

*Second Meeting (December).*

It was decided to consolidate the present poll-tax and medical levy into one personal tax of £1 16s. per year, and so make the Native tax about equal to that in Tonga and American Samoa. Matais (heads of families), £2.

It was also decided to set apart one day per year as a children's tree-planting day.

Roads, bridges, pipe-line water-supplies, and cement cisterns for a number of districts were approved, and Natives agreed to assist the Government in carrying out the work.

The law making certain traders' debts not recoverable from Natives was submitted to the Faipules, with a view to its revision by fixing a sum of approximately £1 for which action might be taken to recover. The Fono decided the existing law should not be altered.

The law prohibiting Natives from wasting their time making *malagas* in large parties around the islands for the purpose of attending fine-mat ceremonies was reconsidered. This law was passed by the Fono three years ago on the understanding that it should be tried for three years and rediscussed at the end of that time. Its initial object was to put a stop to a custom which resulted in neglect of plantations and impoverishing villages visited by large parties from other districts.

Every district representative approved of this law being made permanent. It was realized that, while objections would be raised by some Natives who by virtue of their position benefit by the receipt of presents of fine mats under the old custom, in the interests of Samoa as a whole the existing law was a good one.

Protests were made by the Fono against certain Europeans in Apia interfering in this and other Native matters which they did not understand, as such interference was likely to create wrong impressions on the part of the Natives and lead to trouble.

As the Europeans in Apia who organized the recent agitation included in their propaganda a protest against the punishment of chiefs by removing their titles and authority in cases where they commit offences calculated to disturb the peace, order, and good government of the Natives, the law on this subject was submitted to the Faipules for their views. This law was first introduced in the early days of the former German regime, twenty-six years ago, in order to put a stop to the harsh methods of punishment exercised by the Samoans themselves. The Fono agreed that it would be impossible to maintain peace and good government without this law, and that it was now administered with greater leniency than formerly.

Owing to a number of applications being made to the Administrator by families to remove their Matai (head of family), the following rule has been adopted for the past two years on the advice of the Faipules. This rule works satisfactorily, viz.: "No head of family shall be deprived of his title except for misconduct, while the Administrator will in all cases consult the Samoans themselves through a special committee of chiefs and obtain their advice."

Complaints were made from a number of districts against the administration of the copra laws, which involved Samoans in heavy fines and brought them no recompense for their efforts in making good copra, as the Native who made indifferent copra received the same price as the one who took great care and produced a high-grade white copra. Appeals were made to the Administrator to raise the price of copra to the price the Natives receive in American Samoa and other islands, and also to abolish the fines for making inferior copra until a better price for superior copra was obtained. They again urged their oft-repeated request for the Government to purchase or export their copra. The Fono was informed that the matter was one for the Natives themselves to adjust. As producers they were in the same position as European planters, and were perfectly free to market their own products when and where they choose.

Faipules were informed that the Administration wished to help not only European planters but Natives in every possible way to improve the quality and get the highest possible price for their products, and that the Administration was prepared to help the Natives to export their copra, but would only do so in the case of thoroughly dried white copra of superior quality, which all could make if they carried out the instructions that had been issued for their guidance. Copra of this quality would command a higher price and build up a reputation for Samoan copra. It would also increase the purchasing-power of the Natives, and improve trade by the circulation of many thousands of pounds now lost to the territory. The Faipules agreed to do their utmost to get their people to make a high-grade copra.

In view of the suggestion made during the recent European agitation that the Faipules are not representative of the Native race, the following information may be of interest:—

In 1905 the Fono of Faipule was first established on the authority of the then German Governor, and twenty-seven were chosen by him as follows: To represent various sections of the—Tuamasaga district, 4; Atua district, 3; Aana district, 3; Vaa o Fonoti district, 1; Manono district, 1; Falealili district, 1; Faasaleleaga district, 3; Saleaula district, 2; Safotu district, 2; Palauli district, 2; Satupaitea district, 2; Vaisigano district, 1; Falealupo district, 1; Nu'u e tolu district, 1.

Individual chiefs were selected by the Governor, a condition of appointment being that the office was permanent so long as a Faipule carried out his duties satisfactorily. One of those then appointed still holds office—viz., Toelupe.

These Faipules met twice a year, as at present, and conferred with the Governor. In their districts they were the political "headmen," and voiced the views of the Government to their people.

This system of representation is still maintained, and, under the authority granted by the New Zealand Parliament, "The Administrator may from time to time, by warrant under his hand, appoint such numbers of Samoans as he thinks fit to be Faipules. No person shall be appointed as a Faipule who is not qualified in accordance with existing Samoan usage and custom to occupy the position of Faipule in any Council or body having advisory function."