



# FORTY-NINTH SESSION

## Hansard Report

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**MADAM SPEAKER TOOK THE CHAIR AT 1.00 p.m.**

**OPENING PRAYER**

**MADAM SPEAKER (N. RATTLE):** Please be seated Honourable Members. I would like to acknowledge our Pastor for his wise counsels to us this afternoon. We hope this will assist us in our deliberations this afternoon.

Kia Orana to all our Honourable Members and to all our guest in the Public Gallery and our media gentleman who is with us this afternoon. To all our people listening to our broadcast in the Northern Group, Southern Group and Tumutevarovaro, Kia Orana to you all.

Just a couple of announcements and that is we will be on the livestream today and our people will be engaged by watching as to what you will be deliberating today, which will be very nice. As you all know today is Thursday, being a Private Members day. The procedures will be a little different for a little while until all the Private Member's business is over before we come back to the business of the House.

So, let us begin with the one-hour Question Time for today, and the Floor is open.

**QUESTION TIME**

I see the Honourable William Heather; you have the Floor.

**MR W. HEATHER:** My question is to the Minister of Finance. What is the outcome of your request to OECD to downgrade our country's developed nation's status after only a few months after graduation?

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

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Thank you to the Member for that very pertinent question. Under the current rules of the OECD, Madam Speaker there is criteria which allows a country to be downgraded. But it can only be done after one years' worth of data on the country's income can be assessed. And that is a process that takes as I said one year before

we can get an answer from the OECD. It depends of the level of income that our country has generated over the period of this next year moving forward.

So, right now according to the OECD we are still classified as a high income country, regardless of the fact that our income has taken a drastic hit with the closure of our airport and the restrictions on tourism. That means development assistance or aid funding that is currently being utilised by many countries, small island states in particular through the likes of the IMF, through the likes of development partners, we do not have access to that.

As I will point out in tomorrow's budget Madam Speaker, the reality for us in the short term for next year is we have to generate our own money through our economy or we have to borrow. However, we have petitioned our partners, New Zealand, and Australia to advocate on our behalf for a speedy resolution of the OECD procedure and to look at our case on its merits rather than going through the process that will take a year for us to be able to be classified again as a country that can access development assistance. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** My question is to the Minister of Parliament. If the Minister of Parliament can explain to this House as to where are we today with the appointment of the new Clerk of Parliament?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member as we have established the other day that... Do you want the Floor, Honourable Prime Minister?

**HON. H. PUNA:** Yes, I thought I will save you the trouble of answering.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Alright.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to this Honourable House. I am not sure if you are talking among yourselves because this question was raised just a couple of days ago. The Speaker of the House has responded that this matter falls under her responsibility. Therefore, it is not proper that the Minister appoints the position of the Clerk.

As we all understand there are three pillars to the Government; the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. It is not proper for the other pillars of the Government to put their nose into the matters that concerns the parliament. I would like to ask that we do not ask this question again as the matter is in the hands of Madam Speaker.

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

**MR W. HEATHER:** My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday he replied my question regarding my streetlights in Ruauu. When I returned home last night a lot of people in my constituency rang me on this matter as they have thought I have not done anything on this issue.

However, when they heard the reply from the Prime Minister, that confirmed to them that I have done my duty. But they were not happy with the response from the Prime Minister. Therefore, my question to the Prime Minister, is there an avenue to finish this work today?

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, I really felt that the Member of Parliament should be commending me for telling the people that he has been working not just sitting down. And just to clarify my part of the process in this issue would be when Te Aponga Uira gets a request, they inspect and they cost the whole project and then they return it to me.

My part is just to support your request and give it back to Te Aponga Uira. So, I recommend to you Honourable Member follow up with Aponga Uira to find out where is your request. I would think that the only reason this was not carried out because the funds was exhausted. Your friend next to you knows how this works. That is my reply, I have done my part and please chase it up with Aponga Uira.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Manuela Kitai you have the Floor.

**MR M. KITAI:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Greetings to everyone this afternoon. My question goes to the Prime Minister. This is the question, am I eligible to stand as a Member of the Council in Reureu but I live in Vaipae, will I be allowed to stand for the village of Reureu. In the General Election, you can vote for any constituency even though you do not live in that area, that is why I have asked this question. Thank you.

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

**HON. H. PUNA:** The only problem is the people of Reureu might call you a stranger. To give you the correct answer please let me check with the officials concerned and I will give you the answer tomorrow. Thank you.

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

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Greetings to all of us this afternoon. My question is to the Minister of Parliamentary Services, the Prime Minister.

According to the Remuneration Tribunal Salaries and Allowances Order of 2019 under Order 5 (5), there is a stipulation for remuneration for partners of Members of Parliament. During the last Parliament Sitting, we were stuck on Rarotonga for a period of about one month due to the COVID lockdown. I am not sure about the rest of you but the other Member of Parliament for Aitutaki and I we dearly missed our beautiful wives on the island.

When I look at this Parliament, it seems like it might be another four weeks just in case maybe we might have another lockdown. We were requested to come here for a week to attend a workshop before this Sitting and through the Appropriation Sitting I can see there might be another two, three weeks. This salary allowance 2019 has already been appropriated during the last Budget.

My question to the Prime Minister is whether you are aware that our requests for spousal entitlement has been blocked for all the Members of the Opposition and I believe Government as well.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Mark Brown.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I believe the question relates to entitlements of spouses to accompany Members of Parliament whether they are Outer Island Members of Parliament coming to do business here in Rarotonga whether they are Outer Island Members of Parliament resident in Rarotonga going back to their constituency for constituency business.

I believe there are provisions for spouses to accompany Members of Parliament under the Civil List but what it sounds like is that there are certain conditions on some of these travel that preclude a spouse from accompanying a Member of Parliament. If that is the case, then it is well within the rights of the Parliament to recommend that these rights be reviewed with a view to making allowance for spouses to accompany the Members of Parliament when they are conducting Parliamentary business. That will then require the Remuneration Tribunal to be convened with a certain Terms of Reference to be looking at these specific entitlements and making recommendations to the Executive Council for amendment of the Civil List to allow this to take place.

If that is the wish, I am sure that Government will be very receptive to going through that process to allow this to happen. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Honourable Tina Browne you have the Floor.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Greetings to all of us this afternoon. To you, Madam Speaker and all of us greetings. To our people listening to the radio and watching livestream, Kia Orana to you all.

I am listening to the explanation from the Minister of Finance and I wish to support him. I want to tell the Minister that there is already a clause on this subject in the Order of 2019. When we go to Clause 5 (2) it is mentioned in that clause that any Member who does not reside on Rarotonga or he resides in his constituency and not in Rarotonga, this includes the Member for Ruatonga/Avatiu/Panama/Atupa, he is entitled to funded travel.

When we look at Article 5 (5) this states, that Member is entitled to be accompanied or joined by his or her spouse on three travels each year. Now this makes sense to me because for those of us who reside on Rarotonga but not residing in our constituencies, we are entitled to travel to the constituency four times a year, take our spouses, all the allowances three times a year.

The way I read this Remuneration Order, those who live in their constituency are entitled to the same entitlement as we who do not live in our constituency and that is fair in my view. Otherwise, the situation for those who do not live in their constituency have a better situation than those who reside in their own constituencies and I doubt very much whether that was the intention of Government in passing this Order.

So there is nothing in my view to be reviewed, it is right there, it is in the Order and it just needs to be implemented. I forgot the question and here is the question, am I right?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Minister Mark Brown.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Civil List is administered by Parliament, it is not up to Members of Parliament or Ministers in fact to go there and make use of the Civil List as they see fit. Rules are set down and Parliament administers and implements those payments and they do so on the advice of Crown Law so if you have any questions to ask, I suggest that they be directed to the right people because in this House we are all the same when it comes to access to the Civil List. Thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, I see the Honourable Member Nooroa Baker you have the Floor.

**MR N. BAKER:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health, Honourable Rose Brown because I have a letter here that was given to me just before I entered into this House by Raewyne Henry concerning an incident that happened on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019. Her concern was as a Cook Islands citizen. On the night of 15 May 2019, an incident took place in town. She wants me to raise this in Parliament.

When that happened, on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019, she was given a bill of professional service of \$40, and also on 16<sup>th</sup> May, another \$50 was added to it. Under the invoice, it says, patient surgical for \$50. Then on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, there was another bill of another \$50. On the same day 17<sup>th</sup> May 2019, there was another \$200, and on the same day of 17<sup>th</sup> May, another \$50 was invoiced to her and that was the cost of the ambulance. On the same day of 17<sup>th</sup> May, a bill for professional service for Rarotonga Hospital for air flight to New Zealand was invoiced with the amount of \$834. Again, on that same day 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2019, an invoice was charged to her for professional service for air flight to New Zealand of \$454. The same day again, there was another professional service of \$150. This came to a total of \$1,828.00.

Her question to me was, how come she had to pay for this because she is a Cook Islander. This incident that happened was regarding her son who was assaulted in town and lost an eye sight as a result of the assault. He was referred to New Zealand.

This lady asked me to ask the Minister of Health in this House why she was charged with this big bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I see the Minister Rose Brown.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you, and Kia Orana to all of us in this Honourable House. Kia Orana to you Madam Speaker and your staff, and all our people listening in.

I would like to commend the Member of Parliament for Akaoa for this very important question. I am surprised with this situation, so I would like to ask the Honourable Member is to please give

me a copy of the invoice in your hand and I will seek clarification. If I get the answer for you tomorrow, I will respond to you in this House. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa, you have the Floor.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance. I do not want to ask this question to the Minister of Agriculture because I can see that the expenditure for this financial year has not been fully expended. However, my question is to make a request.

My request to the Minister is to please look at the growers in Matavera because they have no tractor to help them. I don't want to make this request to the Minister of Agriculture because I know the Minister of Finance holds the purse. We all know that in my constituency of Matavera, we are one of the prominent growers on Rarotonga.

Minister of Finance, just so you know that I made some funding enquiries and requests to a number of aid funding. Firstly, the GF through Red Cross, the India Grant and the Japanese grant. Although our proposals were very good, we were unsuccessful with our request. Even if they said no at this time, I have left my request on their table maybe they will consider it for the year 2021 or 2022.

I also know Minister of Finance that Takuvaine is one constituency with no tractor. Therefore Mr Minister, can you please look at our request because the 30<sup>th</sup> of June is when everything close down.

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

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

I am surprised Honourable Member you have been unsuccessful with your application and have not received the tractor you requested through the GF, Japanese and Indian funds. Maybe if you wrote your request in the Japanese language, you would have been successful.

However, I have good news for us. When we go through the Appropriation Bill tomorrow, relevant to the second economic stimulus plan, there are areas where we can provide support including the area of agriculture. You are quite right we are coming to the end of the financial year and sorry to say there is no money now to buy the tractor you're requesting. If there are any surplus, this will be collected by the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, I ask my colleague to be patience, next week we will look at the areas where we can support.

Your question is relevant to the daily bread of the day of sowing the good seed. These seeds will grow in the heart of people. If you have a good heart, it will grow but of your heart is not good, it will not grow.

That is my answer to you Honourable Member, thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Member, and I give the Floor to the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. In support of your support of your answer Minister of Finance, the Member for Pukapuka is boasting that he has four tractor. Maybe he can give one tractor for Matavera and one for Ngatangiia out of his four tractors.

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and it is not a hard question.

When we travelled with the Minister Robert Tapaitau to Penrhyn, I saw the houses on Penrhyn, and this is referring to the Marine site.

My question to the Minister is, have you considered aquaculture because I believe there are many crops in the Northern Group that we can plant by using the aquaculture method.

My question is whether you have any plans of this project for our Northern Group Islands?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Thank you to the Honourable Member for Ngatangiia for your good question. The short answer for you, yes there is plans in place and this has been approved by Cabinet and these will be implemented in the near future.

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

**MRS T. MATAPO:** Thank you Madam Speaker and Kia Orana to all in this Honourable House this afternoon. Madam Speaker before I pose my question I would like to take a moment to say thank you and show my appreciation to the Prime Minister, Cabinet and whoever supported him in acquiring a school bus for the island of Mangaia.

My question is to the Minister of ICI and I know the answer from the Minister is that he does not have any more budget. I have no funding but you have the funds Mister Minister. For the project regarding the water tanks of Tamarua, it was stipulated that we will have two water tanks. Last year, I asked the Minister where the other tank is and he responded that he will look for the funds for the other tank. I know you have told me not to ask this question to me in Parliament but it has been difficult to meet with you because you are a very busy man.

However, when one of the officials at ICI advised me that they are going to Mangaia to complete the project and Tamarua does not need a second tank. I was troubled and concerned. My concern is not just for today but I am looking to the future in terms of climate change. Therefore, this is my humble request to you Minister to help us in Tamarua and I refer to our conversation last year and you promised to find funding for another tank. My intention here is that we should never run out of water on Mangaia.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Honourable Minister Robert Tapaitau.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Madam Speaker and all your parliamentary staff – Kia Orana. To our Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and all Government Members, greetings. Members of the Opposition and your Leader, greetings.

That is the type and way to ask a question, humble and straightforward. Therefore, the response will be humble and positive. You are absolutely correct on this matter and we discussed it and I promised you and you have brought the matter into Parliament. You are aware that very soon the ICI workers will go to Mangaia to complete the water project. Maybe, you should ask the Member sitting next to you or the Honourable Member Agnes Armstrong what happened to the other tank that we have taken to Mangaia.

Maybe it has been taken to Ivirua or Oneroa. I did advise you that we should look at this and try it out. We have been advised there is no more funding for this extra tank for Tamarua. Maybe you can answer your own question because the water tank of 20,000 litres at a CITC cost \$7,000. Your constituency funds allocation is \$10,000. Maybe in the month of July, you can have a look at this.

And if we can work together, you help me and I help you, maybe we can obtain your extra water tank. After we talk in Parliament, maybe we talk again outside and see where we can further work on this project. Maybe you do not know the how's as much as the Member for Rangiatea. Because he does not wait as soon as we started he posed his question immediately to the Minister of Finance. Maybe you cannot ask the Minister of Finance your issue I will ask on your behalf.

Like I said after this meeting let us talk more on this matter and ways where we can obtain another water tank for you. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much and I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I am not sure whether my question is a weak one or one that will encourage us Members of Parliament. This question is to the Minister of Finance. Firstly, I wish to thank the Minister for our constituency fund because at the start it was \$10,000 grant and now you have topped it up with another \$10,000, this is to ensure all the needed projects for our constituencies are carried out. You have given this good amount of money for the Members of Parliament to do their service to the people properly. In total you have given each Member of Parliament an allocation of \$20,000 for each of our constituency.

My question is something like a request. My request is for you Minister to leave this allocation as it is in the next budget. The question is will you be able to carry this appropriation forward as this money is not going into the pocket of the Member of Parliament but to assist with the affairs of each constituency.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much and I see the Honourable Minister Mark Brown.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker, you are the appropriate spoke person for finance on the Opposition side because your ideas and my ideas are the same. Your question through a

request – the answer is yes. We did have a look at this and we are aware of the benefits during the last session in this assistance for the people.

I am sure you will be happy when you look at the Appropriation when we discuss it tomorrow. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** We have one more question then our time will be up and I give the Floor to the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** I have a question for the Minister for Marine. During this period under COVID-19 and we are looking for some funds while we are saving some funds of ours and the question here is whether you and the Ministry of Fisheries have re-looked or reviewed our Fishing Agreement with the European Union and other countries? Maybe if we are able to review this there is an opportunity maybe we can review in terms of the benefits if we can increase this. Thank you.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for a good question. To make sure that I answer your question correctly if I can seek clarification and reply tomorrow.

I do know that within our Agreement with the European Union there are provisions in there that requires review of the Agreement. So what I want to find out is when the last review was and what were the outcomes and more importantly what is the way forward. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate.

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a supplementary questions because I believe my question has not been answered and I have been told to go to different places and in the end the Minister told us to go to Crown Law. The question to the Minister of the Crown the entitlement for the Members of the Outer Islands according to the Remuneration Order 2019, like I stated this has already been appropriated and we have been unable to utilise this.

The concern here is the financial year is coming to end where this funding will not be available. We have not asked for a tractor we are only asking a small amount of funds to help us. My request to the Minister concerned is to please if you can look into this for this is already appropriated or established system from 2019 and that their answer should be clear to us to clarify whether we have entitlement to this fund.

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

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I believe the proper procedure is to approach Parliament through the Speaker and the Clerk to review the Civil List to make clear the entitlements of the spouses of Members. That process will initiate the appointment of the Remuneration Tribunal who will be tasked with that duty. They will then produce a Report with recommendations which will if supported will need to be approved through Executive Council. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, your one hour Question Time is now finished and we will move on to the next business which is the Consideration of Papers. This is only done on Thursdays, so it is not a regular business during the week. If you would like to refer to your Standing Orders 74 and 75 and on your Order Paper you will have under Papers for Consideration. So the way this will happen is I call the number of the Paper, I read it, if it is something that you want to consider you would need to put a Motion and then you would speak to it otherwise, I read the number, the name of the Paper and it would just then come off the Order Paper if there is no discussion about it.

Yes, Honourable Member Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Speaker, I would just like to ask if I can talk on behalf of the petitioners.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Not at this time. We have to follow the 64, if you look at your Standing Order 64 and this is the procedure for Thursday after Question Time we go to Consideration of Papers and if you look at there is an area for Private Business but if you also look at your Standing Orders, Private Business is for a Motion or for business like that which takes precedence as a Private Member.

Let's begin with the Consideration of Papers. Paper 36 The Annual Report by the Public Service Commissioner for the Year Ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Paper 37 Public Health Notification Conditions Order 2020 Serial No.2020/01. Paper 3 No.39 Public Health (Dangerous Conditions) Order 2020 Serial No.2020/02. Paper No.40 Commissioner of Police (Reappointment) Order 2020 Serial No.2020/03. I see the Honourable Member Tamaiva Tuavera. Have a look at your Order Paper on the top of the Order Paper is No.65 and below that is Papers for Consideration. Everybody has one. Just under Papers for Consideration and we will move on.

We will look at Paper 41 Development Investment Amendment Regulations 2019 Serial No.2020/04. No.42 Insurance Amendment Regulations Order 2019 Serial No.2020/05. No.43 Income Tax Regulations 2019 No.2020/06. No.44 Ministry of Health (COVID-19) Supervised Quarantine on Arrival in Rarotonga Regulations 2020 Serial No.2020/07.

I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, before you can speak to the Paper you will need to move that this be considered or debated before we can talk on it.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Madam Speaker, I would like to speak to Paper No.44. I move:

**That Paper No. 44 be debated**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is a Motion on the Floor. Is there a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable Tina Pupuke Browne**

The Question is:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

You may continue.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you very much to all of us in this House for giving the opportunity to talk about the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Supervised Quarantine.

Madam Speaker, some womenfolk that underwent quarantine were from my constituency. They were part of the Golden Oldies Netball Team that travelled to Hawaii. They asked me to convey their appreciation to Government, to the Minister of Health, to the Secretary of Health, Dr. Aumea Herman and to all those support staff involved in the quarantine arrangement for our people returning home. They also acknowledge those of us in the Opposition who supported the COVID-19 Bill. To the management and staff of Edgewater, Maeva Henry and your staff, to those who welcomed our people on the tarmac, the drummers and those who greeted them, they extend their sincere appreciation to each and everyone.

Before they returned home, they were worried about the critics they received prior to their departure but when they arrived home, they were overwhelmed by the support given to them by the people from the airport to the Edgewater. They were moved and cried when they saw people standing beside the roads with their banners to welcome them home. This shows our Cook Islands way of extending our love.

They also acknowledge the good care they received when they were accommodated in the hotel. They felt they were treated like queens. With regards to the rumours that some people tried to leave the accommodation, I did not look at that side but the fact that these people were well looked after and were happy while they were under quarantine until the last day of their quarantine period.

The Golden Oldies Netball Team left the Cook Islands during the first week of March and it took them almost the end of April before they returned home. So, on behalf of the people in my constituency, I would like to thank all the supporting staff under the management of Te Marae Ora during the COVID-19 pandemic. To all our people on Rarotonga who worked hard in ensuring good measures to stop the coronavirus from entering our country, the positive outcome of that is that we were able to see our families again.

I also convey my sincere appreciation to all the Security Officers who worked tirelessly at the Edgewater Hotel in looking after our people there. Thank you also to all the volunteers in the Puna for your tremendous work. During the quarantine period, everyone did their part in ensuring that the rules put in place are complied. This indicates that if the virus reach us in the Cook Islands, we are ready and know what to do.

This is my small contribution on the Paper before the House. Kia Orana and Kia Manuia.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Prime Minister. We will just watch the time for break, unless we take a break now and you take the Floor after.

**HON. H. PUNA:** That will be nice Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Take the break and come back?

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, it is time for our suspension. Parliament will suspend until 3.00 p.m.

**Parliament suspended at 2.24 p.m.**

**Sitting resumed at 3.00 p.m.**

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

And before we suspended the Sitting the Prime Minister had the Floor and on the Paper 44. You may continue, Prime Minister.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker I rise to return the kind words and compliment through the Member of Parliament for Titikaveka. I like this legislation and we have seen that it was legislated and was action and we should not forgo the congratulations. I would like to acknowledge and commend the Mamas that went through this quarantine lockdown firstly in New Zealand and here in Rarotonga. I also recognise also the Member for Akaoa who went through the same lockdown experience.

I am aware that there were some issues. However, I never heard of these Mamas to complain. To me the Mamas realised how they could enjoy this as a holiday during the quarantine period. I would like to dwell on two main points this afternoon.

Firstly, when our people were locked down in New Zealand, our Government did not hesitate to find avenues to return them to the Cook Islands. It did not matter how much finance was expended for this. I estimate that we spent about 1.5million dollars to achieve this. This was not a burden nor a waste.

First of all, I would like to give my thanks and appreciation to some groups in New Zealand. Number 1, Pacific Home Care and working closely with our High Commission Office in Wellington. They were very quick in looking for our people in New Zealand who had been caught in New Zealand. When these were accounted for, the assistance was very speedy to get to our people. And it was through the assistance of the Pacific Home Care they were able to get to our people who needed help.

I do believe our netball Mama team in the Atiu hostel in Auckland were the first lot to receive this help. Within this Pacific Home Care is one of our people, Thomas Wynne. He worked very hard

to provide the needed support to our people when our Government started establishing the repatriation and quarantine program. I would like to commend our Ministry of Health and local doctors and their head of Ministry, Doctor Aumea Herman. These colleagues did not rest properly during those time.

And along with these were our fellow medical doctors residing in New Zealand, Doctor Teariki Maoate, Doctor Joseph Williams, Doctor John Dunn and Doctor Tapukura Rairi. Through them and the Pacific Medical Association was arranged the program for quarantine both in Auckland, repatriation and quarantine here in Rarotonga. There were some minor issues. There is always when something is done in a real hurry. But I believe overall the program was a huge success. What impressed me the most was the way our people here in Rarotonga received our people that came on those flights.

We respected the public health safety measures. I remember the first flight nobody came to the airport as they were asked to and we all accepted and respected the reasons why. And some of us even lined the road to the Edgewater to welcome our people back. Absolutely awesome. Which brings me to the main point I want to make this afternoon.

When we were confronted with the COVID-19 threat our people came together. We were all together as one people we were determined to keep this virus out of our paradise. Thank God for this good spirit. To confirm to us that when we encounter situations like this our people always come together. And this spirit is again reflected in this House. Our emergency Parliament sitting in March, we were all of the same thought.

That is the reason we were so fortunate and able to prevent this disease from coming into our country. However, as proven by other incidents although we reached this milestone let us not just relax. We are always to be mindful and careful in the future. This is what is happening in New Zealand and we realise that and we can afford the same mistake here. Praise the Lord for this wonderful spirit that our people had demonstrated during this hard times. God Bless and Kia Orana.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Prime Minister and I see the Honourable Nooroa Baker and you have the Floor.

**MR N. BAKER:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Yes, Prime Minister you were right. I was one of them that caught in this lockdown in New Zealand. So, I was first hand on everything to see what was happening, to our people that was caught in this lockdown in New Zealand.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Brown the Minister of Finance and also the Minister of Health Rose Brown, for what you have done for our people which included myself when we were caught in this lockdown due to this pandemic coronavirus. You did not withhold the support that we needed in New Zealand because I witnessed the many problems that was encountered by this group caught in New Zealand.

Many businesses in New Zealand closed their doors to us. I listened to talk-back shows about the effect of the virus around New Zealand. I was so surprised on my return to Rarotonga it appears

that nothing stopped or closed. So, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister of Finance and also the Minister of ICI because many were still employed to feed and care for their families. I was comforted to see what they were doing because it was the opposite of what I observed in New Zealand.

The accommodation for our quarantine while we here in Rarotonga, the Edgewater Resort it was really good. The support to us given by the staff there while we were staying there during our two weeks. On behalf of all of us that was sheltered during the quarantine period in the resort, I thank all of you for your very warm care. Thank you to the Opposition side for their patience because I was absent during this time. I would like once again to thank you all for giving your support in looking after our people.

So, to you Honourable Prime Minister and your Cabinet Ministers and those in Government and including the Opposition, thank you everyone for your support. Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and we will go to Paper No. 45, Ministry of Health COVID-19 Domestic Travel Restrictions Regulations 2020 Serial No.2020/08.

We will go to No. 47, Ministry of Health COVID-19 Domestic Travel Restrictions Revocation Order 2020 Serial No.2020/09.

No.49 Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) Order 2020 Serial No. 2020/10. I see the Honourable Minister Mark Brown.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move:

**That the Paper Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities for the Asia  
Infrastructure Investment Bank No. 2020/10 be debated**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Is there a Seconder for the Motion?

**Secinded by the Honourable Patrick Arioka**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

You may continue, Honourable Minister.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June this year just a couple of weeks ago the Cook Islands was accepted as the newest Member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. In fact we are the 87<sup>th</sup> Member of the Bank. This Bank was recently established to complement the other Regional Bank in the area, the Asian Development Bank which we have been a Member since the 1970's.

During the development of our country the Asian Development Bank has taken on a bigger and bigger role as the lender to the Government of the Cook Islands to the extent that over fifty percent of the country's borrowings are from the Asian Development Bank.

There may be a question asked why do we need to join another Bank? Well as our country has matured and now as our country has developed and as we reached high income status in January this year we saw the need to broaden and expand our relationships with global financial institutions to give us options moving into the future for potential investment.

In the midst of this COVID the Asian Development Bank has provided financial instruments in support to Member countries. Similarly, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is providing again similar support packages to Member countries. But this is part of what we do as a country, Madam Speaker as we grow and develop we engage and we develop new relationships with new entities.

We may not need the services of the Bank this year or next year but I expect in future years, maybe ten years, twenty years or thirty years our generations may make use of the services of this bank for whatever they deem necessary in future years. But we have done our part and joined the bank, we are now a Director on this Bank and we sit at the table of this Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank so that in the future if we do require its services, it is there available for us.

This Paper before us affords the diplomatic privileges and immunities to Members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank that may visit our country. As we started our relationship with the Asian Development Bank, it was a very new relationship. There wasn't too much interaction between us and the Bank. Over forty years later the Asian Development Bank now has a building in Nikao where they have a permanent office here in our country. It is the equivalent of a Diplomatic Office and the staff there are afforded the same privileges and immunities as Diplomats.

So it may be that in the future as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank grows its relationship with us, they may in turn look to open an office here in our country and their staff and representatives would be afforded the immunities and the diplomatic privileges that this Paper provides for them.

I am very happy to report, Madam Speaker this was a process in joining this Bank that has taken us close to three years. And furthermore within the Bank there are what is called Constituency Offices where countries will align themselves with other member countries to form a block and I have just received this week news from the Australian Constituency Office that they have accepted our request for us to join with them in their Constituency and this Constituency includes Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam. So we will be the fifth Member country of the Constituency of Australia.

I think it is important for Members to be aware of these undertakings that we have put in place, we put the wheels in motion and they have now come into fruition. But also good for our people

listening in, members of the public to be aware of our direct relationships that we have developed over the years with institutions like these banks.

I am confident, Madam Speaker that in the not too distant future we will see the AIIB as one of our lenders for our country because the country has planned an extensive infrastructure investment plan in place and we will be looking to our partners for funding options to get these infrastructure up and running. I think that's plenty of news for us on the AIIB. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Minister Mark Brown. We will go to Paper 50 Public Expenditure Review Committee Appointment of Other Committee Members Order 2020 Serial No.2020/11.

No. 51 Public Expenditure Review Committee Remuneration of Committee Members Order 2020 Serial No.2020/12.

No. 52 Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Extension of More Favourable Treatment Order 2020 Serial No.2020/13.

We will now go to our last Paper 54 Personal Properties Securities Transitional Matters Regulations 2020 Serial No. 2020/14.

Thank you that completes all the Bills that's on the Order Paper for Consideration. Are there any further Private Members business, if not we will move on? These are usually a Motion of – alright no further business we will now go to the Government business and we have lost our Prime Minister who has a Ministerial Statement to make.

We will have two Ministerial Statements from the Prime Minister this afternoon. However, Standing Order 88 allows the Prime Minister to make a Statement at any time so I am going to move on and we will go on to the Presentation of the Bills. I see the Prime Minister it is time given to you for the first of your two Ministerial Statements, Honourable Prime Minister.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker I apologise I had a minor accident. First of all, greetings to all of us in this House, Madam Speaker, your staff and our people listening in.

There are two matters that I want to speak on today that I believe are matters of public interest and of national interest. It is also because of the questions and concerns that have been raised in this House over the last couple of days. And I think it is just right that Honourable Members are aware of these issues and also our people listening in.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members the first matter is to do with our borders. And the concerns expressed by our people about the outbreak of those recent cases in Auckland, New Zealand and its potential implications for our little country. But I have to say that the Secretary of Health Doctor Aumea Josephine Herman, today confirmed that this week's repatriation flight will depart Auckland on Saturday, arriving here tomorrow, as planned.

As we are aware this week as has been widely reported three new COVID-19 cases were confirmed in New Zealand.

This is most unfortunate; however, our Secretary of Health is confident that the New Zealand Ministry of Health has put in place measures to identify and mitigate any public health risk or threat to the New Zealand public. She is continuing to monitor the situation.

Health authorities in New Zealand are now following up on all those who may have come into contact with the two women and testing them.

Contact tracing is an essential tool in containing any disease outbreak – not just coronavirus. And the good news is that, here in the Cook Islands the Government and private sector will tomorrow start trialling CookSafe a contact tracing system developed locally.

This is the reality of the ‘new norm’ we are going to have to navigate. But it is comforting that Te Marae Ora is steadily strengthening our country’s systems and our ability to rapidly respond to such situations in order to maintain our COVID-19 free status.

Travellers arriving on tomorrow’s flight from Auckland will be invited to keep track of their movements as part of the COVID-19 contact tracing pilot. To avoid any legal issues this will be purely voluntary. The CookSafe pilot will provide important insights to strengthen the Cook Islands COVID-19 contact tracing processes and protocols.

Our priority is to keep our residents and visitors safe. Contact tracing is a core public health work and Te Marae Ora is using technology to enhance their work efficiencies. They like us are learning from other countries that are using similar technologies. But this pilot will give Te Marae Ora the opportunity to road-test digital record-keeping systems, to find out what gaps they need to fill and if there are any issues to be addressed.

CookSafe will complement the World Health Organisation developed Go.Data software a disease outbreak investigation tool for case and contact management that Te Marae Ora is launching next week. This app will provide Te Marae Ora with the ability to rapidly scale response efforts to any disease outbreaks.

Honourable Members, Madam Speaker while COVID-19 is the focus of our current efforts, these systems will apply to future public health threats including dengue. This is an important learning opportunity as our country begins reopening to the outside world. We are checking systems that are in place to rapidly track travellers’ movements in public places like shops and restaurants.

The CookSafe pilot is a collaborative initiative between Government and the Private Sector Taskforce with Te Marae Ora leading. It will keep a digital record of where volunteers have been, in the event the need to be reached for coronavirus contact tracing.

Finally, the trial is open to all interested members of the public, businesses, and venues. People wishing to opt in and pick up a CookSafe card can register at the Tourism Office in Avarua beside the ANZ Bank and at the Chamber Office below the BTIB building opposite the Punanga Nui

playground and I urge my fellow members to participate in this pilot. If we do, our action will clearly demonstrate that we are indeed in this together. For we are together as one.

Madam Speaker, I lay this Ministerial Statement on the Table.

The second statement is to do with another public interest issue and that is of the helmet.

My concern today is to provide certainty, and assurances to our community, that there is a process to cater for the current conditions affecting the supply of safety helmets. Madam Speaker, it is also important that the community be assured that the amendments to the law – as it was passed nearly three months ago – were designed for the specific safety of everyone, who uses the road.

The truth is that, the Rarotonga road system, as it exists today, demands that we all make this adjustment together. Whether you drive a motorbike or not, our goal as road users, must aim to provide for an environment of greater safety, of better protection, and a collective attitude for the prevention of tragedy.

Looking back, our failures to do just that, have already resulted in a loss of life over many years of sorrow. And further inaction will only render us accustomed to the tragedy of losing a loved one, too soon. Many of us are aware of these statistics,

Many of us talk about the penalties to bring those statistics down. But many sadly, do not pay attention to prevention, and how tragedy may have been averted with the wearing of a safety helmet. Honourable Members a safety helmet is designed to save your head from trauma. We can talk long and hard about whose fault it might be that a crash occurred but a safety helmet can make the difference in whether a victim lives or dies.

We all agree that motorbike lives matter. So, let us give that safety helmet a chance to do its job. Madam Speaker, the law governing the driving of motorbikes now means that a safety helmet is an extension of your vehicle. A motorbike and helmet have become permanently tied together under our law for the express purpose of safety and protection. The road culture of motorbike driving has changed and the adjustments must be accommodated.

Honourable Members in response to those adjustments, the Police Service will be applying a grace period for the enforcement of the law, as it applies to safety helmets. The law overall still stands, and the Police Service will be engaged in traffic enforcement checkpoints on and around our roads.

However, time is now being provided to all drivers to secure helmets from suppliers over the next month, as shipments are due. Therefore, because of shipping issues I can announce today that a period of amnesty will apply to the compulsory wearing of helmets by all, until midnight 31 July 2020.

In providing this grace period, I urge everyone to please stay safe on our roads, and extend your good courtesies to other drivers. I would also urge all those who own helmets now to continue to wear them over this grace period. Thank you and Kia Manuia.

Madam Speaker, I lay this on the Table.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Prime Minister. We will now go to the presentations of the Bill.

### **PRESENTATION OF BILLS**

Our first Bill, is the Covid-19 (Island Government Elections) Bill 2020, by the Honourable Prime Minister.

**ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE (J. DANIEL):** Short Title Reads: Covid-19 (Island Government Elections) Bill 2020.

### **BILL READ A FIRST TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can the Prime Minister please name the date and the time of the Second Reading of the Bill.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, after the passage of the Cook Islands Amendment Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Second Reading for the Covid-19 (Island Government Elections) Bill 2020 is called for the Second Reading after the Cook Islands Amendment Bill.

Thank you and we will go to Bill Number 2; Personal Property Securities Amendment Bill 2020, by the Honourable Rose Brown.

**ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE:** Short Title Reads: Personal Property Securities Amendment Bill 2020.

### **BILL READ A FIRST TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can the Honourable Minister please name the date and time of the Second Reading of the Bill.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Madam Speaker, after the passage of the Covid-19 (Island Government Elections) Bill 2020.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Second Reading for the Personal Property Securities Amendment Bill 2020, is called for after the Covid-19 (Island Government Elections) Bill 2020. Thank you.

We will now go to presentation of Papers.

### **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS**

We have, Paper No. 56 on the House of Ariki (Allowances) Order 2020, Serial No. 2020/15. I see the Honourable Minister Rose Brown.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Madam Speaker I have the pleasure to present:

**Parliament Paper No. 56 on the House of Ariki (Allowances)**  
**Order 2020, Serial No. 2020/15**

I lay this on the Table.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and we will go to Paper No. 57, the Ministry of Health (Covid-19: Supervised Quarantine on Arrival in Rarotonga) Regulations Revocation Order 2020, Serial No. 2020/16. By the Minister Rose Brown.

**HON. R. TOKI-BROWN:** Madam Speaker I have the pleasure to present:

**Parliament Paper No. 57, the Ministry of Health (Covid-19: Supervised Quarantine on Arrival in Rarotonga) Regulations Revocation Order 2020, Serial No. 2020/16**

I lay it on the Table.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members we will now go to Orders of the Day.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Orders of the Day is the Seabed Minerals Amendment Bill, on the interrupted debate of the Second Reading of the Bill.

I see the Honourable Selina Napa and you have the Floor.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker for this opportunity to speak on the Bill. I just want to share my views on the Seabed Minerals Bill to add to those previously mentioned by the Opposition Members.

Before I continue Madam Speaker if you please allow me to convey to my village my acknowledgments and appreciation for the good things they did during the COVID-19 lockdown. To the three pillars of Teimurimotia, traditional, government and church, the elderly, mothers and fathers, the youth and our children – I extend to you all my sincere greetings and regards. In particular, those who volunteered to assist the community during this time and not getting paid for their good work.

It was so pleasing to see the youth and all the people of the village working together to look after our old people in the village. May God's blessing be upon you to continue with the good work that you are doing.

At this time I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Papa Tiki Matapo. This will be a busy weekend for us as Auntie Mii's body will be arriving tomorrow Friday and may God's blessing be upon the family and all of us at this time of sadness.

I just want to let the village of Titikaveka know that next week we will be holding a village meeting to elect our Village Council. This will be held on Tuesday, but the venue has not been confirmed and we will let you know.

I come back to the Seabed Mineral Bill. As mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, last week a Workshop was held and this is the first Workshop that I attended that the PowerPoint presentation was ready but the Bill was not ready. So it was difficult for us to discuss this as the Bill was not presented in the Workshop. However, when it arrived on Monday it gave us the opportunity to study it.

I want to thank the staff of the Seabed Minerals Ministry because they have advised there are some areas in the Bill that is not clear. They showed the area of the minor amendments, the substantive amendments and also an amendment which to me is a big section which is in Schedule 2 of the Bill.

They also told us that the correction of minor typographical errors, incorrect referencing omission and sections requiring clarification and these are some of the areas that they told us.

I think because of the urgency to bring this Bill to the House in 2019, they did not have enough time to have a good look through the Bill. We did ask for this Bill to be looked at by a Select Committee and this is what happened this Bill is now back in the House for some amendments.

It is true what the Minister of Finance has said if you sow good seeds you will get good plants and if you sow bad seeds then they will not grow well.

I will mention some of my thoughts on the areas which I think is confusing and need to be put right. In Schedule 2 makes a very significant amendment it changes best available technology to best available techniques. I will say with these two areas the technology is much narrower and qualifies it with an accordance with any standards or guidelines issued and this particular terms is actually added in a number of places within the Bill. It massively weakens the obligation of the minor and it massively weakens pollution prevention to pollution control and the relevant changes made in this Bill it probably is a requirement to satisfy the authority.

The other area that is of concern to me and that is the commercial confidentiality provision. I am concerned in this area because when you want to apply through OIA trying to find areas to make you understand whether this particular clause in the Bill will bar you from actually putting through an OIA investigation.

In today's paper it is saying that seabed mining is greener. I have difficulty in understanding how can seabed mining be green like it has been stipulated in the newspaper today. Maybe time will tell us. When I compare this to the issue of the environment in our lagoons. When we consider all the activities taking place in our lagoons and some of the issues have not been resolved up to today.

There are already existing problems in the lagoon like poisoned fish and some species are disappearing in our oceans and there are profusion of certain algae maybe because of the overflow that's going into the ocean. Therefore, I have great difficulty in understanding how can seabed mining be green when you compare it to what is happening in our lagoons.

I heard the Prime Minister make mention yesterday that the resources and minerals in the ocean is mostly in the Northern Group and for those of us in the Southern Group our seabed is only full of mud. But the Prime Minister should also be mindful that it is mostly the Southern Group and Rarotonga that are paying for our taxes. Although he might mention this as a joke but for a lot of people listening in they were not happy with this. So you in the Northern Group and us in the Southern Group let us work together and do not be divided as being mentioned.

And the notion that time be given to these people to present their submissions on this Bill, I fully support that and let us not be in a rush to grab this resource. Let us be careful how we tread. Those are my thoughts on this Bill, thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, I see the Honourable Tingika Elikana you have the Floor.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Kia Orana, Madam Speaker this afternoon, the staff of Parliament, Interpreters and those involved with this House, a very good afternoon and those who are recording this Parliament Sitting I guess that is why most of us are not falling to sleep.

I do not intend to give my regards to my people in Pukapuka as I have already done that the other day.

I want to show something that is so different about this week that we have come through before I give some of my thoughts on the Bill before this House.

On Tuesday, we were all surprised to hear the announcement made by our Prime Minister of what he had planned to do until September. Not only our people from the Opposition was surprised, even us on the Government side and including you Madam Speaker, as I could see you were surprised to hear the news. Irrespective of that announcement, I stand on behalf of my people on Pukapuka to commend you and for you to be prosperous in what you are pursuing.

I would like to emphasise on this part 'today while you are the leader'. But then come yesterday I was also surprised. I do not know whether you were surprised, this is concerning what had been said yesterday. I believe these are the things that we will happen in the near future. I believe maybe this evening or tomorrow we will be surprised. Because then the Honourable Member for Matavera gave praise to his Leader and even their Deputy Leader, this is what he said 'our Leader right now'. So my colleague if this is a secret in you, I would like to give that support to you because you are just showing this House of Parliament that the leadership on that side is limited. Maybe you will tell us tomorrow in this House. Surprisingly, he did not mention to everyone about this right now. He just mentioned about their leaders and surprisingly just the two of them. Maybe you made a mistake in saying what you said because I believe all of us we have different blood in

us and I know you are from Pukapuka too. But I do not think it's a slip of the tongue but he intended to say that.

Let's put that aside and come back to the Bill before this House. Madam Speaker, you have heard all the things that have been spoken about this Bill. I do not want to over-burden on this but I just want to quote Tetio Kaisara Ariki's statement. Yesterday I rang him to give him some good news because we have seen that in the news and as has been presented before this House of the support that we are giving to the House of Ariki. I relayed to him the support that we are giving to the House including his new remuneration.

During our conversation we talked about the seabed and I asked him for his thoughts on the issue of the seabed. This is what he said, hurry up before I die. This is what he said, hurry up before I die. I want to report to this House what our King from Pukapuka have said because we all want to share the benefit from this mineral.

We have heard the statement given by the Minister in support of this and the steps that is being taken to harvest this mineral from the ocean floor. I believe that the steps and process that has been put in place will help our people.

I believe with those who have given support that there is a strong support that we should diversify from tourism. There is another avenue of the fish that we have in our ocean. My colleague beside me the Associate Minister for Agriculture, he is also saying including agriculture. This is one of the things that we can all benefit and this is the mineral from our ocean.

Here is another source of income and I think we are limited in our resources and while we have them we should make use of them. I think we the Cook Islands is rare in comparison to other Pacific Islands in the region that God has blessed us with this blessing and for us this is what God has given for us.

I can recall the thought that has been presented in the Bible when there comes a time when we appear before God and He would ask us, what have you done with the resources and wealth that I have given you, what would be our reply?

So, I am together with my colleague from Matavera and Ngatangia in supporting this Bill and also in echoing what my King from Pukapuka is saying let's take it so that we can benefit now.

This is what my sister from Titikaveka said and I agree that the majority of the tourists come to Rarotonga. Maybe today and forward we in the Northern Group will be responsible in carrying us through because you only have tourist, ours is tuna and nodules.

I stand in support of our Leader about the wealth that we have from our ocean so together with all of our people we would like to cultivate this wealth so that our country and all our people will benefit from it and may I say this that the wealth that we have in our ocean we will share it all and we will not limit it to the Southern Group but the whole country will benefit. So I stand in support of this Bill because I know each one of us and I want to reap the benefit now before I die. That is all I want to share before this House, Madam Speaker thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much and I see the Honourable Minister Robert Tapaitau.

**HON. R. TAPAITAU:** Don't you two run. First of all greetings, Madam Speaker. Greetings to our Leader today. May God grant you the wisdom and the knowledge to lead our country. Madam Speaker, if I may have some time to offer my regards to my people on Tongareva.

To all my people of Penrhyn, greetings in the Name of our Lord. To the three pillars that we greet, the many churches on our island, to the pastors and leaders of the churches, your elders and all your congregations. The Island leaders, the Council Members, the government and Executive Officer and all your workers on the island of Penrhyn – greetings in the Name of the Lord.

I now come back to the Bill before the House. Sorry, I convey my greetings and condolences to our people on Penrhyn who has gone through some dark times of family passing away. The passing away of Papa Saitu Marsters, this is a hard working elder on the island of Penrhyn. One of our Mama that passed away in Australia Mama Kopurangi, may God comfort the family for your loss.

Coming back to the Bill. The previous comments on the Bill are very good comments, including the Prime Minister and our friend that just finished. On this Seabed Minerals Bill, I assure this House that all the people of Penrhyn strongly supports it. Because when we consider tourism we do say that all our golden eggs are in this basket and yet the Government does not really consider others.

When I look at it carefully it is not just tourism that is advancing as well as fisheries. When I look at our Cook Islands people, those on Rarotonga I recall the year 2018 during the Constitution Celebration time. Some people were complaining that three million dollars was spent to bring the Northern Group people to the celebration on the ship. You should all remember that fish is from the Northern Group. Think about it seriously before you make any complaints.

Do not say that we do not have any allocation of funds. Think where you are getting your fish because when people talk like this I get angry. They do not think before they speak, please look at it carefully. Because when we talk among ourselves the Members of Parliament for Manihiki, Rakahanga, Pukapuka and myself and then we say that we should give the allocation for Penrhyn. But we are not greedy and mean.

We are people of love. Maybe we should create a law where we give the allocations for Manihiki, Rakahanga, Pukapuka and Penrhyn and the rest you can have it. Do not anybody say that they do not benefit because we all do – all of us. And we are now talking about nodules. There are more on our side in the north. I think most of it is just below the seabed of Penrhyn. So, when we share the benefits, more for Penrhyn.

I am telling the truth.

So, I really encourage the Minister of Minerals – hurry up with this mining so that we can share the benefits. The talk by the Members for Pukapuka and Nassau, yes there were many people who

have passed on. We have deliberated on this subject for so many years. We have the Member from Amuri-Ureia talking about this project was during his team and even from Papa Arapati Henry and Papa Tom Davis time. I think the time for talking is over. This is the time for reaping the benefits. Let us not just keep talking until we all die.

I myself want to take part of the benefits of the ocean. It is better not be when I die then the people on Rarotonga will reap the benefit of Penrhyn. I am not sure whether the person that will replace me might not be as strong as I am. When I look at the Members of Parliament from the Northern Group, there is lawyer from Rakahanga, from Manihiki and from Pukapuka but from Penrhyn a simple labourer. But I am a worker and when you debate with them you cannot win. They create the legislation and I do the work.

To all of us let us work together and do the work properly. That is the reason we have officials to do all the work and bring it in here and we discuss and finally approve the way forward. So, this is a very easy question. And to the Opposition please support and approve this Bill. If we agree then we will reap well the benefits for many generations to come and we will not know when it will stop.

When I listen to the talk asking for a tractor, a fishing boat and all sort of things. When we reap the benefit from the ocean it will flow for many years. I will finish here because this is enough. And before I sit down please this request to support the Bill from the Member from Penrhyn is a humble request. Thank you.

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

**MS T. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, Honourable Members and the hard working staff of Parliament – Kia Orana. Before I begin, may I greet my constituency?

I would like to convey my sincere condolences to the families of my patron the late Tauu Porio as well as the family of Mama Nga Hosea that have just left us this week. May the good Lord cover you and your family in strength during this loss. Kia Orana to my family and people of Enuamanu tuning in to our session today. I trust you are all well and happy keeping busy with our road sealing project, courtesy of our Government of course.

And with that being said, I would like to acknowledge the ICI team that are currently on the island working on this. I would like to especially mention our young female Atiu Tumu engineer and former classmate of mine, Maruia Willie who is overlooking this project. We young females are surely capable of anything.

Furthermore, I would like to congratulate our Prime Minister for the act of humility and courage that you have taken in stepping down from your post. Not only have you set an example for our future generation, it also serves as precedent for Leaders of the wider Pacific and perhaps the world. I am very fortunate to have worked alongside your leadership, I might be the last of my generation to have that privilege.

Therefore, I wish you all the best and I have full faith that our DPM will step-up to do an exceptional job which he has already demonstrated. On top of that, I would like to formally congratulate our Cabinet Ministers, Te Marae Ora, the Secretary of Te Marae Ora, Dr Aumea Herman, the NHET team, the volunteers, the Puna and all those that worked together with the Government to help keep our country COVID free. What we have achieved as a Nation compared to other Nations is great.

Now back to the Bill at hand. I commend our new Commissioner of the Seabed Minerals Authority, Alex Herman and your team for the work that was put into this Amendment. This is yet another female leading our Nation and when you look at it closely, this is the kind of value that new blood adds to an existing establishment.

Thank you also to our Crown Law Office who would have played an equally important role in this Amendment in order to further protect our people and our ocean.

Madam Speaker, I do not agree when people say that this Act was rushed because I know this was envisioned before I was born and that is quite a long time now. So I would like to acknowledge our first Premier, Papa Arapati, as well as those that worked with him because this was their dream for us.

It saddens me to think that many of our former Leaders that pushed for this are not around to see this through, but I know there is a time for everything and the length of time it has taken to get to where we are now was in order to protect and do what is best for our Nation.

From my understanding these nodules sit on the top of the seabed and you do not need to drill or mine anything or move anything. I also believe there are Corporations out there that are desperate to just come and look at the seabed and this is just to look, not touch so I fail to see why anyone would oppose to the initial Act.

We have been blessed by a vast ocean full of potential and it will be nice to see this come into fruition while we still have the experience of those that were involved in the initial study and the last Act.

Madam Speaker, our former Leaders, forefathers, our elders have all laid out the stepping stones with a vision of excellence for us to carry through. I think it is time we fulfil that legacy as a tribute to our elders that built up our Nation and as a building block for our future children and their grandchildren. Madam Speaker, I support this Amendment, that you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It is wonderful, thank you very much, Honourable Member. Wonderful to hear the perspective of a young lady, a young Member of Parliament. Honourable Minister, I just realise the time.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Madam Speaker, I rise to say the closing prayer that is why I stood up. I will continue tomorrow.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It's been a wonderful day, Honourable Members we have done some wonderful work and I am often told by the Hansard when they are writing the reports that I was a bit too early when we finish or we are sticking to the times according to the Standing Orders but still a wonderful idea.

We will finish here which means that our Seabed Mineral will sit because tomorrow is a new day. Tomorrow we will have the presentation of the Appropriation Bill and the business of tomorrow will be our Appropriation Bill. Wonderful day and we will see you tomorrow. Remember tomorrow being Friday, we will start at 10 o'clock in the morning and not 1 o'clock in the afternoon. We will stand for our closing prayer and since our Minister is very keen to do that, our closing prayer please.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** We will adjourn now and come back Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> at 10.00 a.m.

**Sitting adjourned at 4.55 p.m.**