. He was instrumental in the formation and a strong supporter of this Bill that is before us today.

Lastly Madam Speaker, I would also like to especially mention our former Secretary of Agriculture who have been ill in the last few weeks, Dr Matairangi Porea. We all trust that even if he is overseas, in New Zealand, he is listening in to our debate today.

Madam Speaker, I would like to present an outline of an idea, that this Bill before us consist of ways to financially support our people in the future. The 1978 Act is now outdated and it is way past its time, it is now time to look at a few provisions again to ensure that it is appropriate and suits our needs today.

Firstly, to correct the Clauses that is appropriate for the vision of our Nation that is written under the National Development Goals (NDG). The aspiration of this Bill is so it is workable in assisting our people. Written in the NDG, the Ministry of Agriculture is required to survey and evaluate the standards within agriculture, as these are the areas that our Government is funding to complete these projects. It is only right then Madam Speaker that these findings enabled the Bill to be updated.

The Regulations that will eventually be created will show how the Bill should be used, it will also contribute to improve the weak areas within our Ministry.

Today, we are aware of growers that are using harmful pesticides and also animal husbandry are on the increase and there is a real need for areas that are failing that needs to be corrected. It is quite obvious Madam Speaker that a majority of our animal keepers are mistreating animals and being seen by tourists therefore it is a disadvantage to our Nation.

Our people's livelihood are affected by the use of harmful pesticides, even using pesticides without any understanding that they are harmful to our people. So, the Bill is going to cover these areas so that they not only inform our people, but also support our growers who are doing a brilliant job with growing produce that is healthy for us and also to financially support themselves these days.

In this Bill Madam Speaker, the Ministry had formed an Advisory Division. This is one of the division that was terminated by the Ministry in 1996. When we look at the termination, this division is the link between the Ministry and our people and this division assist our growers.

So, Members of Parliament in the Honourable House, these had already been established and this is the result of all that work.

Thirdly Madam Speaker, the Advisory Committee that we can see in the Bill will be involved in some recommendations and proposals by the Ministry in developing

agriculture for the future. The most important aspect here is that they be included in all the proposals and recommendations of each division of the Ministry, through their observations and being aware about what is happening in the growing industry. So, it is only appropriate that they be involved in the development and management of agriculture in this country.

Madam Speaker, there are two parts in this Bill. One is the responsibilities, what they do and the powers and authority they need to do the work. This will guide and set the direction with what they have to do in assisting our people in the area of growing food and animal husbandry.

The protection of our borders through bio-security. These are the areas that are being considered to strengthen their capacity.

Madam Speaker, when we consider the provision of data collection and data collectors collecting the data in our communities, this will greatly assist our Ministry of Agriculture in their responsibilities. Madam Speaker, this is one area that is very weak in this Ministry and in other Ministries in terms of data collection. I am encouraged that this provision has been made as part of the law that it has to be done and will never stop.

Basically, the main thrust of this part is that we are able to measure what is good and what is bad in our growing area.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member, may I interrupt you, your time has expired if you have more to contribute in the debate, maybe a Member would like to move a Motion for your time to be extended to ten minutes. I see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown.

HON. R. TOKI BROWN: Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Honourable Member be given extra time to complete his comments

MADAM SPEAKER: That will be for ten minutes. Is there a Seconder?

Seconded by the Honourable William Heather

I put the Question:

That the Motion be agreed to?

Motion agreed to

Your time is extended to ten minutes and you may continue.

MR P. ARIOKA: Madam Speaker, thank you for the extended time given to me by our Members.

In the area of data and knowledge collection from amongst our growers, it has become vital and important in helping them and strengthening them in the area of growing and agriculture.

We may be aware of the presence of our Agriculture officers at our Punanga Nui Market especially inspecting the produce on the tables which gives them an indication of the situation and quality of the produce that we have. This knowledge helps us to gauge the standard of our agriculture activities over one month, three months and six months.

Although this has already been carried out, myself and the Minister are very pleased that this has now been made a provision of the Bill.

When we look at the functions and responsibilities of the Inspectors under the Bill, this is one area that the Ministry is weak and its responsibilities under the Act in policing what our people are doing wrong in the area of agriculture.

The main thrust of this part is we are able to address the issue of importation of bugs, diseases and other harmful inclusions into our country through importation. Even though this area is provided for in the Bio-Security Act of 2008, however, it's inclusion into this Bill and Act to come, establishes these systems across all the islands of the Cook Islands.

Therefore, Madam Speaker this Bill provides us the means to protect our bio-diversity here in the Cook Islands for the future. There are many other areas that we can develop to benefit us but these remain a stable part of the development of agriculture for our own benefit into the future. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I again give my full support to this Bill before the House today. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Patrick Arioka.

Now the Floor is open for debate, and I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa; you have the Floor.

MR V. TUPA: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me this opportunity to address this House. Before I do so, may I seek your indulgence to convey some words of comfort to some of the people that I know, and these are people that lives in my constituency.

Firstly, I want to mention Papa Peri Vaevae Pare, as he has been a Member of this House in the past. I give my words of comfort to the two children who are residing here in Rarotonga including those who are living overseas in New Zealand and Australia.

Secondly, to the deceased that was mentioned by the Honourable Minister Rose Brown, Apii Matai, who also lives in my constituency Matavera. I give my words of comfort to his wife, Pauline and to their children and family in Matavera.

Finally, I also convey words of comfort to Mataio Aperau's family for the passing away of Mama Tere Aperau. I convey words of comfort to the family here in Rarotonga and

those living in New Zealand and Australia. In the meantime, they are waiting for the opportunity to come back home.

I also convey my condolences to the family of Mama Vaine Rairoa who passed away. Although Mama Vaine lived in Avatiu, her son, known to many as Ting, lives in my constituency. I convey my words of comfort to Ting and his wife and to all the family of Mama Vaine Rairoa.

Madam Speaker, I will now come back to the Bill before this House. Madam Speaker, I want to tell this House that I have read this Bill from the beginning to the end and from the end to the front. I am looking at this Bill and I believe this is good and strong Bill before this House.

I will not go into details of this Bill because I believe there is a Select Committee where we will consider all the related matters. I want to talk specifically on the type of work that this Ministry has carried. I have seen the old Act and in comparing the old Act there is no teeth in there for them to carry out their duties.

I have listened to the Associate Minister in his outlining of the difficulties of the old Act in saying that the inspectors don't have the powers to impose any of the things that we are not required to do. I have asked the head of this Ministry of Agriculture about those people that would steal from the plantations of others at present there is no way for people to redress those problems. We are hearing our planters complaining that their kumara, arrowroots, oranges, lemons and other products are stolen from their plots.

I would like to reiterate to the Honourable Members of this House that this is a good legislation and therefore we need to go through each clause so that it will improve our agriculture today. I would support the proposal that there should be a Committee to be appointed so that they can look into the Agriculture and support the work they do. This is part of the area that we need to encourage and give support to our planters. In addition, I give my support to this Bill and support the proposal for this to go to a Select Committee for further perusal.

Finally, I would like to go through the area where someone has been found to have breached the Bill. I am very interested in the area where a planter has breached the Act by using chemicals that is not approved for agriculture. I believe that this Bill before the House is a good Bill because it will strongly support our planter here. And finally, I would like to make comments on the relationship between our planters here in Rarotonga with those in the Outer Islands. In our Sitting last year, I remember there was some discussion whether the issue of bringing the administration of agriculture in the Outer Islands under the Ministry of Agriculture here in Rarotonga.

I do believe that what has been appropriated for the Agriculture department on the individual islands is not enough and not only that but sometimes when the Island Council sees that there is money available in the agriculture department they will use it for other purposes.

Madam Speaker, I would like to give my support to this Bill and to the proposal that there will be a Select Committee to be formed to look into this Bill.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Are there any further speakers? I see the Honourable Nooroa Baker, you have the Floor.

MR N. BAKER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Firstly, if I may Madam Speaker, allow me to make some acknowledgement to my people in my constituency who supported me and placed their faith in me as their Member of Parliament.

Now, I would like to speak on the Bill Madam Speaker. When I read this Bill regarding all the work that is taking place on this island in agriculture, I want to make mention of this because I believe this also has an impact on our trees and coconut trees in this Bill. I would like to see the provision of tree cutting and tree trimming to be included in this Bill based on what I have seen when I returned home from living in New Zealand. What I have observed happening in this area I am concerned as to how the trees are been cut and trimmed recklessly on this island. As far as I know, there are only two qualified people for this kind of work of tree cutting and that is myself and my son.

Madam Speaker, my concern here is that our country does not have a programme for replanting trees. There should be in the Bill a provision whereby a person cutting down a tree especially a fruit producing tree, that person should be obligated under the Bill to replant what they have cut down.

Madam Speaker, I have much concern especially when I see how trees are being cut and taken out on Rarotonga and as well as the Outer Islands. There should be a provision in the Bill on how to cut these trees in the proper way. Madam Speaker, during my training, I learnt that if a tree is cut or trimmed the wrong way, that tree will die. Therefore, there should be a provision in the Bill that compel people to do this the right way.

Madam Speaker, I would like to submit to the Minister of Agriculture for protection to be provided in the Bill for cutting and trimming trees so that our trees are protected. I believe that if we do this, our island nation will retain its rich look of growing greens which will please our visiting tourist. If we continue the current trend and practice of cutting trees recklessly and overdo it, our island will dry up because a lot of the tree covering has been removed especially during the hot season.

These are my thoughts Madam Speaker on this Bill and my support to it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member. The Honourable Minister George Angene wants the Floor, you may continue.

HON. G. ANGENE: Kia Orana, Madam Speaker and to all our people listening in to our broadcast. If I may Madam Speaker say a few words to the people of my constituency. Kia Orana to all the people of my Tupapa-Nui-o-Au, this is your favourite Member of Parliament. To those bereaved families, I send my condolences to you all. Those who have asked me for something, the Bible says there is a season for everything so I promise you it will come to you.

Madam Speaker, I will come back to the Bill before the House. I would like to acknowledge the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Marama Anguna for all her courage and hard work in putting this Bill together and submitting it to Parliament.

Madam Speaker, this young lady is from my constituency and like her Member of Parliament, we are both clever and full of energy. I am not only praising her but honouring her hard work. My congratulations to this young lady for your efforts.

I would also like to acknowledge the Honourable Minister Rose Brown for her contribution to this Bill. I give my 100 percent support to this Bill.

Madam Speaker and all Honourable Members, I heard the Honourable Member for Akaoa mention about some agricultural issues. I do understand where he is coming from. There is something about being licensed to cut down trees. He is also claiming that there is only two people in the Cook Islands that have licenses to cut trees. I believe a law should be in place that requires everyone here to be licensed before they can cut trees down. The aim here is for protection and we don't want people getting into an accident. We don't want spending money on patient referral to New Zealand and yet it is their own clumsiness.

Madam Speaker I have a team of village workers that does this kind of work of cutting trees. We need to allocate people for cutting trees and those that trim trees. I have the budget to support my team. The main aim here is for these people to be licensed to cut trees and for the support by Government. If you do not have a license for cutting trees, then you should be penalised.

I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture for this area to be inserted into the Bill to assist future programmes in this area. As mentioned by the Honourable Member earlier, there has not been any monitoring process for this kind of work but we need to consider it now for the Bill before the House and ensure we do it properly. Thank you to the Honourable Member for bringing this to the House and I hope that in the future we will have something in place for this area of our agriculture.

This is also to protect the Government not to spend money on referral cases to New Zealand because someone had cut themselves. This also involves the road accident these days of our youth where the Government is responsible for costly referral to New Zealand. We have different kinds of referrals to New Zealand which includes people who fell off the trees and other kinds of accidents which has become a funding burden on the Government. We saw the petition march during lunchtime about the wearing of helmets. Thank you to all of you who came to Parliament to show your concern about the helmet legislation.

If you don't want to wear helmets, go and approach your Member of Parliament and if you want to wear helmets go and see your Member of Parliament and he will bring the matter to Parliament. You should not march on the road.

MADAM SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am going to ask you to please come back on the Agriculture Bill. We will leave the helmet issue to another time.

HON. G. ANGENE: I was just following my time, but thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

HON. G. ANGENE: I will now come back and summarise my thoughts on this Bill before the House. Honourable Minister Rose Brown, Minister of Health and also the Minister of Agriculture, I believe that what I am about to say will involve both Ministries. I speak on Agriculture and I will again speak about Health, especially with the cutting of trees and other areas.

Madam Speaker, I give my full support with the intention of helping our people develop for the future.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister. I now give the Floor to the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera.

MR T. TUAVERA: Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to all of us this evening in this Honourable House. I would like to extend my words of greetings to the people in my constituency, Ngatangia. Greetings to all of the people of Ngatangia and especially to those that is going through bereavement.

I was told that yesterday was our Mama Orometua's birthday and also on that same day, we were informed that her mother passed away in Cairns, Australia. Thank you Madam Speaker, now I will talk about this Bill before us.

I will not spend a lot of time debating on this Bill. The only thing I wanted to touch on is, last year in Parliament, I spoke about livestock in the outer islands. These animals that I am wanting to speak about are; ducks, chicken, pig and goats.

I am happy that when I spoke to Minister Rose Brown and also to the Associate Minister, Patrick Arioka regarding this issue, they both agreed that we need to consider having abattoirs in the Outer Islands. Before the COVID period, there were some problems in the Outer Islands and it relates to wandering animals like pigs and goats destroying people's plantation.

There is one quick fix for this problem and that is to hunt them and bring them to Rarotonga for our people to eat. This matter has been raised to me by other people and I have heard young people talking about the idea of going to the Outer Islands to hunt down these wandering animals. In talking about this issue, they discovered that they need a freezer to store all these livestock.

Honourable Minister Brown, if you are able to construct these abattoirs so that it will cater for these livestock if they are hunted in the Outer Islands. I am one of those who is pushing for these people to go so that we can address this problem on those islands.

Earlier on, you mentioned about the short term support that Government is giving to address these issues. I am also happy to hear from you that there are some landowners who have given their land so that foreigners who do not own land on Rarotonga can plant for their livelihood. But I did not hear about your long term plan.

When we look at COVID-19 right now, we should also look at the long term planning of what we should do especially here in Rarotonga because there are lots of land which has not been cultivated and the problem is there is not enough machinery to clear the land. We all know that when we do some clearing work especially on the wet lands,

we need to get permission from the Environment Service to do that work. But these are potential land for planting.

So if you can include in your Appropriation for some tractors for Rarotonga and the implements that will come with the tractor, that is the long term that I am looking for.

I would like to thank the Head of the Ministry of Agriculture, Temarama Anguna, well done. When I look at this Bill, you have done a lot of work, collecting data and the drafting of this Bill, because if the Member of Parliament for Matavera is happy with this Bill that you have presented then it must be right. So Honourable Minister Rose Brown and your Associate Minister Arioka, I am praising you for what you have done but don't blame me when people start to shoot at you.

Thank you Madam Speaker, and I support this Bill before the House.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Member William Heather; you have the Floor.

MR W. HEATHER: Greetings to you Madam Speaker and to all Honourable Members of this House. Before I give my thoughts on this Bill before the House, I would like to ask for your indulgence Madam Speaker for me to address my people in my constituency, and also to convey my appreciation to the Minister of Health.

To all the people in Puaikura, from one end of the village to the other, to all our Traditional Leaders, our business people, to all the parents, our youth who are working very hard in our district, I extend a very warm welcome to you all. I must also not forget the Leaders of our Churches, I extend a very warm welcome to you all because you play a big part in the development of our communities.

Now, I would like to convey my appreciation to the Honourable Minister of Health, for what we have read in the newspaper today. Right on the front page, the headline 'Hospital Care for Mentally Ill'. Madam Speaker when I look at what is in the paper, it makes mention of one of my uncles, his thoughts and what he proposed and today we see the birth of this before us. So my sincere thanks to the Minister of Health, Rose Brown, thank you very much for what you have done for our people.

Madam Speaker, I will come back to the Bill before us. When I look at it there is a lot of important messages in this Bill. Our growers will benefit, our people will benefit and our country will benefit if this becomes a reality. Madam Speaker, throughout my time in Parliament, even when I was in Government I was a great supporter and I encouraged people to plant because this is the backbone of our country, agriculture.

Before the years of tourism in the early 70's, and before that, we know that this is what our people used to do. I am sure a lot of us recall during the days when this was a very important industry here in the Cook Islands.

Madam Speaker, I would like to focus and give emphasis and encourage the area of marketing. My thoughts here, Madam Speaker I can see that beyond our shores there is market for our produce overseas but we have to work hard to get our produce to these markets.

When Mr Nandi Glassie was the Minister for Agriculture, I presented him my thoughts on this but unfortunately it did not happen. When Papa Kiriau Turepu became Minister, and like the point emphasised by the Honourable Nooroa Baker, when you cut a tree you plant a new one. Those were my thoughts that I presented to Papa Kiriau and Mr Glassie but that did not happen.

With regards to the comments made by the Honourable Member George Angene about limiting the number of people cutting trees

HON. G. ANGENE: Point of Order.

MADAM SPEAKER: What is your Point of Order?

HON. G. ANGENE: 197, making unrelated comments or comments that are not correct.

MADAM SPEAKER: Just a minute, I think you might have just spoken too soon because he hasn't really finished what he is trying to say. Can we just let him finish his part of the speech please? You may continue Honourable Member.

MR W. HEATHER: Madam Speaker, I believe many people have bought their own chainsaws. During my days in the Ministry of Works when I was responsible for trimming and cutting trees in town from the shop South Seas International to the roundabout, I was insulted, I was criticised for doing this Madam Speaker.

I was called a butcher for cutting these trees but when you consider what I have done, none of those trees died from what I did and today they are flourishing.

This is what I am trying to say Madam Speaker, I am not critiquing what the Honourable Nooroa Baker said, I accept what he said but this is what I had to say. That is the reason I am expressing my thoughts and asking the Ministry of Agriculture to consider this properly and seriously before you confirm it and it becomes a major issue for all of us.

I do acknowledge that we do have a problem with livestock in the Outer Islands and I am proposing if we are able to secure shipping transportation maybe through Papa Tapi Taio shipping, then this will strengthen our ideas to utilise livestock from the Outer Islands.

Madam Speaker, I give my full support to the Bill as well as the implementation. Yes, the key to all of this is implementation of the provisions of this Bill and I will be behind you to support it all the way if the plans are well crafted. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member and I see the Honourable Tetangi Matapo, you have the Floor.

MRS T. MATAPO: Greetings Madam Speaker and all the Honourable Members. Madam Speaker, if I may please convey my greetings to my people on my island Mangaia, and even if they are not hearing me I will still greet them. Today is the celebration of the arrival of the missionaries to Mangaia and I believe the people in

Mangaia today are preparing themselves for this special occasion today. Your prayers for us are most welcomed. This evening at 6 o'clock the Mangaia-Rarotonga community will also be celebrating the arrival of Christianity to Mangaia at the Mangaia Hostel.

Our deepest condolences go out to all our families that have lost someone dear to them during this time of COVID-19. Papa Keni Tungata to all the families may the good Lord comfort you all. Papa Ngarima and the families may God be with you. Mama Oiaua Pukeiti, the wife of the late former Member of Parliament, Tereiti Pukeiti I convey condolences to all the family. Also our condolences to the passing away of the mother in law of our Member for Ivirua, Agnes Armstrong. May God comfort the husband of our Mama. To the family of Papa Peri Vaevaepare, former Member of Parliament, I convey condolences to the children and family. He has given a lot of support enabling a lot of people from Mangaia to do well to where they are today. Our deepest thoughts for all the families that are going through bereavements during this time.

I will now come back to the debate on the Bill before the House. Firstly, I would like to talk about the use of chemicals. Not to go against it but we heard our men saying that this chemical is their best friend. Maybe there are other chemicals that can be a best friend to our men if this can be brought to their attention. I bring this to our attention because there are provisions in the Bill that if you use these chemicals wrongly you will be penalised. This is the reason I am speaking on this issue because of our situation in Mangaia.

As mentioned earlier by other speakers, maybe the introductions of new machineries will assist our men in their planting activities.

The reason I strongly brought this matter before us today as we go through the time of the COVID-19 especially the use of machineries. During this time, when I approached the Island Council for the use of the machineries they laughed at me. The machineries are available but the attachments to be used by the machines to do the work are not available. This is one of our experiences and issue that I have seen in Mangaia. There was a proposal put on the Floor earlier about the administration of Agriculture for the Outer Islands to be brought back to Rarotonga.

My question here is, the administration of Agriculture was initially administered from here in Rarotonga, and then it went back to the Outer Islands then back to Rarotonga and now again to the Outer Islands. When will this be solved? Madam Speaker the problem here is money. When we look at the appropriation for the Outer Islands, I see that there is not enough money. How are we going to complete the projects? So if you think that the management of the Outer Islands funds is to be returned to Rarotonga, I think the Outer Islands should be given the chance to make the choice whether to return it here, or to leave the management for the Outer Islands and to increase that budget.

There were discussions about wandering livestock on the islands. There are those that are being farmed and taken care of by the people, and there are others that is just wandering wild up in the hills and the mountains. I support the proposal for an abattoir on each island because in our village, a plan was put together by our Puna that an

abattoir should be established in our village to utilise the goats and the pigs in our village.

We are aware that funding through the Pearl funding is available, I do hope that you support the applications by the Outer Islands especially with the supply of fencing their crops. Those are my thoughts Madam Speaker, and I fully support that this Bill be referred to a Select Committee as there are some very important issues that needs to be addressed. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will give the Floor to the Honourable Agnes Armstrong. I will then come back to the Honourable Member Tuakeu Tangatapoto. So you may have the Floor now please.

MRS A. ARMSTRONG: Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to everybody in the House today and those listening in. Greetings and condolences have gone to each and every island and to everyone concerned, so I won't repeat that again.

I would like to thank the Head of the Ministry of Agriculture for putting this Bill together, along with Crown Law and your team for putting this together, which has been long overdue.

The Bill sets out guiding principles for our Island Governments and farmers in the Pa Enea which I am grateful for as they have been included in this. We do feel in the Pa Enea that sometimes we are overlooked. We do get groups coming through or people coming to conduct workshops but each time they come, it is always the same thing. So I am hoping with this new Bill, a lot of the guidelines given will support and help our farmers in the Pa Enea immensely. Of course this includes the technical assistance and machinery. Thank you for including the Pa Enea.

I strongly support the Bill in essence but would also like our people out there to express their concerns and comments as well because they are the ones working the land, know what is required and know what chemicals they require.

We need to make sure our environment is protected in the same way and so I am sure this Bill will cover all that and look forward to this going out to the public. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Tuakeu Tangatapoto, you have the Floor.

MR T. TANGATAPOTO: Madam Speaker, greetings to you and your staff. To the Government side, the Prime Minister and all Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament, and those in the Opposition, I extend a very warm welcome to you. I also extend a very warm welcome to all our people listening to our debate in this House. Kia Orana to you all this afternoon.

With your indulgence Madam Speaker, may I be given the opportunity to address my people. To the three divisions on our islands, the Traditional Leaders, Church Leaders and our Government workers, I extend a very warm welcome to you all.

To all the family who went through difficult times this year due to bereavements, to our Papa, Metuaone Tou, I would like to convey my condolences and comfort to the children and family during this time.

During the last couple of months, two women from our island passed away. They were very strong in the women movement, strong in the community and strong in supporting all the things that is happening in regards to the women. The first woman is Aremaki Porima and secondly, Shirley Patia as previously mentioned by the Minister of Health. I extend words of condolences to all the family. May God give you comfort especially the two husbands left behind with their children and family.

Maybe Madam Speaker I should say this in this House. I think it is acceptable to us when someone passes on due to natural cause but definitely not because of the mistake made by the doctors or nurses. These two women passed away within a few days of each other. One of them was a nurse who served our community on our island for over thirty years.

Madam Speaker, we must not be criticised for making suspicion claims because this is our natural behaviour. Sometimes, we suspect about things that happened, and like I said earlier on, there are some causes of death that we accept, the fact maybe it is for natural cause, but one of the concern that I will raise is if the person passes away due to someone else's mistake.

I have not been supporting the idea in the past that we should have a doctor on each island, but now I fully support that we should have our own doctor or a strong Medical Practitioner on our island. This is what I am pleading to the Minister of Health to look into this matter because this woman who passed away has been serving our island for over thirty years and she has done her job very well.

I would like to say some words to my people who have been quarantined here on Rarotonga. They are wanting to go back to their home island of Mitiaro, they can afford to pay their fares but the problem is they cannot fly back. What I have heard from them is that the flight is full going to Mitiaro but because there are no passengers for the return trip to Rarotonga, Air Rarotonga will not take them.

My problem is this, if only the Government can provide for their meals while they are in isolation during the time of the COVID but that is not the case today. This is one of my plead to the Minister Responsible for Transport, to give the means so that my people can return back home.

I would like to say to my people from Mitiaro that during this time we have been through a lot of things, maybe some of you cannot pay your rent, maybe you cannot afford to buy food and you are struggling at this moment and I recall the song that goes, "*Let us go back home*".

Madam Speaker, I did not read the entire Agriculture Bill before the House. I just want to dwell on this word collaboration between the Ministry and the Island Government. I think we have been dwelling on this word for so many years but nothing has transpired.

I think when we look back to 2016, we will discover that each Island Government cannot look after their own Departments of Agriculture on each island. To clarify this matter, I was the Executive Officer on the island of Mitiaro in 2016 and we needed some seeds but at that time, diesel was the most important thing on the island. Since 2016 agricultural seedlings have never been something important to the island but diesel, even though we have solar power.

Madam Speaker, when I look at my island of Mitiaro as we have come through this COVID-19, the island have come together to plant and I see that there are plenty produce on the island. I would say that it is because of this COVID-19 that forced our people to go back and plant the land and go fishing.

Madam Speaker, it was clear to me back in 2016 that this was one important Ministry that Island Governments could not support and carry. The very small operating fund allocated will not even take a month before it is all spent. Although it is not stipulated within the Bill, I fully support the notion that the Ministry or the Agriculture sector be returned under the Central Ministry of Agriculture here on Rarotonga.

The tractor that is operating on the island of Mitiaro nowadays, I am not sure whether I was still running around wearing no clothes in those days when that tractor was first brought to the island. It was bought and delivered to the island by the Ministry of Agriculture and since then, we have not received any new tractor for our island Mitiaro.

As stated before, the island needs a tractor because you cannot get into agriculture farming today using the shovel. You cannot do anything so please consider our plea to supply machinery to the Outer Islands. Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member. You know you spent ten minutes of your time talking but I did not want to stop you because you had some very, very emotional, touching things to talk about. Hence, we gave you ten minutes to talk about those things and perhaps we should put you on the Committee so you can read the Bill.

I have two announcements to make Honourable Members, before we adjourn for the day. A point of clarification on the Point of Order, now that you are both back in the room if I can bring that to your attention please, Honourable Member so we leave the room being clear about what it was about.

The dispute by the Honourable Minister was the use of the word '*akakotinga*'. The word used by the Minister refers to limitation, what he was referring to was that those who intend to get into the business of tree trimming should be given a licence to be able to carry out this activity.

The second notice, our first Session we have had over 100 people watching our livestream from the Cook Islands, New Zealand, Australia and a Cook Islander in Utah, USA. There is an average of eighty people watching Parliament live and I also want to then acknowledge our people, our seconded staff from the Ministry of Culture for helping us do that and that is how we are able to do that job.

So Honourable Members, we have come to the end of the day and I thank you very much for a very productive day. Thank you to our Officials for being with us today, Louise and Marama for being with us all day. Tuakeu as you were the last Speaker I will ask you to say our closing Prayer please.

CLOSING PRAYER

MADAM SPEAKER: Parliament is adjourned until Tuesday, 16th June at 1.00 p.m.

Sitting adjourned at 5.00 p.m.