

1947
NEW ZEALAND

WESTERN SAMOA

STATEMENT MADE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON 27th
AUGUST, 1947, BY THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER, THE RIGHT HON.
W. NASH, ON POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT IN WESTERN SAMOA

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave

INTRODUCTION

I DESIRE to inform the House that the Government have under consideration certain constitutional changes in Western Samoa. The House will recall that, soon after the Government assumed office, they became aware that the aspirations and political development of the Samoans enabled them to take a more responsible part in the Government of the territory.

In the period before 1939 some preliminary steps were taken towards giving the Samoan people a greater voice in the management of their own affairs, but the disturbed conditions resulting from the war delayed the development of further measures directed to this end. In 1944 the Prime Minister, accompanied by Mr. A. G. Osborne, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary, visited Samoa to learn at first hand the ideas held by the Samoan leaders themselves regarding political advancement.

TRUSTEESHIP AGREEMENT

In October, 1946, a draft trusteeship agreement for Western Samoa was submitted to the United Nations by the New Zealand Government, and placed before the General Assembly for consideration and approval. This provided for the replacement of the League of Nations' mandate by the trusteeship agreement, which brought the territory within the framework of the international trusteeship system, established under the Charter of the United Nations. The agreement was approved by the General Assembly on 13th December, 1946.

In the meantime the Samoan people had been consulted regarding the terms of the draft. Their representatives declared that they recognized that the trusteeship agreement marked an advance on the mandate, and they stated their appreciation of the sympathetic manner in which they had been treated by the Government, and of the progress made during the past ten years in developing social services, but they felt that their ultimate aim of self-government would not be furthered by accepting the agreement. Accordingly, they asked that Samoa be granted self-government and that New Zealand remain as adviser and protector of Samoa.

CONSULTATIONS IN SAMOA

During recent months the Government have carefully studied the whole question, and consulted with the Samoan leaders to discover in what manner the wishes of the Samoans can best be met in the immediate future.

In undertaking this task the Government have been greatly helped in an examination of the position by the members of the United Nations Mission, which, at New Zealand's request, is visiting Western Samoa in connection with the Samoan petition to the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

OBLIGATIONS OF TRUSTEESHIP

Under the terms of the trusteeship agreement New Zealand is charged with the responsibility of progressively increasing the participation of the Samoan people in the control of their own affairs. Our consultations with the Samoan leaders have led us to believe that a substantial step forward can now be taken. Accordingly, the Government have worked out plans which will give the Samoans an increased measure of responsibility immediately, and prepare them for taking further progressive steps towards self-government. These plans are now being discussed with the representatives of the Samoan people.

The details of the Government's proposals are—

COUNCIL OF STATE

The establishment of a Council of State to advise the Administrator or the High Commissioner, as he may in future be called, on all important matters of policy affecting the territory. This Council would be composed of the Administrator, as representative of New Zealand, and the three Fautua, who are, at present, the acknowledged representatives of the Samoan people. Future appointments to the Council would be made by the Governor-General on the nomination of the members of the Fono of Faipule, and the Samoan members of the legislature sitting together.

LEGISLATURE

It is proposed to replace the present Legislative Council by a legislature in which the Samoan members would have an absolute majority. This body would be composed of the following groups :—

The members of the Council of State :

Eleven members nominated by the Fono of Faipule :

Five representatives of the local European community elected under adult suffrage :

Six official members.

The Administrator would act as President of the Legislature, and would possess only a casting vote. The three Fautua would have all the rights of ordinary members.

POWERS OF LEGISLATURE

Whereas in the past the powers of the Legislative Council were limited, it is proposed that for the future the legislature should have full powers in all matters affecting the territory. In the case of legislation on the following subjects, however, the consent of the New Zealand Government is necessary before it becomes law: external affairs, defence, the control of the Public Service, the imposition of discriminatory Customs duties, currency and banking, immigration, and any matters affecting the prerogative of the Crown or the title to Crown lands.

In view of her position under the trusteeship agreement, New Zealand must continue to hold general reserve powers of legislation and of disallowance of local legislation. But this necessary reserve power will not restrain the exercise of a real initiative and responsibility by the new Samoan legislature.

In regard to finance, control would be vested in the Legislature, but measures dealing with financial matters or involving expenditure would only be introduced with the consent of the Administrator. The audit of the finances of the territory would continue to be made by the New Zealand Controller and Auditor-General.

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN SAMOA

In future it is proposed that the title "Administration of Western Samoa" should be replaced by that of "Government of Western Samoa." This might require a number of other consequential changes, such as a change in the title of "Secretary to the Administration" to that of "Chief Secretary."

FONO OF FAIPULE

The Fono of Faipule, or Samoan Advisory Council, which consists of forty-one district representatives, would remain constituted as at present; its principal function being, in addition to that of nominating the Samoan members of the legislature and the holders of various other offices, to keep the Government and the Legislature aware of the opinions of the people in the outer villages.

SAMOAN PUBLIC SERVICE

The Samoan Public Service would be removed from the control of the New Zealand Public Service Commission, and an independent Public Service authority would be appointed in Samoa. It would be the special function of this new authority to find means of promoting local people, both Samoan and European to positions of responsibility as quickly as possible. In this connection both the New Zealand Government and the Samoan leaders are aware that promotion of local Civil servants to the higher posts depended upon our ability to push forward, as rapidly as possible, with our proposals for giving specialized training to officers already in the Samoan Public Service, and for providing young Samoans with the best possible education.

PROFITS FROM REPARATION ESTATES

The Prime Minister declared during his visit to Samoa that he believed that in future all the profits made by the New Zealand Reparation Estates should be used for the benefit of Samoa. Many grants had been made from the New Zealand Treasury for the construction of roads, for the establishment of scholarships, for the building of a broadcasting-station, and for other purposes. It was intended to continue this practice and, possibly, to give it some legal form by the establishment of a Samoan Development Fund, to which the profits of the Reparation Estates would be paid and from which grants would be made.

OTHER QUESTIONS

There are, in addition, certain proposals of less immediate importance, which the Government wishes to discuss with the representatives of the people of Samoa during the coming year. One of these is the question of Samoan status. The Samoans are anxious that any risk of an eventual clash of interests between persons of Samoan status and persons of European status shall be avoided. They hope, instead, that all those who regard Samoa as their permanent home will gradually move towards the possession of a common status. Another question which the Government wishes to see discussed is

that of local-body government for the villages and for Apia. These are matters, however, which the proposed new Legislature and the Fono of Faipule should have an opportunity of considering fully before any action is taken.

CONCLUSION

Conferences with the Fautua have been held in an atmosphere of the greatest frankness and friendliness, and the Government's proposals will now be discussed fully at a meeting being held with district representatives.

The United Nations Mission in Samoa has been kept informed of our plans. Their own report has not yet been submitted to the Trusteeship Council, but the Government will give full consideration to any proposals that they may make regarding the Government of the Territory. From our examination of the position and our discussions with the Samoan leaders, we are convinced that the plans we have elaborated for the development of self-government in the territory represent a real and, I believe, a welcome advance for the people of Samoa.

The present proposals are intended only as the first steps in a process which will not end until the Samoan people are able to assume full responsibility for the control of their own affairs.