



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

REMARKS BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR JOHN A. CARVER, JR., AT PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA, MAY 27, 1961, AT THE INAUGURATION OF HON. H. REX LEE AS GOVERNOR OF AMERICAN SAMOA

Governor Lee, Governor Coleman, President of the Senate Sotoa, Speaker of the House Tuia, Territorial leaders, servants of God, honored guests, fellow Americans:

It is a matter of great personal satisfaction to me to have a part in the inauguration of Governor Lee. I know that he will be a great governor--he is a man of outstanding ability, skilled in the arts of government, and sensitive to human values. He understands and truly believes in democracy, and under his leadership I know that the Samoan Government will achieve a new prosperity and development of these beautiful islands and their people.

There is much talk in the world today about self-determination. Much of that talk is a blatantly cynical cover for the cultivation of confusion out of which the imperialism of the twentieth century is built.

The attempt is being made to make the people of American Samoa a pawn in this imperialist game. Your neighbors of Western Samoa will celebrate their independence in a few months; the eyes of the world, drawn to this event, will fall upon American Samoa.

We know that the United States has never been a colonial power. Yet our position with regard to the so-called dependent areas--the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands--is under a constant and often unfriendly scrutiny. The free, the uncommitted, and the enslaved watch us.

What we do speaks more loudly than what we say. What we have done is impressive--we have fulfilled our promises at an ever accelerating pace. The hallmark of our policy is freedom on the part of the people to determine the course and direction of their own political future. Our system has accommodated and assisted independence in the Philippines and Cuba, commonwealth status in Puerto Rico, statehood in Hawaii and Alaska. Guam and the Virgin Islands have organic acts and the people there have full citizenship.

But what we have not done speaks loudly, too. Let us start with American Samoa. Thirty years ago a congressionally created commission made a survey in

Samoa. Its Chairman, the distinguished Senator from Connecticut, Hon. Hiram Bingham is still remembered here, and all of us are pleased and proud that Senator Bingham's son, Hon. Jonathan Bingham, the United States Representative to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, is a member of the official group attending this inauguration.

In the report of the Bingham Commission to the Congress, it was concluded "that the time has come to do away with administration by rules, regulations and orders and to begin that by law under an act of Congress in which the functions of the Governor shall be confined to the executive, the courts presided over by a chief justice independent of the governor, and the legislative authority vested in an assembly of the people;"

It was also concluded "that the Samoans are capable of accepting and should receive full American citizenship."

Taking that 1931 report as a yardstick against which to measure progress in the intervening years, the comparison is not heartening. It is true that your legislature now has full legislative powers under a constitution of your own devising, but this has just happened. Under the Department of the Interior, some of the arbitrary trappings of a military government, however beneficent, have been softened. Judicial power is no longer in the executive.

But from a material standpoint, there has not been any striking gain. The withdrawal of the Navy's operating establishment here deprived Samoa of a payroll and a cash economy which has never been fully replaced. Even your cannery does not rely upon Samoans for its supply of fish. Your young people are found in Honolulu, San Diego, and San Francisco--the skills which they acquire with distinction and honor to Samoa at the institutions of higher learning in Hawaii and on the mainland are usefully employed--but not in American Samoa.

It is possible that the younger Bingham must be less sanguine about the future of Samoa than his father was?

But the picture is not all dark. There is an ingredient which to me seems worthy of a great deal more attention than it has had. I forecast an important role for Samoa in resisting the blandishments of those who would equate your situation with that of the emerging nations of Africa--they are Pied Pipers whose interest in your welfare is selfish.

American Samoa has never been conquered or occupied by a foreign power. Samoa became a part of the American system through wholly voluntary acts of cession. The agreement to cede was absolute, and without reserve, and the islands of eastern Samoa, possessing full sovereignty, gave it up to the United States of America.

Only Texas and Hawaii, of all the areas under the flag, are in the select company of former sovereign nations. And both Texas and Hawaii used their sovereignty to dicker--to ask for and to get concessions and commitments. Only Samoa demonstrated unequivocal confidence in the American system.

Herein is a source of great strength and great responsibility for the United States and for American Samoa.

Such a demonstration of confidence deserves that succeeding generations, both American and Samoan, work out the permanent form of democratic society on the same high moral plane of trust, good will and mutual respect.

But this cannot be done by fiat from either Washington or Pago Pago. If we are to be true to this great and unique tradition, we must provide the leadership, the assistance, the education so that the solution arises out of the Samoan people to and through their leaders designated in the best democratic process.

Two peoples can join in harmonious and mutually profitable political association only when each makes its own distinctive contributions to the united effort. When this ceases to be the case, then we see moves of separatism--and the union is dissolved. We mainlanders and Samoans, have a great opportunity to keep our association vibrant and strong because our widely different cultures offer so many opportunities for each to enrich and reinforce the other.

On our part, the vast technological and educational resources of the United States can be drawn upon for the benefit of your people. Our experience in democratic living and political organization is available to guide you in the evolution of whatever kind of government ultimately may be found best adapted to your needs and aspirations. To the extent which is customary in our system of national-local relations, the financial resources of the United States have and will be utilized to afford greater equality of opportunity for your people. Finally, I would count our complete and unlimited good will as our ultimate contribution to your future development.

On the other side of this enduring partnership, you have already demonstrated that most precious of all qualities in human and social relationships--an unswerving loyalty to our joint cause, even under adverse conditions. This the people of mainland America will always cherish and savor.

On a less tangible front, you have been and must continue to be our mentor in the ways of other cultures. Your history, your way of life, is exotic by the standards of our customary contacts. As an integral part of the American system and structure, you provide both a leavening influence within our society and a bridge to better understanding of the peoples to the West. Your cultural personality stimulates us to a new appreciation of values which our technological and economic pace might otherwise reduce to the mundane. Your art, music, and handicraft need to be better known as a new and vital part of American life.

But, above all, you contribute the unique moral base for self-government arising from your special history.

The task now is to get on with the work at hand. I know we can count on the Samoans to make the pride they feel in that history--former independent sovereignty and voluntary associations with the United States--a mighty bulwark and weapon in the struggle to preserve and defend the anticolonialist reputation of the United States.

On behalf of Secretary Stewart Udall, the administration of President Kennedy, and the Department of the Interior, I promise that you will be consulted and kept informed on matters affecting your future; I promise harmonious and constructive working relationships with your new governor. Together, the Samoan people, the Samoan Government, the administration in Washington will demonstrate to the world that free institutions serve the ultimate goals of free men.

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