

25. On the 10th instant I received a telegram from the Premier stating that Ministers had wired to the Agent-General asking him to call at the Colonial Office and ascertain whether your Lordship would allow the New Zealand Government to despatch a mission to King Malietoa at Samoa, and perhaps make a similar Convention to that made by Germany, adding “ ‘Hinemoa’ will await reply.”

26. This course appeared to me to be open to even greater objection than the original proposal. Your Lordship had given weighty reasons against the Colonial Government taking action; and the avowed object was now not only to make inquiries, but to enter into an engagement. If any step of the kind were to be taken, obviously it should be by the Imperial Government. I may add that if the internationalization of the Islands was to be maintained, I felt that it should rather be by the cancelling of special advantages conceded to Germany or any other Power, than by making counter-agreements.

27. To avoid any chance of misconception of my views on the matter, I telegraphed to your Lordship on the 10th instant to the effect that the idea of sending the “Hinemoa” to the Islands did not meet with my approval, but that I considered that if any action were to be taken it ought to be by an Imperial officer.

28. Your Lordship informed me in reply, by message received on the 12th instant, that the Admiralty had already been requested to send a ship to Samoa to inquire into the state of affairs there; and on the 13th instant I was informed by the Commodore, in answer to inquiry from me, that the “Miranda” had started that morning for Samoa.

29. On informing my Ministers that your Lordship had taken steps for the despatch of an Imperial ship to Samoa, the Premier telegraphed back that Ministers considered that as the petition from King Malietoa asked for annexation to New Zealand as an alternative, it was their “duty and right to visit Samoa and “ascertain feelings of natives” for themselves, and they requested me to represent their views to “the Colonial Office,” with the object of obtaining your Lordship’s consent to the despatch of the New Zealand steamer.

30. I replied that the matter was one to be dealt with by the Imperial Government, and not by that of the Colony; moreover that as an Imperial ship had been despatched to Samoa to inquire into the state of affairs there, the object desired by Ministers—namely, to ascertain accurately the “feelings of Samoans”—would be attained, and that it appeared to me that confusion might arise from sending a New Zealand Government steamer; but that if Ministers still wished me to do so, I would telegraph, as they requested, to your Lordship their views respecting the despatch of the “Hinemoa.”

31. The Premier replied that Ministers thought it better that your Lordship should know their views. I accordingly telegraphed on the 15th instant, submitting the request of Ministers for your Lordship’s consideration.

32. On the 20th instant I received another telegram from your Lordship, to the effect that Her Majesty’s Government could not approve of the proposed despatch of the New Zealand Government steamer to Samoa. Your Lordship observed that the question was not regarded in Europe as one depending on the national feelings of the Samoans, and that there was no reason for the inquiry which the Government of New Zealand contemplated making. Your Lordship added that, if not prevented by the action of the New Zealand Government, the Imperial Government would, at a Conference which was about to be held, do the best they could for British interests.

33. I accordingly informed the Premier of the substance of this message, and telegraphed to your Lordship in answer that no step would be taken here.

34. I have thus given your Lordship an account of recent occurrences here with reference to Samoa. I cannot but feel that the annexation of those Islands and of Tonga in some form or other would be most desirable in the interests of the Islands themselves, of this colony, of the Empire as a whole, and of other Powers concerned. There is no hope that a purely Native Government will be able to deal with the complicated questions which must arise from the presence of numbers of Europeans of different nations, and possibly an influx of Asiatics and Americans.