

*The Island Utopia of Tonga*

LISTENING TO THE PROCEEDINGS of the United Nations Trusteeship Council at Lake Success the other day, when reports were reviewed from various trust territories, I was reminded of G. M. Fowlds' story about Tonga, an island utopia, as retold by Mather Smith. It goes this way:

"Down in the South Pacific Ocean lies a small group of islands called Tonga, where a happy Polynesian race numbering 40,000 live in a condition which few if any so-called civilized communities enjoy. The reason for this is that the right of everybody to the equal use of the land is recognized and practised.

"A young man on reaching the age of 18 has the option of taking up 8 acres in the country and two-fifths of an acre in the village free of rent. Tonga is fortunate in possessing a fine climate, a fertile soil and, being out of the malaria belt, its inhabitants are a fine healthy looking people.

"Every male Tongan, when he attains the age of 16, is liable to a poll-tax of one pound, sixteen shillings. Education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 14. The country is unique in being without a national debt and has a credit balance of 400,000 pounds in the treasury. Europeans are not allowed to buy land and it is increasingly difficult to go there otherwise than as a visitor.

"In a royal palace at the capital, Nukualofa, resides the only Methodist monarch in the world, Queen Salote, a handsome upstanding woman over six feet tall who is worshipped by her subjects. All the trappings of a constitutional monarchy are in vogue with a Parliament, cabinet ministers, a royal guard and a State band. The group is under the protection of Great Britain, which has a consul there. But there is little interference in Tonga's internal affairs.

"Many years ago, the late Sir George Fowlds, for long the leader of the Henry George movement in New Zealand, while visiting Tonga with a New Zealand parliamentary party, being naturally interested in their equitable land system, had a friendly interview with the present Queen's father, King George Tobou II, a man standing over six feet tall and weighing about 20 stone."

Few of the reports to the trusteeship council could compare with this one. Indeed, in most the land question was ignored. In a few it received oblique mention, in the form of recommendations that alienated land be recovered for distribution. Pressure should be brought to bear upon the council to require that every report give an accurate and factual statement on the status of the land question and on the measures taken or contemplated by the administering authority to guarantee equal rights in the land.

W. L.