

is preyed upon by the man who does not. It has been asserted that the Samoan is physically unfit to put forth sustained effort for any lengthened period, but this theory is difficult to believe. It seems more probable that the principle of communism rather than any physical unfitness is responsible for his unwillingness to work.

From the evidence placed before us we are led to believe that Solomon-Islanders are more suitable than Chinese for work in coconut plantations, but we understand that the whole question has been carefully considered, and that certain steps have already been taken in regard to the matter.

We do not hesitate to assert that imported labour is required for the development of the islands. Until the labour question is finally and definitely settled there is not the slightest chance of the areas which are now held by Europeans being improved or extended; the future trade of the islands, both Native and European, is entirely dependent on the result of such settlement.

Shipping.

Shipping must naturally play a most important part in the extension of the trade of the islands, and if the New Zealand and British trade generally is to be fostered the subject must have the serious attention of the Government.

At present one ship, the "Navua," owned by the Union Steamship Company, runs a four-weekly service between Samoa and Auckland. It leaves the latter port and proceeds via Suva (in the Fiji Group), Haapai and Vavau, of the Tongan Group, to Apia, the port of entry for Samoa, returning via Levuka and Suva to Auckland. The following trip it proceeds from Auckland by the short route—Fiji, Levuka—returning by the long route—Vavau, Haapai, Nukualofa, and Suva. On the outward journey it carries the New Zealand cargo to Suva, where it discharges and loads transshipment cargo from Australia to Tonga and Samoa. On its return trip comparatively little cargo is taken from Samoa, as every inch of space is required for green bananas from Suva to Auckland.

Although Samoa grows many varieties of fruit, especially bananas, there is no chance at present of a fruit trade being developed.

Since the war started, the Union Company has refused to carry copra for transshipment, giving as a reason for this the inflammable nature of such a cargo. The real cause, no doubt, has been the shortage of ships. It is claimed by several witnesses that they have never known of a single case of spontaneous combustion in connection with copra either stored or shipped in bulk. Copra has been known to go on fire when it has been shipped in wet sacks, when it has been badly stowed, or when matches and cigarettes have been carelessly used.

Whatever may be the reason, we wish emphatically to state that the failure of the shipping company to carry copra has had a most disastrous effect on British trade, and has forced the trade in copra into American hands. Since 1914 Samoan traders have been forced to make arrangements with American shipping houses for the carriage of their commodity to America, and it will be increasingly difficult to break off the connections which have thus been formed. Unless practical means are immediately taken to counteract this connection, the copra trade of Samoa will be lost to British commerce. Then, too, if American ships take away the largest portion of the Samoan products, American ships will bring in American goods in exchange, and the loss to the Empire will be considerable. Direct encouragement has thus been given to American manufacturers of copra products, and they will not willingly relinquish the business which has gradually been built up during the past five years.

The remedy is obvious: either the New Zealand Government should make equitable arrangements for a direct Samoan service, or purchase suitable ships themselves. There seem to be the same shipping troubles in nearly every island we visited, and unless this matter is satisfactorily dealt with it is utterly impossible to look for trade development, for without a satisfactory service, and a certainty that the produce grown will be taken away in a reasonable time, planters, Native or European, become disheartened, and consequently trade languishes. We are aware that the carrying-out of this recommendation would affect private enterprise,