

Though it differs greatly from a representative democracy, it seems to the Mission to provide a suitable basis for progressive development in self-government. Certainly self-government must not be made to await the slow acquisition of any western form and philosophy of government, nor must its character be shaped arbitrarily by outside authority.

9. The indigenous Samoan system of political organization is at present actively handling village and district affairs, and to a lesser degree national affairs, though for the most part outside the framework of the New Zealand Administration. It is based upon a hierarchy of "title-holders" (chiefs and orators). These title-holders meet in councils, or "*Fono*s," of the villages, the sub-districts and districts, the extended families, and at the highest level, as the representatives of all Samoa. Each title-holder is the responsible head of a co-operative family group with whom he is likely to discuss current matters, so that, to a certain degree, channels of discussion and opinion are open all the way from the lowly untitled family member to the highest title-holder of the "Royal" family lines.

10. There is a small but increasing group of Samoan leaders who by now have some understanding of the processes of modern government. These are usually holders of high titles who have gained experience as Government officials. Being of importance according to Samoan custom, they carry prestige and some influence beyond their immediate family and village; in the case of the "Royal descendants" they have the respect of the Samoan people as a whole. Such leaders possess self-esteem and a great pride in being Samoans.

11. To some degree the Samoan social structure is changing under an impetus from the people themselves. Some of the high-level title-holders, for example, have adopted to a considerable degree western ways of living. There is also a tendency for the authority of title-holders to be undermined. The existence of a money economy lessens the dependence of persons of lower rank upon their leaders, and opens the way for such persons in earning money to attain importance beyond that traditionally allowed, or even to break away if they wish from the family and community group altogether. Furthermore, the rapid increase of population without any increase in the number of *matai* titles may menace the whole *matai* system. A number of observers believe that one element in the present move for self-government is the desire of some leaders to reinforce or regain their traditional control in the face of this tendency towards a more individualistic and equalitarian way of life. Delicate as the matter is, the Mission would not wish to suggest the creation of a situation in which normal political development of the people as a whole would be turned back in favour of any privileged group. In due course [particular Samoan districts and the Samoan people as a whole may well wish to replace the present