



# FORTY-NINTH SESSION

## Hansard Report

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**TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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

### **OPENING PRAYER**

**MADAM SPEAKER (N. RATTLE):** Honourable Members please be seated. I extend a special thank you to our Minister this afternoon for the wonderful message he delivered to us and may it serve to assist us all in serving our people in the House today.

Greetings to all the Honourable Members who are in this Honourable House today. We have one more day of business and I believe we will work hard and smoothly today to complete our tasks.

Kia Orana to all our people throughout the Cook Islands listening in and watching on our livestream. I would like to give my special acknowledgement to the Women's Council of the Cook Islands. To the Patron, Mama Nga Papatua, and to the President, Vaine Wichman and your whole team, greetings to you all.

I was invited yesterday evening together with the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Tina Browne, Selina Napa and Agnes Armstrong to attend the launching of the Strategic Plan. However, we did miss the Minister who was also invited but we did enjoy the evening for you.

Also present last night was the New Zealand High Commissioner as well as the Australia High Commissioner. It was wonderful to see a group of women together enthused and ready to go in implementing what they believe would be helpful for the women of the Cook Islands.

May I also acknowledge our Solicitor General, Mr Stuart Baker and the Deputy Solicitor General, Kathy Bell who are in the House today. So Honourable Members we have come to our Question Time for half an hour and the Floor is open.

### **QUESTION TIME**

I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I have three questions today and this is my first one. Although I arrived late to Parliament, I stand to ask my question. My first question is to the Minister of Finance, our Deputy Prime Minister. This question

is regarding our growers. I believe some of our growers have met with the Minister of Finance, they also met with me, and they were firm with their views.

Their views were that they have been encouraged to plant during this COVID-19 period. However, when they sell their produce they noticed less customers were buying their produce. Our growers in Matavera noticed an increase for produce like tomatoes selling on the roads. However, some of these produces were shared out for free among our people in Matavera.

In line with the current subsidy that was supposed to end on the 30<sup>th</sup> September and is now extended to the end of December, my question then to the Minister of Finance is, will there be any assistance for the growers after this period.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Minister of Finance.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you to the Member of Matavera for your important question. And correctly as you mentioned, the growers of Matavera approached me and their request was exactly as you have stated.

We do know of recent times much of these produce were sold through the hotels and restaurants for our tourism industry but as of now, it is very difficult to sell them because no tourist is coming. Today, we see whole basins full of tomatoes given out for free because there are no customers.

We are aware that our workers in the hotels are being assisted by the Government subsidy payments and maybe this assistance could be extended to the growers and to our fishermen for their products. My directive to the officials at the Ministry of Finance was to see how we could assist or subsidise these growers and food producers who are unable to sell their produce.

I also discussed this matter with the Minister of Agriculture and the officials in her Ministry to see how we can provide assistance to the growers especially the fulltime growers during this hard time. I see that our major retailer shops are the ones purchasing these produce and selling them out through their shops.

Maybe through these big retailer shops, we will be able to discuss with them how to provide extra market to sell these produce. That is where our plans lie Madam Speaker in discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture and with the business sector as well as the growers themselves so that they are able to get some revenue for their produce.

That is the only way Madam Speaker we can get somewhere by assisting each other and working together. Just how we are working together during this COVID-19 pandemic, working together can get us through difficult times. Thank you very much Madam Speaker.

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

**MR W. HEATHER:** I have a supplementary question Madam Speaker. I also stand and support what the Member for Matavera mentioned before about the situation and

difficulties that our growers are facing in selling their produce. Not only them but also those who are cooking food to sell and those who are sewing and doing craft work to make a living. These people are facing difficulties in selling wares and they need support and subsidies.

I received a telephone call this morning from a mother who sells her produce at the Punanga Nui Market. She told me that because it is hard for them to sell their produce, if it is possible for the management of the Punanga Nui Market to suspend the rental fees for this place for a month.

We see as we drive around the island people selling their produce under the shelters so they can get money to support their family. I think this is a good thing. Therefore, I want to hear the Minister of Finance's response to this question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you and I see the Minister for Punanga Nui Market.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Speaker, and greetings to all of us in this House this afternoon.

To respond to the question raised by the Member for Ruaau, if the fee is too much at the Punanga Nui Market, come and join us at the Social Centre. We extend that invitation to anyone who would like to join our market at the Social Centre.

Madam Speaker, I agree with the views put before this House and I think it is appropriate for me to see the Manager for the Punanga Nui Market and request for grace period for fees charged to our vendors selling their produce at the market.

The idea has been promoted for other places to build a market all around the island and I think this is a good idea and it should be supported. This shows that we are united and we should be encouraged to do this because it falls in line with the policy of the Te Marae Ora concerning food and safety. That is the answer to this question, thank you.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** Greetings to all of us in this House this afternoon. My question is to the Honourable Minister for Parliament but if she is not able to answer, maybe the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister can answer. My question is in relation to the Petition that was put forward to this House, I think a month ago.

I do believe that it is the duty of this House to consider any Petition or any issues that is brought before this House for us to discuss. Therefore, my question is, is there another time given to those who have made the Petition for Te Vai Ora Maori to be considered and discussed before this House in regards to the purification of water. Will their Petition be heard again in this House? I do believe over 1,400 people signed this Petition.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, I feel that I should answer this question. First of all, you have made your decision in this House and the Government respects and honour your decision.

Secondly, when I listened to the Member for Titikaveka, it is as if this is the only platform where this Petition can be heard. We know this is not correct. She is on the Select Committee for To Tatou Vai. This is the responsibility of the Select Committee to consult with people and to gather their thoughts. That Committee still exist Madam Speaker. This work has not been completed, and so I am wondering why this group of people are trying to get into this House to present their thoughts and yet it is the responsibility of the Select Committee.

Our people are on the same level where we are going out to meet all of them. It is not appropriate that for those who speak louder than others they should take precedent over our people. I want to emphasise that the concept is for us to go out and talk to our people and gather their views and also tell them that it is their right to express their views before the Select Committee. This Committee is part of Parliament because it was established by Parliament. That is my answer Madam Speaker.

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

**MRS S. NAPA:** I would like to return to the question because the Select Committee that has been mentioned was formed to look at the establishment of the Water Authority not to address the issues covered by the Petition. We on the Select Committee know the comments and the views of our people regarding the Water Authority.

Therefore, my question then is, what shall we do with the signatories of this Petition. There are 1,400 of them altogether, where can they go to be heard.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, perhaps if we can go back to the decision that was put at that Sitting where the Speaker was to report back as what that decision was. That was not made solely by the Speaker, we did seek legal advice and we were advised that in the separation of powers, Parliament cannot tell the Government to stop doing something, because in the Petition it said that it wanted to stop Government from what it was doing. Even if it was going to a Select Committee, the Select Committee is a mini Parliament that is a Parliamentary Parliamentarians within the Parliamentary Service.

So the decision that was given that day was that Parliament is not in a position in telling the Government to stop doing what they are doing and there is no other pathway for that Petition to come back to Parliament.

We have received letters from the people involved or one person involved in that Committee. We have responded many, many times and I saw the newspaper last week mention about it. I did see on the television the other night that she spoke about it and the fact of the matter is, that business is done, it is over. Thank you, and I see the Honourable Tina Browne.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Greetings to all of us this afternoon. To the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Members and all Members on both sides, Government and the Opposition, to you Speaker and all your staff, greetings.

First of all, I would like to endorse the commendation and the praise for the work of the women folk last night. Their work was wonderful in welcoming the High

Commissioners of New Zealand and Australia. I do believe they did wait for the Minister for Internal Affairs but he did not arrive. However, I gave them his apology and this is what I explained. The wonderful thing about women is that we are multi-skilled in that we go to Parliament and later we attend to womenfolk's responsibilities. The Minister being a male was stressed out and went back home. So, they did accept the apologies on behalf of the Minister for Internal Affairs. What was heartening for me was the report that the Minister supports the women's projects. We women would like you to continue this in the future.

I will come back to the issue on the Petition. I cannot remain silent on this because I do have views on this issue. I heard what the Speaker said about her decision. However, I would like all of us Members to return to the time when this Petition was presented to the House. Mistakes started at the beginning when a Motion was put before the House for us to vote whether it will go to a Select Committee or not, and this is not what Standing Order 81 says, all it says is whether this will be read or not. The two Solicitors from Government were asked to clarify Standing Order 82. The reply was since it did not pass under 81 then there is no need to proceed to the Select Committee under 82. I believe this is the second mistake.

For that reason, the Speaker was involved in this when in fact she should not have been involved. When I read 82, it is mandatory, it says it shall be referred and it is supposed to go straight to the Select Committee. I have not read in that Standing Order any proviso that says except if the Speaker so rules. Therefore, this issue has gone from one mistake to another mistake and to another mistake. What is worse is, I believe these Standing Orders are avenues offered to our people opportunities to exercise their democratic rights in this House and what we have done is to stop them. It is no excuse with respect Mr Prime Minister to say, oh well there is another avenue you go to the Select Committee on To Tatou Vai. In my mind, it is no excuse to say whether the decision has been made even if it is the wrong decision then we cannot revisit the matter.

It is fundamental in our Constitution that we are a democratic country and all of us Members in this House should be promoting that democracy and not gagging petitioners at the first door. It may be that if it went to a Select Committee the Select Committee will come back with certain recommendations like we do on the Bills. However, we will not know that because they have not been given that opportunity. Therefore, I would like to support the question from the Member of Parliament Selina Napa – when is the opportunity to have this Petition properly tracked through Parliament in accordance with the Standing Order? Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Prime Minister.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, can I please have the opportunity to respond to the comments from the Leader of the Opposition? I think it needs to be corrected particularly with the alleged mistakes that she has mentioned and in her closing comments she made reference to complying with the Standing Orders of this House. This Standing Order 81 Madam Speaker is very clear, on a Petition being presented any Member may move that it be read. No debate shall be permitted on such Motion and if it is seconded the question shall be put forthwith. If the Motion is agreed, the Clerk shall read the petition.

Madam Speaker, my clear resolution what happened was that the petition was received and it was moved that it be read and it was seconded. But then it was also put to the vote as required by Standing Order 81 but then the vote was against the reading of the petition. Therefore, my question is, where did the House go wrong when we have followed the letter of Standing Order 81. I think it is important that this Standing Order be mentioned and be looked at so that this House can be satisfied that we have complied with what is required of this House in the case of a Petition being presented.

I repeat Madam Speaker, the motion was put to the vote for the petition to be read but the motion was defeated. That to me in accordance with the Standing Orders is the end of it. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Prime Minister. As we are reviewing our Standing Orders in the Committee, we are finding difficulties in the translations of many of our Standing Orders, which we hope as we review them they will be much more clearer.

Concerning the comments by the Honourable Tina Browne about the Speaker's decision, the Speaker of Parliament is the Head of Parliament in the Separation of Powers is where that decision was formed in the Parliament telling the Government how to do their business, which is not the business of Parliament, if you can accept that. It did not use the words like consider or have a look at, it said to stop, to cease actually was the word, so, that was the decision made on that.

Thank you very much Honourable Members. That completes our Question Time and I call on the Leader of the House.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I stand to move:

**That Standing Order 224 relating to Notice be given of introduction of a Bill of at least one day's notice be suspended to enable the Constitution Amendment (No. 29) Bill 2020 to be introduced and passed through the First and Second Reading today**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I seek a Secunder?

**Seconded by the Minister Vaine Mokoroa**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to the presentation of Bills.

## **PRESENTATION OF BILLS**

That is on the Constitution Amendment No. 29 Bill 2020. I call the Minister Responsible to move to present the Paper.

**ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE (J. DANIEL):** Short Title: Constitution Amendment (No. 29) Bill 2020.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I ask the Minister for the day and time for the Second Reading of the Bill.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, at the first available opportunity this afternoon.

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

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Interrupted debate on the final report of the Immigration Bill 2020 Select Committee dated September 2020.

When we adjourned yesterday, the Honourable Member Vaitoti Tupa had the Floor and I give you the Floor again.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker. I think I will just shorten my speech this afternoon because our people has made their submissions in our public consultation meetings and on the radio yesterday and even today. What I want to highlight is people who are Permanent Residents and thinking to go overseas like New Zealand.

In the past, people who are Permanent Residents go overseas and stay there for the term they are permitted to leave the Cook Islands, which is three years, and before their term expires, they return home. Our people are now asking us to reduce this term from three years to just six months. When the Committee went to the Outer Islands, the views of the majority of our people was that three years is too long and should be reduced to either one year or six months which many people supported.

I know that the way to do this is through the Regulations that will be drafted after the enforcement of this Bill. The Regulations stipulate the penalties enforced on those that will breach their Permanent Residence status and also how long they are allowed to leave the Cook Islands.

I believe that in our consultations with our people, their views were that when the Regulations comes into force, we have a guideline to control these people with Permanent Resident status. As presented to the House by the Minister responsible, I stand to represent the Opposition side and put to table our strong support to this Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, are there any further speakers? I see the Honourable Selina Napa.

**MRS S. NAPA:** Kia Orana to all of us in the Name of our Lord. I would like to make some comments on this beautiful report from the Select Committee and also to commend on the outstanding draft report.

I want to express my views although I mentioned this in our “in-camera” session with the Committee yesterday. This is regarding Clause 4 of the Immigration Bill. I will place my comments to the Chairman of the Committee so that our people will understand the clarification on this issue.

Madam Speaker, before I continue, if I can be given the opportunity to make some comments to the people in my constituency, especially to acknowledge the hard and good work that they have done during this COVID-19 period. I would like to give my appreciation to the hard working EOC Team of Titikaveka, Ali Macquarie and your strong team.

To all of them who are working hard during this time, especially to those who are supervising our people under quarantine from New Zealand, I thank you all. I know it is difficult to prepare a roster for all the Securities who are in charge of the homes that are under quarantine, it is a huge responsibility because these people stay up late at night to do these duties.

I would also like to commend and acknowledge the hard working nurses and doctors in our medical centres in Titikaveka. While we rest over the weekends, they are still working hard. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the Minister for Corrective Services, George Angene, for approving the services of the Corrective Services to assist the work in my village, especially the cutting of coconut trees in the village. They are not doing this work for free, they are being paid a small amount of money and food and some funds for the maintenance of their machineries.

I would also like to acknowledge another group of people, although we sometimes complain that they do not follow the rules that are establish for COVID-19. However, the important thing that our churches are doing is to pray for the spiritual wellbeing of our people. When the rules for COVID-19 were established, people complained that our church groups were not firm with the rules but these groups worked hard in looking after the spiritual welfare of our people.

To all our hard working growers in Titikaveka and around Rarotonga, I see that the amount of produce they are producing are huge, however, their returns are very minimal. When we look at what the growers are doing and the amount of produce that they hand out for free, they should be acknowledged and thanked. On our roadsides, we sometimes see produce in the wheelbarrows that our growers give out for free. These are produce such as tomatoes, pak choy and all sorts of fresh produce. These growers should be acknowledged for their kindness.

My big concern however is those people who go into plantations without the knowledge of the owners and steal the produce from these hardworking growers.

I will now come back to the issue before the House relating to Recommendation 4. This is related to the provision, providing some powers to the Minister and his power to approve Permanent Resident applications and seeking the views of the Traditional Leaders. The Minister is also required to take into account the views of the Religious Advisory Council and the Ariki in the area where the person normally resides.



My question yesterday was, why was the Traditional Leaders not included in the decisions by the Ui Ariki? For us in Titikaveka, our Ariki resides in the village of Ngatangia and we also have Traditional Leaders in Titikaveka, so does this mean we have to go through the Ariki to get the decision from our own Aronga Mana.

The reason I raised this yesterday was, I want the Minister to explain to our people so they understand why the Traditional Leaders are not included in the decision making with the Ui Ariki and why the approval for these Permanent Resident applications will only go through the Religious Advisory Council and the Ui Ariki.

I want to say that only us who are living in the village of Titikaveka know the people in our village. We know the expatriates living in our village and we know who is helping our community and who is not. That is why I am directing this question to the Minister so he can explain to our people exactly how the decision was made so they can hear him and when I return to my village, people will not ask me why the Aronga Mana were not included with the Ui Ariki.

However, if the intention here is to go through the Ui Ariki, then my request to the Ui Ariki is, when you receive application letters for Permanent Resident, please consider the people in your villages and give them the opportunity to assess these applications.

As for the Report from the Immigration Select Committee, I am a bit envious because we on the other Select Committees have not completed our Report whereas Immigration has completed theirs. Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera, you have the Floor.

**MR T. TUAVERA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Greetings to all Honourable Members on this beautiful day. Madam Speaker, please allow me the opportunity to address the people in my constituency.

Kia Orana to my people of Ngati Tangia listening to the radio right now. I know you are aware that we are doing some cleaning in our village and cutting of trees. We are also clearing some drains in Muri because these areas are prone to flooding when there is heavy rain.

We all know that the culvert has not been delivered and that was the report given to me. When we finally get these culverts, it will be installed in our village of Muri.

I would also like to thank the Honourable Minister, known as the Action Man and his daughter Mareta for the good work they have done in Ngatangia. Thank you also to their workers who are helping us right now in Ngatangia, not only us but I also know they have been helping other districts on the island. My colleague next to me is saying very soon they will move to Matavera. So let us be patient with the development that is happening in Ngatangia and I would like to ask our people to stay off the road because of the moving vehicles around the area.

Another thing that I want to comment on is about an incident that happened in our village. If you see people driving under the influence of alcohol, please stop them and

take the keys off them. What happened a few days ago is really frightening. If this is your child you will be heart broken.

The speed limit in our village is 30 kilometres but many of our children and some from outside of the village are driving over the speed limit. Like what the Prime Minister said the other day, ask and it shall be given so my request to the Prime Minister is to give the Warrant that we have been requesting for our Community Police in our village of Ngatangiia and maybe we can stop people speeding on our road. Not just driving, Prime Minister but also drinking. I am sure if Papa Iro and his colleagues were still alive today they will be slapping their ears.

I remember these old Police Officers when they catch you breaking the law they will give it to you right on the road. That's their justice and you will not go to Court and there were never any repeat offenders. Thank you Madam Speaker. Now I would like to come back to the business before the House.

What I am looking at is the Immigration Bill. We have explained this in the Maori language, English and maybe for further enlightenment we should translate it into the Chinese language.

Yesterday, you heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about all the recommendations that has been put forward to the Select Committee. She explained this clearly to the House. She went through all the recommendations by numbers and finally, she came to the recommendations that is required to be considered by the Religious Organisations, the Ariki and the Island Council.

I spoke to the Secretary of the Select Committee and she agreed about the explanation given regarding the recommendations. In considering someone who will be applying for Permanent Residence, it is also a requirement to consider where they are residing. Where they are residing, those leaders around that area must give their approval because they know those people.

Therefore, I will say that if we are required to go through this again it is just a repetition of what has already been explained and presented to this House. Maybe I am the final person to speak because when I look at the Members of this House, they are indicating their hand of approval, the Prime Minister is smiling to me, and that is an indication that this Bill will go through the House.

Those are my views and I would like to give this House my support for this Bill. Maybe it is time to hear the views of the Minister Responsible for this Bill and his final summary.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I see the Honourable Terepai Maoate. You have the Floor.

**MR T. MAOATE:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us in the House this afternoon. To our people listening in to our discussions, Kia Orana.

As mentioned before, I will be brief with my comments but before I do so, I seek your indulgence Madam Speaker for me to address the people in my electorate.

Firstly, to our people in Amuri and Ureia listening in, the Island Councillors and your Assistants, our elders right down to our children, Kia Orana. To our warriors who are coming over to Rarotonga, I know some of the other islands are bragging but we will not brag. Like what the Member for Ivirua said, he is on standby for all Codes, I am also on standby for all of you. Next week, together with the Members from Ngavaitau and Arenikau, we will meet you here in Rarotonga. To my Chairman, Committee and supporters, Kia Orana. I will see you all in the near future to discuss our way forward.

I will come back to the Constitution Amendment Bill (No. 29) and acknowledge the hard work by the Select Committee of the Immigration Bill. I understand the effort that you have put in your work especially the consultation meetings with our people and putting your report together. In such a short time, you were able to report to this House. It shows our people that Government and the Opposition have been working together so we can do a lot of things we have planned. What I am happy about is that the Leader of the Opposition made the presentation to this House. I think it is a good example that we have shown to our people that the Government and the Opposition are working together to do a lot of things and not just for the sake of coming into this House to eat.

I find it hard to ask the Prime Minister the question about Permanent Residents because it was the Cook Islands Party supporters that raised the questions with me and not the Democratic Party supporters. Therefore, I am happy and I support this Constitution Amendment. When I look at the Committee's Report, I believe they have deliberated the issue thoughtfully for us to consider in this House.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. As there are no further speakers I will ask the Chair of the Immigration Bill Select Committee to conclude the debate on the Bill.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to you again. To our Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Members of Government, our Opposition, Leader of the Opposition, staff of the Parliament, Kia Orana. To all our people listening in or watching via livestream a very warm Kia Orana to you all.

Madam Speaker, at the outset let me take this opportunity to convey my sincere acknowledgement and appreciation to the many people who assisted and brought us to this stage in terms of reviewing, consulting, recommending and submitting this Report to this Honourable House. I can only add that seeing the complexity, sensitivity and difficult nature of this Bill, it will definitely require ongoing and continuous review of the relevant policies pertaining to this Bill.

I would like firstly, to thank all the Immigration Bill Select Committee, a Committee who have continuously and consistently paved the way since its establishment back in March 2020 to this day. From the Vice-Chairman, Honourable Vaitoti Tupa, the Leader of the Opposition who has been acting as our own professional lawyer and our good Colleagues from the Opposition, the Honourable Tamaiva Tuavera and the rest of us from the Government side. The Honourable Tama Tuavera likes to refer to our team as the Real-A-Team.

Madam Speaker, you would have no doubt seen that the subject on hand is all new to us. We have not been heavily involved in dealing with Immigration issues prior to being established in this Committee. However, as time went by, as meetings after meetings, the Committee started to get a good grasp of the many complex issues and ongoing difficulties that the Ministry of Immigration has been faced with and will continue to face when this Bill is operational.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to thank your very good staff, from your Acting Clerk of the House, our Secretariat Margaret, our IT Unuia and not forgetting the Finance staff working behind the scene. Not forgetting the Honourable Tuavera's outstanding account at Babes as I believe this should rightly be covered by the Civil List obligations. You personally asked me to highlight this in this Sitting. I would also like to thank Mrs Nooroa Numanga who was heavily involved in the Maori translation of our Bill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister, this might be an appropriate time to interrupt your concluding remarks as it is time for our break.

Parliament is suspended until 3.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended at 2.30 p.m.**

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

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

Honourable Members, before we suspended the Honourable Minister Vaine Mokoroa had the Floor and you may continue.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Before we suspended I was extending our appreciation on behalf of the Committee to the many, many people throughout our visit, the meetings both here in Rarotonga and in the Outer Islands. I thank each and every one of you that came forward to hear and listen and if you have spoken at any of these public meetings, from each and every Committee Member and more so from myself as Chairman of this hardworking Committee – thank you very much and may the Good Lord continue to bless you all.

This work would not have got to this stage without the professional and continuous input from our Crown Law staff and more so to the Deputy Solicitor General Kathy Bell, thank you very much Kathy for your assistance.

Although I have not made personal contact with him during this process but it is much worthy that we take note and acknowledge and say thank you to the New Zealand Parliament Services. You were always on standby to assist us and I am told not only with this Bill but also with the other many pieces of legislations that we have been introducing or amending – thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, let me also thank and acknowledge the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration more so the Secretary Tapaeru Herman and the

Principal Immigration Officer, Miss Kairangi Samuela, who is sitting with us – thank you very much to both of you.

Madam Speaker there are however, serious considerations and implications required for this Bill that will have an overall impact on our Constitution and other relevant legislations. Our people would have no doubt heard the concerns and submissions of my esteemed Colleagues in the House pertaining to and reporting to the House the different and the many concerns that our very own people have brought forward.

The Honourable Selina Napa during the debate raised a concern and issue in terms of Section 7.4 of the Report. This is pertaining to the Ministerial discretion as stipulated in Clause 42. This issue was highlighted frequently and debated vocally amongst people and the emphasis amongst our people and the inclusion of the Aronga Mana into the vetting process became the norm.

I can recall Bishop Pere when we held the Puaikura consultation. The Bishop was straight and to the point in saying that, the vetting should be undertaken by the RAC, Ui Ariki and the Minister. We all know that each Puna or island have different structure in terms of its traditional setup where some Puna have a Ariki and some do not have any Ariki.

Some islands have a Local Government and Rarotonga do not have any Local Government. Some Puna have a Ariki where some of the Ariki are currently residing in New Zealand for different reasons but they have a representative.

It has been proposed by the Select Committee that the discretion rest with the Committee made up of the RAC, Aronga Mana and the Ariki where appropriate the Island Council. However, there are issues with setting up a Committee in terms of its framework decision-making process budgetary constraints.

A Committee would negate the purpose of this discretion being a residual discretion that should have limited use into something that creates more of a path for Permanent Residence as opposed to the system. This could also be raised within the Bill or in the new Regulation that is still to be developed. Removing the exercise of this discretion to a Committee also undermines the accountability for the decision-making.

The Select Committee's view is that the decision making should rest with the Minister who is ultimately accountable to Cabinet but that the discretion should not be absolute.

Madam Speaker, I would like to end my speech here and I would like to thank this House for your support in taking us over the first hurdle in tabling an amendment to our Constitution. Each matters and concerns was not taken lightly. You would have noted that the Leader of the Opposition said that I was stress out from reading these Reports. I have no doubt that I have seen that on her as well.

We know that the foundation we set for today, solid as it should be will be the foundation that we will be setting for our country to implement for the next 40 to 50 years. I once again thank each and every Member in this House. God Bless and thank You Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Chair of the Immigration Bill. Honourable Members, I just like to explain the procedure that we are going to take now. I will be putting the Question on the Motion, which I will read, and we will go into a division vote. If you can refer to your Standing Order 149 in your Standing Order Book.

The reason we are going to do this is because this Bill wants to change the Constitution and it is very clear. In Article 41 of the Constitution, the Second Reading or the vote on this needs to sit for 90 days before the second and last vote is made, and we will require a two third majority for this vote to succeed.

So I put the Question:

**That in accordance with Standing Orders 266 or the Report  
from the Immigration...**

I beg your pardon. You have the Floor.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Madam Speaker, rather than discuss this on air, I was just wondering whether we can have this discussion “in camera” only, and the Crown Law can be part of that discussions because we are dealing with two matters here, the Report itself minus the Constitution does require two third majority to adopt.

It is only the Bill which is now called the Constitution Amendment No. 29 the one that requires a two third majority and my reading of Standing Orders 149, but I was going to refer Madam Speaker to 143 as well, which may be necessary only in respect of the Constitution but not in respect of the Report of the Select Committee.

I am happy to be corrected by the other side, and by the Crown Law Office but that is how I see the process going forward.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The reason we are going this way is because you need two voting for between the 90 days, and we have already done the Second Reading of the Bill and your report includes the amendments that you have put into your Bill because it is attached to your Report.

After we do this voting, this is going to sit but recommitted to the House if it passes. Then we go to deal with the Constitution Amendment and after the Second Reading, it is going to sit again and therefore for the Immigration Bill the second vote will be when we go through the Third Reading. That’s the reason we are doing it this way.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** I was just wondering with the Minister, whether we could have this discussion in-camera.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** With in-camera session Madam Speaker, just so we can clarify this.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Parliament is suspended to go in-camera for 15 minutes.

**Sitting suspended at 3.16 p.m.**

**Sitting resume at 3.36 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Parliament is resumed. We will begin on the Question on the Motion that was, I will read that for you.

**That in accordance with Standing Order 266 for the Report from the Immigration Bill 2020 Select Committee be approved and in accordance with Standing Order 268 that subject to the recommittal of the Bill in respect of Clause 21, 24, 35 and 36 of the Immigration Bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

We will now go to Orders of the Day. As I explained before, this Bill will now just sit and take pause until we have dealt with the Constitution Amendment Bill.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

The Orders of the Day is on the Second Reading of the COVID-19 Cook Islands National Superannuation No.2 Bill.

We have been asked to go in-camera at this point, as Members want this Bill explained to them. Is that still the case? All right Parliament will suspend and we will go in camera for half an hour. Parliament is suspended.

**Sitting suspended at 3.40 p.m.**

**Sitting resumed at 4.05 p.m.**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, please be seated. Parliament is resumed. I will now call for the Minister to move the Motion for the Second Reading of the Bill.

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

**That the COVID-19 Cook Islands National Superannuation No.2 Bill be now read a Second time**

Madam Speaker, this Bill is a continuation of the support package being put to our people as part of the measures taken to protect our country from COVID-19 in order to keep our people safe, Madam Speaker, we have had to close our borders to all travellers and even though it was very nice in the first few months, everybody was saying oh, it is beautiful we have our own beaches back, there are no traffic on the road, it is lovely. We are now starting to see the harsh reality Madam Speaker of having no tourists in our country.

Immediately, the hotels felt the pressure, the rental companies felt the pressure, the tour companies felt the pressure. Now we are seeing that trickle down to our growers, our market vendors, stall holders, the people who sell food at the markets are now struggling to sell their product and their produce because of the impacts that the border closure has had on our country.

However, we have had everybody chip in to make sure that people do not miss out. Government have been able to put together the wage subsidy to ensure people who no longer have work are still earning some money until the end of this year.

Government has further introduced tax measures to put more money into people's pockets by lifting the tax free threshold in July and it will be lifted again at the end of this year or by 1<sup>st</sup> January to ensure that the first \$14,900 you earn will be tax free.

Those who have loans at the banks, Madam Speaker the Government has put in place a support mechanism where the Government will pay 70% of your interest on your loans for the whole year until June next year just to help those who are struggling with their debt.

We have provided opportunity for those who do have loans at the bank to have their loans on hibernation for that period of time.

We have had our Power Company provide free power to everybody for the first three months and then continued to provide a subsidy to all households so that the next set of support to households is a \$50 discount on your power bill.

The Superannuation Board Madam Speaker has also recognised the need to support our people with their first reduction in the Superannuation contributions of three percent, these are now being extended to a one percent contribution.

This Bill Madam Speaker now seeks to extend that one percent contribution for Superannuation from the 1<sup>st</sup> October which is just two days away until 31<sup>st</sup> December of this year. But this latest round of support for the Superannuation contributions Madam Speaker, there are conditions that need to be met in order to qualify as a one percent contributor rather than a five percent contributor. They are that you have received the Government support either a grant or the wage subsidy or other Government support after 31<sup>st</sup> March of this year and your business is below fifty percent of your regular income then you would qualify for this reduction in Superannuation.

So while we continue with an economy that is essentially an economy without tourism, Madam Speaker the Government is still looking at further ways that we can extend our support to businesses and to our individual households that are struggling. At the same time, Madam Speaker the Government is working very hard in discussions with our New Zealand agencies to find a way to enable us to have our tourists come back at least in small numbers to start off with to enable income to flow into our country.

We were very close in August Madam Speaker, until the new outbreak in Auckland which put a hold on any further plans for opening up of our borders. However, New Zealand is managing its outbreak very well and it seems that its reduction in its restrictions will now be looked very favourably for us to start again proposals to commence travel between our two countries.

One thing I do know Madam Speaker is that, it will not take much for our country to have some economic recovery. Our country had a booming economy during the times when we were up to 170,000 visitor arrivals a year. Even a fraction of those numbers,



Madam Speaker will throw a life line to our businesses, to our households, to those small market vendors once we start our flights between our two countries on a regular basis again. One thing that this COVID has done for our country Madam Speaker is that, we have greatly improved the requirements of our hospital to meet the threat of this COVID-19.

The arrival of our CT scanner plus the construction of our additional laboratory which will enable faster diagnostics is all a step in the right direction. Good supplies of PPE gear that have been provided and donated by sponsors to our country greatly boost our ability to be able to meet and confront this COVID-19 if it ever gets to our country.

The Prime Minister was able to divulge to us that his phone call with the Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison gave the assurance that Australia's vaccine programme to the Cook Islands is sitting right at the top of the priority list to be able to receive the vaccine once approved.

So, there are challenging times ahead for us Madam Speaker. No matter how good the Government Policies are, there will always be some businesses that do not quite fit and will come into trouble but there is no avenue for them under the current support programme. This is where your Government Madam Speaker is a good Government because it will adapt and be flexible to meet the needs of those that maybe we did not recognise but now it is emerging. Because at these times, especially now heading into the end of this calendar year is an important time for us so we must make sure that we recognise the needs of individuals, businesses, small businesses as they emerged and be able to respond to them to support them.

However, at the same time, we must encourage and allow those who are looking for solutions, those who are willing to invest and do different things, we must encourage them because it is their enthusiasm, their energy that will see us through and that will help our economy recover.

Therefore Madam Speaker, I commend this Bill that has been put forward to us by the Superannuation Board to ensure that whilst we provide relief to individuals and companies we also make sure that we do support and protect the Superannuation Fund because it is this Superannuation Fund that will help us that will retire and have no income, this Fund will be part of our livelihood. It is money that has been contributed to by the workers and by their employers to ensure a Retirement Fund for when you retire. With those words Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to this House.

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

**Seconded by the Honourable Tingika Elikana**

The Floor is open for debate. I see the Honourable Vaitoti Tupa.

**MR V. TUPA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker please allow me the opportunity to address my people in my constituency.

I extend my greetings to my people of Matavera, the Traditional Leaders and our Church Leaders, I extend warm greetings to you. I also extend greetings to our people from one end of our village to the other end.

In Matavera I have a gentleman who will be on medical referral to New Zealand. He is known as Trainee and he works as an ambulance driver for the hospital. May the blessing of God guide and heal you. We also had another referral that has been referred to New Zealand about four weeks now and that is Papa Tukurangi Hosking. I was told he is not well and one of his sons will be flying across this Friday to support his father as he is not responding to people visiting him. May the blessing of the Lord be with him and heal him.

Madam Speaker, when I went with this Committee to the Southern and Northern Islands, I did not convey my greetings to them. Therefore, to the people on Manihiki, Rakahanga, Tongareva and Pukapuka, I convey to you my sincere appreciation for looking after us during our time with you. Thank you also to the Mayors and Councillors on the island. Madam Speaker, I also must not forget the womenfolk on Rakahanga and Tongareva who gifted us with hats, likewise to the womenfolk of Pukapuka who gifted us with kikau brooms.

Coming back to the Southern Islands, especially to the people of Ngaputoru Islands who looked after us and also to the people of Aitutaki, I sincerely thank you all. Thank you also to the Minister Robert Tapaitau because our Committee stayed in his house in Tongareva. Finally, to the people of Auau Enuu, to the Members of Parliament, the Mayor and Councillors, thank you for looking after us.

Madam Speaker, before I come back to the Bill, I can see on the other side of the House the Member of Parliament for Tupapa Maraerenga in a colourful outfit. I do not know what the Maori word for the colour pink is. Maybe he is wearing this for a special reason and we are all aware that very soon we will have a new Prime Minister in the country.

Madam Speaker, I will now come back to the Bill before the House. Madam Speaker I believe what we have discussed “in camera” in this House has given light to us. Now I know why this Bill is brought to the House and I fully understand what it is all about. The Bill is coming back for the second time and its main purpose is to support our people during this hard times.

I know the Deputy Prime Minister who is also the Minister of Finance is saying, because of Government the support has been given to our people. However, let me remind this House that it is not only the Government, it is also the Opposition who has given their support to Government.

During our Question Time, I asked a question to the Minister of Finance regarding this issue because I know that as Minister of Finance, he knows the situation of our finance. However, even our Leader for the Opposition also understands the finance process and what is happening with our finance. That is the reason I asked the Minister the question regarding our growers, not only for the growers on Rarotonga but also those in the Southern Group Islands.

I have seen the produce from the growers in the Outer Islands that were imported to Rarotonga to be sold. I met with some of these business people and they told me that sometimes the market is good but sometimes it is not so good.

During our visit to the Outer Islands, the Associate Minister for Agriculture explained some of the things to the people there because the business people that go to the Outer Islands to look for produce look for good quality produce. They also look for produce that will last long so they can be sold in the shops.

We have been looking at our growers but not just our growers but our fishermen as well. I think it is a good thing to see a lot of produce that given freely to our people but at the same time, I noticed that the cost of the fish has come down to about \$5 or \$6 a kilo. Yes, it is true that there is support given to our people by providing free produce but on the other hand, it is actually our growers that are suffering because they fail to profit from their labour.

Therefore, I stand to give my support to this Bill before the House. In addition, we should also look carefully at those who do not qualify under this support. Not only for the island of Rarotonga, we also want to look outside and give support to the people in the Outer Islands. For us in Matavera, I know our growers are working hard to plant produce but we have our problems also because last Saturday I tried to sell my brother-in-law's produce, I had problem selling it. The left over I returned them home.

Even another grower brought some of his produce to my home because when he saw the left over produce at my home he asked me, who gave these to you. He understood the difficulty about being unable to sell the produce because his produce could not be sold at the Punanga Nui Market the reason he brought his left over to my home.

Let us look at this problem seriously and for those who are not accommodated in this Bill, we need to look at this now and address the matter instead of waiting for a later date. But I know that the main intention of this House is to support our people so that they will be in a better position especially during these hard times of COVID-19.

Madam Speaker, I stand to support this Bill before the House and I hope that all of us Members will support it as well.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, and I see the Minister George Angene and you have the Floor.

**HON. G. ANGENE:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us and our people listening in and those as well from New Zealand and Australia.

Before I present my views on the Bill Madam Speaker, if I may take some time to greet my people in my electorate of Tupapa-Nui-O-Au. To all the leaders of our many sectors in our village and our little ones, I greet you in the Name of our Lord. To all the public servants in the Ministries under my Portfolio, I greet you all at this time.

A special acknowledgement to my own daughter who is in charge of my own workers – I greet you. This daughter of mine is like a strong man and she manages all my workers during the week. I heard the comments by the Member for Matavera regarding

the clothes I am wearing. Thank you for your comments on what I am wearing. I would just like to explain this garment I am wearing.

Those of you who are new to this House, this is not the first time I have worn this. I wore this to Parliament back in 2010 when I entered this House. Many people say this colour is for women. I chose this colour because the intention is to make peace. This is in line and appropriate with the motto for the Cook Islands Party, Peace and Love.

I would like to speak to the young people travelling through my village because I have established a market place in my village and people are turning these into places for drinking alcohol. I believe this desecration is being done by young people from outside our village. I am asking that you refrain from doing this and to take it back to your own village before you end up being sorry.

I acknowledge and thank the Government of today for all the good work that they have done in my village of Tupapa. I am sure it is quite clear when we travel through Tupapa you will see the drainage has been done there supported by Government under the leadership of the Minister Robert Tapaitau.

I thank the Minister of Finance for providing the funds and support from Government for this because I am 60 years of age now and this drainage has never been touched.

On top of that, thank you very much for the good road the Government has provided for my people in Tupapa and there is one more and this is the asphalt to be applied on to the current road. I thank you in advance the Minister of ICI even though you have not approved this yet.

I will come back to the Bill before the House. I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for introducing this Bill before the House. Our people are facing many challenges out there and this will serve to help them.

My only concern here is that you are providing the funds to help our people and yet all the drinking places are full of young people drinking and may be wasting money. However, in saying that, you are responsible to your own funds that Government has given you, but we should be mindful to save our funds because these are challenging times we are going through.

The Word of God teaches us that we should be like the wise men instead of being like fools and to take care during these times. The Bible also teaches us parents that we have no other joy when we see our children travel along the right path of righteousness.

We understand Minister of Finance that the Cook Islands Games is approaching and we have before us the requests from the different sectors of the sports community. The Member from Titikaveka made a request and my reply was no. To the Member for Titikaveka, maybe if you come back tomorrow, maybe the funds have reached my bank account. Just to confirm with you I do not hold any cash on me, all my funds are being shared out to help my people.

To the Government and all the Members of the House, let us work together as one and in peace and love. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Member. I see the Honourable Tingika Elikana you have the Floor.

**MR T. ELIKANA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise as Leader of the House to move a Motion:

**That Standing Order 54 (2) which relate to sitting days and hours for sitting of this Parliament be suspended to enable Parliament to continue sitting until the business in relation to the Second Reading of the Constitution Amendment (29) Bill 2020 is completed**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I seek for a Seconder?

**Seconded by the Honourable George Angene**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

**Motion agreed to**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Are there any further speakers? I beg your pardon Honourable Tereapii, the Honourable Tina Browne actually had the Floor before. I will give you the Floor after that.

**HON. T. PUPUKE BROWNE:** Thank you Madam Speaker, thank you Honourable Member for Arutanga/Reureu.

Greetings to all of us this evening. I would like to take this time if I may to greet my people on my island of Rakahanga. To the Mayor and your Council Members, all the Government workers, to the Minister of the Cook Islands Christian Church, the Seven Days Adventist as well as the Catholic Church, our children and young people, to the elderly men and women, all our people living on Rakahanga, greetings to you all in the name of our Lord.

I believe you are watching the livestream on Face Book for the Rakahanga Sport Team and you are able to witness the donations being presented by our people from New Zealand and Australia. If it is not posted on Face Book, I would like to announce that \$5,000 have been given to our Hostel last night to assist with our uniforms and our catering for the next two weeks.

I want to report that everything is fine, good with Team Rakahanga. I am visiting the different sectors opening and the codes. We arrived at the opening of our Bowling team on Saturday. Our team was beautiful and we had very good numbers. We have seen the spirit of togetherness during this time. Maybe because of this COVID-19 time and the request for all of us to work together we have seen this spirit of togetherness.

I would like to give my greetings and acknowledge our President and all the Executives of Rakahanga. It is fortunate we have our hostel in Maraerenga as a place for us to gather and to meet for about six to eight weeks now because we don't only meet but

following our meeting, we are fed by all the Mama of the Hostel. So it is very easy for our people to come together on Monday evenings for our meeting and our kaikai afterwards.

I extend a special and sincere appreciation to those of you who sponsored Team Rakahanga, thank you very much for your sponsorship. To all the families assisting, the donations from Rarotonga as well as from New Zealand and Australia, a big thank you very much to all of you.

Returning back to the Bill, there is no thought of objecting because this Bill in front of the House will serve to help those people who have been greatly impacted by COVID-19 because at the start, we were not quite sure how long this virus will be around us.

We started with the first three months and extended another three months and then extended another three months. As I mentioned before, my only concern, maybe the Government can consider those who may not qualify and maybe their situation is not as bad as in the month of March but perhaps because of the length of time of this COVID situation, they are going along the same path way because this subsidy will not assist them until they qualify to collect the subsidy as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March.

I was assured when I heard the Minister say maybe one area that can be looked into is the Policy for the Ministry of Finance so that our assistance is ready for the second group who may encounter this problem.

I know of two businesses which are not in the tourism sector and they are starting to go along this path. The main concern here is when the office or the business closes, then all the workers will go home because they have no job and they will not qualify for the subsidy under this arrangement.

I understand that the criteria now for assistance is that if your business has been downgraded by up to fifty percent, maybe then you can apply for assistance. This is where I was coming from earlier on of the things that we should consider so that our treatment to our people are the same and fair to ensure that we are ready before they fall into trouble and we try and rescue them.

I think I am our last speaker from our side and so I would like to give our full support to this Bill because this will serve to help our people if they have gone into some difficulties since the month of March until today. As mentioned by the Minister Angene, we should also be cautious of the situation where the subsidy funds provided by the Government are spent at places like Vaiana. Maybe we should employ Securities at these places so that when these people receiving subsidies arrive there, their subsidy should be cancelled because this is a lot of money.

We often talk about conserving funds in this House because we do not know what the future holds. However, when we look at the CNN news on television, we are way ahead of countries like the United States in terms of their situation there. Therefore, we should save our funds because we are unsure of our situation and maybe in June next year our boarder is still close, because there are further COVID spikes in New Zealand and Australia.

The Opposition supports this Bill. Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. I see the Honourable Tereapii Maki Kavana, you have the Floor.

**MR T. MAKI KAVANA:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity to talk in this Honourable House. I would also like to commend the women at the Clerk's Table today who have remained in their seats throughout the sitting and also the Interpreters doing their part.

Greetings also to the Honourable Members in this House. To the Government side and to our Leader, because tomorrow is a very important day in our country regarding our Prime Minister. To the Opposition side, to your Leader the Honourable Tina Browne and your Members, Kia Orana to you in the Name of our Lord.

Madam Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Bill before the House. I also seek your indulgence Madam Speaker for me to greet the people in my constituency of Arutanga/Reureu/Nikaupara in Aitutaki.

Kia Orana to my people in my constituency Arutanga/Reureu/Nikaupara. To all the Ministers of the different denominations, and to all those who hold positions in our constituency and also to all our Councillors, greetings in the Name of the Lord. To our youth right down to our new born babies, special greetings to you all. I thank God for blessing my family with a new baby this month. This will increase the number of supporters for me in the future.

I will now come back to the Bill before the House. On our island Araura today, there are many foreigners residing there. I feel sorry with some of these foreigners because their employers mistreat them. I would like to ask these business people to please look after these foreigners if you are employing one of them because they are our people as well. Our Government is looking after you and your business with the expectation that you will do the same in looking after your employees.

When I look at the Bill before the House, it is a triple blessing to us in our country. As mentioned by the Honourable Member earlier on, we came through the month of March and then June and now we are approaching the month of December. I believe when we reach the month of December, we will go for a further three months because I strongly believe God controls our country because our leaders put their trust in God.

In the last couple of months, my people asked me what will happen after three months. I told them not to worry because our Government and those managing our Government funds are full of wisdom and they can lead us. I know that it has been discussed in this House that for those who did not qualify for the Government subsidy and are now facing hardship with their business, they will now qualify under this support.

I would like to convey to Government the appreciation from one particular business in Aitutaki who has received the subsidy from Government to help pay the wages for his employees – thank you Government. I also believe our business people here in Rarotonga and in the Outer Islands have received this support.

For us on the island of Aitutaki, the way we run our electrical supply is that, all the tourist accommodation receive one hundred percent subsidy on their power bill. I am talking about the situation now and I am unsure what the situation would be from October to December. For our private homes in Aitutaki, the first one hundred dollars of our power bill is paid by the subsidy from Government and the consumer pays the rest of the balance. For the business people today, seventy percent is subsidised by Government. Thank you Government for this assistance. For the remaining of this year, this is in the hands of the Board to decide.

It is our prayer that the Board Members for the Power Supply in Aitutaki will look after us for the next three months and hoping that this support will continue for the island of Aitutaki.

Finally Madam Speaker, before I sit down, I would like to thank the Government and all the Members of this House for your support to the Supplementary Budget that was passed because that budget enable the purchase of a tractor for my constituency.

I sincerely thank you all in this House and I pray that you will continue to support me in the future, not only for the people in my constituency but also for the rest of the people in our country.

I want to make a public announcement that this machine is not only for Arutanga-Reureu-Nikaupara but it is for the whole island of Aitutaki. May God richly bless us all for giving me the opportunity to speak before the House.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Member. Honourable Minister you have the Floor.

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Kia Orana to all of us again this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, I stand to support this newly introduced COVID-19 Cook Islands National Superannuation Bill.

As mentioned by the Deputy Prime Minister, this is part of the economic package that the Government is trying to introduce. The simple reason behind this is to enable those that are paying Superannuation to put more money in their pocket as the result of the reduction from six percent to one percent.

An example for this is if someone is paying \$197 a fortnight, he will now only have to pay \$50 a fortnight on his Superannuation. This leaves about \$140 in that persons pocket to buy bread, butter and the basic necessities for their home.

Madam Speaker, earlier on during our Question Time, the Honourable Member William Heather asked for the exemptions of fees for our Mama at the Punanga Nui Market. I am happy to announce that as a result of the COVID-19 impact on our people, the charges that have been imposed on all the vendors at the Punanga Nui Market, they will not pay fees from Monday to Friday. However, those vendors who operate on Saturdays, their fees have been drastically reduced, where pensioners pay \$10 and other normal vendors pay \$15.



This is part of the Government support which compliments not only the Superannuation Bill that we are putting through today apart from the wage subsidies that we have been promoting, but as well as the reduction in payments of our energy cost. The Government through Punanga Nui has also addressed this through the reduction and exemption of fees.

For this reason, I fully support this Bill. Thank you Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. As there are no further speakers, I call the Minister Responsible to conclude the debate.

**HON. M. BROWN:** I have no further comments to make Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** In that case then, I put the Question:

**That the Bill be now read a Second time?**

**Motion agreed to**

**ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE:** Long Title: An Act to mitigate the economic hardship resulting from measures taken to protect the Cook Islands from COVID-19 coronavirus diseases 2019 by temporary lowering the rate for contributions to the National Superannuation Fund for employers who received a business grant or wage subsidy under the COVID-19 economic response plan after 31 March 2020 and their employees.

**BILL READ A SECOND TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. I now resolve Parliament into the Committee of the Whole House to go through the Bill.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE**

**MADAM CHAIRMAN:** We will begin with:

Clause 1: Title.

Clause 2: Commencement.

Clause 3: Interpretation.

Clause 4: Act binds the Crown.

I put the Question:

**That Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 stands part of the Bill?**

Sorry I beg your pardon,

**That Clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

I put the Question:

**That Clause 5: Application, Clause 6: Contributions to fund in respect of employers who received business grant or wage subsidy, Clause 7: relationship of this Act with National Superannuation Act, Clause 8: relationship of this Act with Employment Relations Act 2012, Clause 9: effect of rates on employment agreements.**

I put the Question:

**That Clauses 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, stands part of the Bill?**

**Motion agreed to**

Long Title: An Act to mitigate the economic hardship resulting from measures taken to protect the Cook Islands from COVID-19 (coronavirus diseases) 2019 by temporary lowering the rate for contributions to the National Superannuation Fund for employers who received a business grant or wage subsidy under the COVID-19 economic response plan after 31 March 2020 and their employees.

**Motion agreed to**

I put the Question:

**That the Report be made to Parliament**

**Motion agreed to**

Parliament is resumed.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I call the Minister Responsible to report the Bill to Parliament.

**HON. M. BROWN:** Thank you Madam Speaker I am happy to report:

**That the Bill progressed through the Committee with no amendments**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I put the Question:

**That the Report be adopted?**

**Motion agreed to**

I call on the Minister to move for the Third Reading of the Bill.

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

**That the COVID-19 (Cook Islands National Superannuation)  
No.2 Bill be read a Third time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I call for a Seconder to the Motion?

**Secoded by the Honourable Tingika Elikana**

I put the Question:

**That the Motion be agreed to?**

I beg your pardon, I put the Motion:

**That the Bill be now read a Third time?**

**Motion agreed to**

**ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE:** Long Title: An Act to mitigate the economic hardship resulting from measures taken to protect the Cook Islands from COVID-19 Corona Virus disease 2019 by temporarily lowering the rate of contributions to the National Superannuation Fund for employers who received a business grant or wage subsidy under the COVID-19 Economic Response Plan after 31 March 2020 and their employees.

**BILL READ A THIRD TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Members. That completes the First, Second and Third Reading of the Bill.

We will now go to Orders of the Day.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Orders of the Day is the Second Reading of the Constitution Amendment No.29 Bill 2020, and I call on the Prime Minister to move for the Second Reading.

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, I move:

**That the Bill be now read a Second time**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do you wish to speak on the Bill, Prime Minister?

**HON. H. PUNA:** Madam Speaker, the principles and merits of the Bill has already been covered in our in-camera session and really there Is no need to go through it again. Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I call a Seconder for the Motion?

**Secoded by the Honourable Vaine Mokoroa**

Do you wish to speak as a Seconder?

**HON. V. MOKOROA:** Talk on this subject matter, I am happy and I think all of the Members are happy with the explanations and the comments that I have made before.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Are there any speakers or no speakers for this Motion? If there are no further speakers, I am hoping I am going to get it right this time.

We are going to do a division vote the reason being according to our Constitution Article 41 the First Reading which we are going to do on this Bill now will require a two-third majority and the Third Reading which will be after 90 days will also require a two-third majority.

So in your Standing Order 149 when I put the Question for the Second Reading you will stand. Those who want to support the Bill will stand and the Acting Clerk will call your name and you sit and we carry on until all the Members standing have been written down and then you sit.

When I put the question for those opposed you will do the same and then we get the result after that. So we will begin.

I put the Question:

**That the Bill be read a Second time?**

Those in favour stand please. I beg your pardon, is everybody present? I beg your pardon so can you please be seated. We will sound the conch for two minutes to get the other people back in. Just take a seat please. There is an empty seat over there, we are required by the Standing Orders to do that just in case somebody especially come in for the vote, two minutes.

*(Conch sounded for two minutes)*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I put the Question:

**That those in favour that the Bill be read a Second time, please stand?**

For the Motion:

Honourable Henry Puna

Honourable Mark Brown

Honourable Rose Toki-Brown

Honourable Robert Tapaitau

Honourable George Angene

Honourable Vaine Mokoroa

Mr Tingika Elikana

Mr Tai Tura

Mr Patrick Arioka

Mr Tereapii Maki Kavana

Mr Tuakeu Tangatapoto

Ms Tehani Brown

Honourable Tina Browne  
Mr Terepai Maoate  
Mrs Selina Napa  
Mr William Heather  
Mr Tamaiva Tuavera  
Mr Vaitoti Tupa  
Mr Wesley Kareroa  
Mr Nooroa Baker  
Mrs Agnes Armstrong  
Mr Manuela Kitai

Against the Motion:

Nil

Absent:

Mr Albert Nicholas  
Mrs Tetangi Matapo

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we have our result from our division as quite obviously seen by the rest of you, we have 22 ayes out of 24 with two absent out of the House today and zero no.

Quite obviously we have much more than the two-third that is required to amend the Constitution and the Acting Clerk will now read the Long Title of the Bill.

**ACTING CLERK AT THE TABLE:** Long Title: An Act to amend the Constitution.

**BILL READ A SECOND TIME**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, that completes our business on the Constitution Bill and it will now sit and wait for the ninety days period before we can come back and deal with it.

Thank you very much, that completes our business for today. It has been many, many years since the Constitution has been amended so this day will go down in the history of the Members of Parliament who sit in this House today. I would like to thank our Solicitor General and our Deputy Solicitor General and also Nani for being with us throughout the day. Thank you for your assistance throughout the procedures of this part of our work.

Finally, I wish to thank every Member of the Immigration Select Committee and the Members of Parliament for this wonderful, overwhelming support in achieving what we set out to do with this Immigration Bill and with our amendment to the Constitution and the rest of the journey of those will be after ninety days.

May I ask somebody to finish our meeting in a prayer before we adjourn.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Parliament is adjourned until tomorrow Wednesday, 30 September at 1.00 p.m.

**Sitting adjourned at 5.47 p.m.**