

New Zealand in Samoa

Page 3 – Colonial administration

(MCH, 2014h)

The League of Nations formally allocated New Zealand the Class C mandate of Western Samoa in December 1920. Samoan leaders were not consulted as other nations decided the islands' future.

Colonial rulers

NZ Administrators, 1914-62:

- Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Logan (1914-19)
- Colonel Robert W. Tate (1920-23)
- Major-General George S. Richardson (1923-28)
- Colonel Stephen S. Allen (1928-31)
- Brigadier-General Herbert E. Hart (1931-35)
- Alfred Turnbull (acting) (1935-43)
- Alfred Turnbull (1943-46)
- Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Voelcker (1946-49)
- Guy R. Powles (1949-62)

Prioritised using MFAT, 2010a
for its figure of 1919

Legislation was already in place to support the mandate. **On 1 May 1920, the Samoa Constitution Order had replaced the military occupation with a civil administration.** The Samoa Act 1921 provided the foundations of government until Western Samoa's independence 40 years later.

The Samoa Act established the British colonial model as the basis for civil administration. New Zealand's Governor-General appointed an Administrator to hold executive power. The position, based in Apia, reported to the Minister of External Affairs in Wellington.

Law-making power was held by the Administrator and a local Legislative Council, although Wellington had final authority. Most Council members were administration officials, with local Europeans given a small minority of seats.

Samoans initially had no role in government. The *Fono of Faipule*, an advisory body of Samoan leaders established by the German administration and retained during New Zealand's military occupation, was not given legal recognition until 1923. Samoans first sat on the Legislative Council in 1928.

New Zealand was ill-equipped to cope with the Samoa mandate. It had no formal foreign service, so officials were seconded to Samoa from New Zealand's public service. Few stayed on for more than one three-year term, or took the time to learn the language or fully understand the culture.

Between 1914 and 1935, New Zealand appointed Administrators from military backgrounds who tended to take an autocratic approach to governance. They lacked experience of

Pacific Island cultures, and were often ignorant of or unsympathetic towards Samoan customs and practices.

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'Colonial administration', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/samoa/colonial-administration>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 28-Jul-2014

