

taining in Samoa such hospitals and other institutions as he may deem necessary for the public health, and the Minister is required to appoint a Chief Medical Officer and such Assistant Medical Officers as he thinks necessary to assist the Chief Medical Officer in the execution of his duty.

It was, of course, necessary to provide funds to enable this duty to be performed. Prior to 1923 the only taxation imposed upon the Natives was a poll-tax of £1 4s. per *matai* and £1 per *taulealea*. The Natives were expected during the currency of this taxation to pay for medical treatment and medicine. The medical tax came into force at the beginning of April, 1923, and imposed a tax of £1 per adult male Samoan. It will be seen from Dr. Hunt's evidence that the first medical tax was imposed with the consent of the Samoans. The two taxes which have been mentioned—namely, the poll-tax and the medical tax—were, by the amending Ordinance of 1927, amalgamated, and the sole Native tax now imposed is a direct personal tax of £2 per *matai* and £1 16s. per *taulealea*. It is also shown by Dr. Hunt's evidence that the amalgamation of the taxes was effected with the consent and at the request of the Natives.

The imposition of the medical tax, of course, imposed upon the Administration the obligation of providing adult Samoans, their wives, and children with free medical treatment. Prior to the tax the Natives were chargeable with fees for medical attention and medicine. As might be expected, many Natives abstained from seeking proper medical aid, setting up the plea that they were unable to work when ill, and therefore had no money to pay for treatment. Towards the end of 1922 the Fono of Faipules passed a resolution—set out in Dr. Hunt's evidence—to the effect that the Fono considered that a system of general subscription for medical purposes would be preferable to the present system of individual payment, and the matter was left to His Excellency the Governor to examine and to decide whether to levy a tax or not. The Fono desired that, if His Excellency should decide to levy a tax, such tax should not exceed £1. The tax was accordingly imposed, and a promise was given that its imposition would be reviewed after three years. Dr. Hunt's evidence shows that in August, 1923, written replies were received from the Faipules showing the concurrence of their people with the tax. We are satisfied that the general trend of Samoan opinion was in accordance with the resolution of the Fono of Faipules, and was favourable to the imposition of the tax. As we have said, free medical treatment was commenced in the beginning of April, 1923.

Some startling figures were given by Dr. Hunt as to the attendance of Natives at two of the hospitals in the year before the adoption of free treatment and the year subsequent. The institutions whose figures are given are the main hospital at Apia and the hospital at Tuasivi, in Savai'i. Eliminating attendances for the treatment of yaws and hookworm, the attendance for treatment for other complaints in the free year exceeded the attendance in the previous year in the Apia Hospital by over 13,700, and in the Tuasivi Hospital by over 7,200. Dr. Hunt in his evidence says, "Four and a half years after the inception of free medical treatment we have out-stations and dispensaries dotted throughout the group, as shown on the accompanying plan." He then gives a list of hospitals, out-stations, and medical staffs outside Apia, and points out that the list does not include mission stations, to which drugs are supplied free. In addition, there is also employed a visiting Medical Officer for the northern coast of Upolu from Mulifanua to Falefa. Mr. Baxter in his concluding speech (see page 407) said: "I think that due consideration by reasonable people must show that the country has benefited largely from the medical services here, and it is essential that we have a fixed revenue for medical services."

We are of opinion that the medical tax was imposed with the general consent of the Samoans, and that the medical treatment which has enabled the Administration to provide for them has proved a blessing to them in the very efficient care it has taken of their health. It is a truism to say that no public-health system can be maintained only out of payments by patients for medical treatment, which is the only alternative suggested for the tax.

5. UNNECESSARY INTERFERENCE WITH NATIVE CUSTOMS.

The next matter to be dealt with is the allegation "That there has been improper and unnecessary interference with ancient customs of the Samoans in relation to *malagas*, or journeys for the presentation of "fine mats," and the individualization of family lands."