

Nations in 1921. I quote from page 4 of that Report, under the heading "Crown Estates," as follows :—

"The New Zealand Government has decided to administer these plantations as Crown estates, and to use the profits derived from them to supplement the ordinary revenue of the Samoan Treasury as may be required from time to time in providing those works and services which are considered necessary in fulfilment of the obligation imposed on it, as mandatory, to 'promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants of the Territory.'"

At no time have the Government considered the question of the sale of these estates. It is true they were twice offered to the public on long lease. On neither occasion did the Government consider the rentals adequate, and no lease was accepted.

On the second occasion the New Zealand Government, in deciding to reject the offers, had in mind an even more important reason than the inadequacy of the rentals—namely, the fact that the Samoan race is now so rapidly increasing in numbers, as a result of our medical work, that these large areas of the best land in the Territory would be required to meet the land-hunger of the growing population long before the leases expired—and, therefore, it would be contrary to the interests of the Samoan people to let the control of these estates pass from the Government.

The principal estates have accordingly been operated as going concerns under the management of a Board of Control in Samoa. They have been and are being most successfully managed, and are now earning large profits. I was privileged on my visit to inspect them all, and as a practical farmer I found them in splendid condition. A number of the smaller plantations, consisting principally of cocoa estates, which by reason of their size and isolation make effective operation and oversight difficult and expensive, have been leased to experienced local planters.

The foresight and wisdom of the Administration in respect to the retention of these estates have been proved, because already it has been necessary to make some of the undeveloped bush areas available for the needs of the Native people.

As you know, the Samoan Administration are not trading in copra. What has happened is this : For years past the Administration have steadily urged the Samoan Natives, who produce four-fifths of the total copra output for the Territory, to improve the quality so that it should have a recognized status in the world's markets and realize the highest prices obtainable for the first-quality article. I may mention, in passing, that the reputation of what is known as "South Seas copra" is so bad in the London and European markets that the copra is practically unsaleable.

The Samoan Natives have responded to the appeal of the Administration, which, by the way, was also the first in the South Pacific to pass a Copra Inspection Ordinance, even to the extent of installing several community driers ; but in recent years they have been making this appeal to His Excellency :—

"We have responded to your urging, and have improved our copra and given it such a good name that it commands the best prices in the markets of the world, but we are still getting the low prices of old from the traders ; we are not benefiting by all our increased care, and labour, and expense ; we are getting no better price than is paid for South Seas copra, and very much less than our relatives in American Samoa, who last year received nearly £20 per ton, as against our average price of £12 per ton. Is there no way in which you can help us ?"

The Administration, with my full approval, thereupon informed the Samoan people that it would make available to them, if they so desired, the machinery of the New Zealand Reparation Estates for marketing their copra which came up to the standard of quality laid down for Government-produced copra in the markets of the world. The Administration do not buy this copra. A Native brings his produce to the nearest Government plantation, and if its quality satisfies the manager he receives it, weighs it, and gives the Native owner a receipt, on production of which the Reparation Estates Department makes a conservative advance, such as any bank or commercial firm makes against shipping documents. When that copra is sold the Native owner receives the full price paid, less his proportion of shipping and other overhead charges. It has been found that the conservative advance to which I have referred in most cases is higher than the price paid by the district trader. I had an opportunity of seeing the scheme in actual operation during my visit to the Mulifanua coconut plantation.

This measure of assistance is exactly the same as that which has been given by the Administration to the European cocoa and copra planters since the severe depression of 1921, which assistance the Planters' Association in the report that they submitted through the Citizens' committee on the 7th December last, before they disassociated themselves from the latter, acknowledge in these terms :—

"We wish you to understand that the Administration have been sympathetic and have assisted us in many ways . . . We fully appreciate the Administration's attitude towards us."

In my view, the Administration would not have been justified in refusing the same measure of help to the Samoan Native copra-producers as it has freely given to the European planters.

For the last financial year about 10,500 tons of Native copra was produced in Western Samoa, and practically the whole of this was shipped through the local European merchants.

An impartial and experienced authority on tropical Native countries has said this :—

"I suppose it should be accepted as an axiom that any organization, such as a Government or missionary society which is working in a Native territory primarily in the interests of the indigenous population, should be regarded with suspicion if it is not incurring the hostility of the trading and planting community."

I have written the foregoing reply being convinced that it discloses an accurate exposition of the situation as it exists in all its aspects in Western Samoa to-day.

Forwarded through His Excellency the Administrator of Western Samoa.

Yours faithfully,

W. NOSWORTHY,
Minister of External Affairs.