

PETITION FORWARDED BY CERTAIN RESIDENTS OF WESTERN SAMOA ON 4TH FEBRUARY, 1910, TO THE HIGH PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT IN BERLIN.

To the High President of the German Parliament in Berlin.

GUIDED by our desire to generally advance the best interests of this beautiful Colony of Samoa, and in our struggle for life in this country, we respectfully ask the German Parliament to hear our grievances, and to assist us to better our circumstances. Ten years ago, when the German flag was raised, most of the inhabitants believed that then would come a peaceful prosperous advancement. These expectations have so far only been partially achieved. Unfortunately, most of the foreign inhabitants now living in Samoa believe that most unsound conditions rule in these islands, and that measures taken by the Administration are, and have been, oppressive and unprofitable, and have retarded the advancement and the happiness of the colony. The majority of the white residents believe that many of the Ordinances issued by the Administration have been useless and oppressive.

If the Reichstag have decided that Samoa must support its own Administration, the inhabitants accept this dictum with alacrity, as it is easy of accomplishment. But it is highly desirable that the colonists may have as far as possible the right to govern themselves. Those who pay the rates ought to control the expenditures. This is the chief desire of the petitioners, and most of the inhabitants of the colony. We beg the German Parliament to strongly support this justifiable wish.

Before the hoisting of the German flag at Mulinu'u the Berlin General Act was in force, and Samoa was self-supporting and self-governing. And with very light taxation a lot of improvement and betterments took place which the older residents remember with great satisfaction. Therefore it has been demonstrated that self-government in this place is not only possible, but has been advantageous. We find that we have no voice in the expenditures of the taxes, and that we do not even learn how the money has been disposed of.

Excluding the official members, the Government Council, which has only an advisory vote, consists of five planters and a merchant who does not speak German. True, two of these planters have also commercial interests, but their planting interests are much greater. This Council, with limited powers, and as now constituted, does not represent the majority of the taxpayers or their wishes. We may say that this Council chiefly represents the interests of a certain firm whose desires differ very much from those of the majority of the colonies. We believe that the Government Council ought to be periodically elected by the ratepayers, from whom these nominations should emanate, and the meetings of this Council should be public. We think that this Council should arrange the taxation and the Budget, and that it should have an advisory voice in connection with Native affairs. As other German colonies who do not support themselves already have self-government, we feel that we may justly claim that we too may enjoy these privileges. From self-government we certainly would expect good results. In such a case the Home Administration would be largely relieved of much annoying work.

As the Colonial Office only have before them the reports of the highest officials here, they cannot know the wishes of the majority of the people. Matters here often change rapidly, and it is desirable that actions of importance may take place with celerity. Frequently requests sent to Germany are declined, or granted after very long delay, and when the answer reaches Samoa the subject-matter has been passed out of sight and is no longer of interest. If such affairs could be settled in Samoa much time and much expense could be saved.

Of the 435 white population of Samoa, fifty-eight of these are Government officials; while in the year 1902, with about the same number of whites and Natives, there were only twenty-two white officials. Under the Berlin General Act there were even less officials than in 1902. More than 260,000 marks is paid away to the white officials alone as salaries, and this is more than one-half of the whole income of the colony. Such a great official staff is both extravagant and harmful. Self-government would replace many of these expensive officials with locally appointed people, who would be of more value, being better acquainted with prevailing conditions, and who would be willing to labour seven or eight hours per day instead of four or five; thus a less number of people would be needed to do the work properly. The three-year contract made with governmental employees could be made to extend to five years, as the climatic conditions here are very healthful. Merchants, who work much harder and longer hours, cannot afford themselves frequent and expensive holidays; in fact, they do not feel the need of them. The present conditions are such that out of thirty-eight officials one-third are usually on expensive furloughs, and all of the officials are on heavy tropical salaries, and other perquisites. The almost annual vacations of the Governor derange the affairs of this colony; but were this colony self-governing such derangement would not be so severely felt.

If we had had self-government the taxation law lately promulgated could not have been issued. Because of the injustice of this taxation, against which we strongly protest, a Traders' Association has been formed. This body represents three-quarters of the capital which is invested in business enterprises in German Samoa; excluding the Deutsches Handels and Plantagen Gesellschaft, and others influenced by them, the association represents 92 per cent. of the capital employed in business in Samoa.

The 33,000 Natives resident in Samoa pay 130,000 marks, which is about 4 marks per head; but from 40,000 to 50,000 marks of this collection is paid back to the Natives in the form of salaries of Native officials, and a further sum of 36,000 marks is also paid back to them for the Native troops.

The requirements of the Samoan domestic purposes are trifling, while those of the whites are heavy; the Native people pay an exceedingly small proportionate share of the import revenues. There are 435 whites and about 400 half-castes registered as whites; these together pay 98,000 marks, including the house and other taxes, and this amounts to 117 marks per head. There are sixty-five missionaries