

LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE CONTROL

The High Commissioner and the Council of State

The administration of the executive government is entrusted to the High Commissioner, who is appointed by the Governor-General of New Zealand and responsible to the Minister of Island Territories. He also acts as President of the Council of State and of the Legislative Assembly.

The former body is composed of the High Commissioner and the Fautua. Appointment to the office of Fautua is made by the Governor-General, who invites the Samoan members of the Legislative Assembly and the Fono of Faipule to submit recommendations. The office itself is a relatively recent one—it was instituted by the Germans in 1912—but it gives recognition to the acknowledged place as representatives of the Samoan people of the heads of certain eminent families. At present there are two Fautua, Tamasese and Malietoa, the representatives of the two royal lines of the Tupua and the Malietoa. As members of the Council of State, and in other ways, they give full-time service in the performance of multifarious public duties. During the year a system of regular meetings was gradually evolved. By the end of the year the Council was ordinarily meeting once a week. The Secretary to the Administration is normally present at meetings to provide information, but he is not a member and does not vote.

The Legislative Assembly.—The Legislative Assembly is composed of the members of the Council of State—eleven Samoan elected members, five elected European members, and six official members. The High Commissioner, as President, has no deliberative vote, but he has a casting vote. The other members of the Council of State have the voting powers of ordinary members.

The right of electing the eleven Samoan members has been conferred on the Fono of Faipule. This system of indirect election has been adopted for reasons similar to those which have dictated the use of a like method in dependent territories in many other parts of the world. It accords with existing Samoan opinion, and it provides an opportunity for the return to the Legislature of men who are not merely important local figures, but who have the sort of experience to enable them to take a positive and constructive part in political life. No conditions have been imposed by law as to the manner in which the Faipule shall exercise their right, but the number of Samoan elected members was fixed at eleven to enable them to provide for the separate representation of each of the eleven traditional districts if that should be their wish. In the first election under the new constitution the members were actually chosen in this way.

The European members are chosen by secret ballot under a system of adult suffrage. All adults possessing European status who are resident in the Territory are eligible to vote, regardless of nationality. At the first election under the new constitution, held on 28th April, 1948, there were 1,014 names on the roll, and 819 electors cast their votes. This represents a poll of 81 per cent. Interest in the election was much greater than on previous occasions, there being eleven candidates for the five seats. Public meetings, fly-sheets, and the new broadcasting-station were all used by the various candidates to expound their policy to the electorate.

Meetings of the Assembly are summoned by the High Commissioner. Between the first meeting in June, 1948, and March, 1949, five sessions were held. They extended over the following periods respectively: 2nd to 9th June; 29th June to 10th July; 23rd to 27th September; 29th October to 5th November; 15th to 21st December. The Assembly sat on twenty-five days. The Budget was passed in the session beginning on 29th June; and supplementary estimates were dealt with in the session opening at the end of October. Eight Ordinances were passed during the year (a list of them is given in Appendix IV).

In addition to attending the formal sittings of the Assembly, members spend considerable time in service on Committees. Four standing Committees of the Assembly were appointed during the second session. They are the Finance Committee, the