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THE ETHIOPIAN
CONSTITUTION

*To Dr. Hunter Miller
in admiration of a great scholar
William M. Steen
July 18, 1936.
By*

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PREFACE

Prior to the Walwal incident, which led to the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war, Ethiopia was practically an unknown land to the world-at-large; even in academic circles, knowledge was rare concerning its long and interesting history.

Developments growing out of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict have centered attention on this celebrated Empire. In the course of the past year, literally hundreds of publications have appeared treating of various phases of Ethiopian life and history. Up to the present, however, there has appeared little or nothing of a detailed character concerning the internal government of the Empire--particularly is this true of the Ethiopian Constitution. It is doubtful indeed, if it is generally known that Ethiopia had a Constitution. It is a fact, however, that Ethiopia has had a written Constitution, which has served as the primary basis for the government of the Empire, since 1931. This Constitution was the handiwork of Emperor Haile Selassie.

Throughout the period of his regency, from 1916 to 1930, Haile Selassie--then known as Ras Tafari--had cherished plans of allocating to the people of Ethiopia a larger share in the task of governing the Empire. He had constantly and consistently projected programs designed to bring the Empire abreast with the methods of government characterizing the more modern and progressive nations of the day. The earnestness and sincerity of the Regent's methods and motives in this regard are evidenced by the fact that upon his accession to the Imperial Throne, he promptly undertook, of his own free will and accord, the task of perfecting a Constitution which, one year later (July 16, 1931), he voluntarily put into effect throughout the Empire. It is worthy of note that this was the first instance in history where an absolute ruler had sought voluntarily to share sovereign authority with the subjects of his realm. As will be observed from a study of the text of the Constitution, it was the Emperor's aim that the Constitution would become in time the chief instrumentality through which all sovereign and governmental authority would be exercised.

In this monograph, there is presented to the public-at-large, for the first time, an English translation of the text of the Constitution, together with translations of the Decree and the Address of the Emperor delivered on the occasion when the Constitution was proclaimed. There is also included an analysis of the Constitution, in which it is compared with similar instruments of government in other lands.

7 Aug 50. Gift of Hunter Miller

The texts of the Constitution, the Decree, and the Address, as here presented, are based upon copies originally drawn up in Amharic and French. For assistance in rendering these documents into English, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Malaku E. Bayen, and Mr. Makonnen Haile, of Addis Ababa, formerly students in America; and to Mr. Louis T. Achille, of the Department of Romance Languages at Howard University.

Appreciation is expressed also to the Research Staff of the Ethiopian Research Council, for much valuable criticism and many helpful suggestions.

W.M.S.

Washington, D. C.
January, 1936.

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DECREE

We, Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, having been called, by the Grace of God and the unanimous voice of the Ethiopian people, to receive under unction the Crown and Throne of the Empire, do hereby acknowledge Our gratitude to Our Creator and Our people for the confidence they have shown in Us.

It is Our conviction that there is no better way of expressing Our gratitude for, and proving Ourselves worthy of, this confidence than by directing all of Our efforts in such a way as to insure that he who comes after Us shall be invested with the same confidence and shall strive always to rule Our beloved Country in a manner that will ever promote its progress, prosperity, and welfare.

After thoughtful and prolonged deliberations upon the best means of securing and safeguarding these ends, We have decided that these objectives can be most effectively attained by granting to the Ethiopian people a Constitution, based upon the approved laws of Our native land and well-established principles of order and justice. It is Our hope that this Constitution will contribute to the maintenance of Our Government and to the happiness and prosperity of Our beloved people, and that it will be a source of pride and satisfaction to all.

With these thoughts in mind, We do hereby, in accordance with Our sovereign will and authority, grant this Constitution, and in order that it may remain perpetual and immutable, We

do decree that in the future it shall serve as the basis and authority for the promulgation of such additional laws as shall be deemed necessary for upholding its principles, attaining its objectives, and preserving the Ethiopian State.

Having received from the hands of God a high mission for the accomplishment of Ethiopia's destinies, We have, ever since Our accession to the Imperial Throne, held it to be Our duty to safeguard the welfare of Our people, and to promote their progress and advancement in these pursuits of happiness and civilization which distinguish cultured and independent nations.

We believe that governmental action can be facilitated, the happiness of the people assured, and peace and prosperity promoted, all in such a way as to redound to the honor and well-being of present and future generations by further elaborations of this Constitution. It is Our hope that such elaboration shall be carried out in the future as circumstances require and in the spirit of the afore-mentioned objectives.

It is in this spirit that We have issued this Decree proclaiming the Constitution, without solicitation, and of Our own free will, in the second Year of Our reign, in the Year of Grace, 1923 (1931).

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HIS MAJESTY EMPEROR
HAILE SELASSIE I, IN THE PRESENCE OF THE
PRINCES AND DIGNITARIES, THE BISHOPS AND
HEADS OF THE CLERGY, ETC., ON THE OCCASION
OF THE SIGNING OF THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE'S
CONSTITUTION, ON THE 9th HAILIE OF THE YEAR
OF GRACE 1923 (July 16, 1931).

We, who have been invested by the will of God with the mission of protecting Ethiopia, have judged that it was not sufficient to glorify the Almighty, who has conferred this great honor upon Us, merely by words nor to express our feelings by acts insignificant, ephemeral and subject to oblivion.

Although the efforts We have made to establish a lasting Constitution advantageous to all -- a Constitution which can be passed on to the generations to come -- are but the incomplete expression of Our gratitude to the Almighty, We have chosen to have you assemble here at the present hour to reveal to you the work We have created but the accomplishment of which We must leave to Almighty God.

Everyone knows that laws bring to men the greatest benefits, and that everyone's honor and well-being depend upon the wisdom of the laws, whereas depravity, shame, iniquity and denial of justice result from the non-existence or insufficiency of laws.

The Lord, who is above every creature, although he possesses the omnipotence to direct everything only according to His will, has none the less willed to establish the law and to submit all creation to it.

He among men who is worthy of praise is he who, animated by just sentiments, perseveres in the path of justice and endeavors within the limit of his powers to improve the conditions of men -- if not of all of them at least of the greater number among them.

Although divers reasons have prevented the accomplishment of Our plan, Our constant efforts for several years have tended to establish, among other things, a Constitution. The idea which has so pre-occupied Us, in view of the welfare of Ethiopia and of Our beloved people, and which has been the object of our untiring perseverance, is formulated as follows:

1. To grant a constitution to all the Ethiopian people.

2. To enforce and preserve it.

The main provisions of this Constitution which we grant to the Ethiopian people are the following:

1. Ethiopia shall remain united like the members of one family, without divisions. It shall be ruled in common by a Constitution and governed by an Emperor. The strength of this accord shall be based upon the community of interests in such a way that the individual, without there resulting for him any loss

or injury, may understand the strength of union and the advantages which he may derive from it for the safeguard of his private interests, and at the same time giving up any plan for personal ambition contrary to the public welfare.

2. The law shall be enforced upon all, without exception, whether it rewards or punishes.

3. It is not amiss to point out that in the past the Ethiopian people, completely isolated from the rest of the world was in a backward state which justified for its Sovereigns the obligation to govern it as a good father governs his children. But the considerable advances in all spheres of activity realized by Our subjects, allow their Emperor to state that the granting of a Constitution is not premature, and that the moment has come for them to collaborate in the overwhelming task which the Sovereigns alone have hitherto accomplished.

It is necessary that the modern Ethiopian accustom himself to collaborate in the workings of the whole machinery of the State. It is in this spirit that We have resolved, in order that all those who are worthy of it may participate therein, to set up two Houses whose members will be appointed according to provinces at the pleasure of His Majesty the Emperor. Decisions will be made by majority in these two Houses, and will have the force of law only when approved by His Majesty the Emperor.

4. The responsible Ministers will have the duty of executing throughout Ethiopian territory all decisions resulting from the deliberations of the Houses, duly approved by His Majesty the Emperor, in conformity with the interests of the State and of the people.

5. With a view to eliminating all uncertainty with regard to the succession to the Throne, and in order to avoid causing greatest injury to Ethiopia, the right to the Imperial Throne is reserved by this Constitution to the present Dynasty.

6. The utilitarian objects of law being the development of the progress of the people according to the loftiest and surest principles, these laws should be inspired by scientific methods having as their purpose the harmonious improvement of all things.

7. The present Constitution has not been wrought haphazardly; it is not contrary to the customs of the country. It is inspired by and comes near the principles of other civilized peoples. It has been studied with the help of the Princes and Dignitaries, and with the collaboration of Our Most enlightened subjects.

Man's power is limited to beginning his enterprises, it remains with God alone to lead them to good results. We hope to obtain the Lord's help to enforce this Constitution and to allow Us to accomplish the task we have assumed.

Last, We wish to thank the Diplomatic and Consular Corps for having kindly given by their presence more splendor to the solemnity of this happy day on which we have set Our hand to this Constitution of Our Realm.

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CONSTITUTION OF ETHIOPIA
ESTABLISHED IN THE REIGN OF
HIS MAJESTY HAILE SELASSIE I.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE AND THE
SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE.

Article 1.

The territory of Ethiopia, in its entirety, is from one extreme to the other subject to the Government of His Majesty the Emperor.

All natives of Ethiopia, subjects of the Empire, form together the Ethiopian nation.

Article 2.

The Imperial Government guarantees the unity of the territory, of the nation, and of the law of Ethiopia.

Article 3.

It is provided by law that the Imperial Rank shall remain perpetually in the line of His Majesty Haile Selassie I, descendant of King Sahle Selassie, whose lineage continues unbroken from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of King Solomon of Jerusalem and the Queen of Ethiopia, sometimes called the Queen of Sheba.

Article 4.

The Throne and the Crown of the Empire will pass to the descendants of the Emperor by virtue of the Law of the Imperial Household.

Article 5.

By virtue of His Imperial Lineage as well as by the anointment he received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity inviolate and His power incontestable. He therefore enjoys by right all honors due him by tradition and in conformity with the present Constitution. The Law provides that whoever shall dare to harm the Majesty of the Emperor shall be punished.

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CHAPTER II.

THE EMPEROR'S POWER AND ATTRIBUTES.

Article 6.

Within the Ethiopian Empire the Emperor holds in its entirety the supreme power. He guarantees to exercise it in accordance with the established Law.

Article 7.

The Emperor of Ethiopia will establish the Senate (Yeheggue meoucssegna meker biet) and the Chamber of Deputies (Yeheggue memriya meker biet). The laws drafted by these chambers will become effective by His promulgation.

Article 8.

It is within the power of the Emperor to call sessions of the deliberative Chambers and to announce the opening and closing of their sessions. He may also call sessions before or after the regular periods. He may dissolve the Chamber of Deputies.

Article 9.

When the Chambers are not in session the Emperor has the right, if needs be, to promulgate decrees having the full force of laws in order to maintain peace and to ward off public dangers. The Law provides that these decrees will be presented later to the Chambers at their first subsequent session, and that they shall be abrogated as regards further validity if the Chambers do not approve them.

Article 10.

Within the letter and the spirit of the laws now in force the Emperor will give the necessary orders to guarantee their execution, to preserve public order, and to develop the nation's prosperity.

Article 11.

The Emperor will determine the organization and regulations of all the administrative departments.

It appertains to him to designate and to discharge officers of the army as well as civil office-holders, and to define their respective powers and salaries.

Article 12.

The right to declare war and to conclude peace is reserved by law to the Emperor.

Article 13.

It is the Emperor's right to prescribe the number of armed forces necessary to the Empire in time of peace as well as in war.

Article 14.

The Emperor has by law the right to negotiate and to sign Treaties of every kind.

Article 15.

The Emperor has the right to confer the title of Prince, and other honorary titles, to make personal land grants, and to institute new Orders.

Article 16.

The Emperor exercises the rights of pardon, of commuting sentences, and rehabilitation.

Article 17.

If the Emperor, for reasons of either illness or of age, becomes incapable of managing the affairs of Government, a Regent of the Empire may be appointed by virtue of the Law of the Imperial Household to exercise the supreme power in the Emperor's name.

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CHAPTER III.

THE RIGHTS ACKNOWLEDGED TO THE NATION
BY THE EMPEROR, AND THE DUTIES INCUMBENT
UPON THE NATION.

Article 18.

The law prescribes the conditions required for Ethiopian nationality.

Article 19.

All Ethiopian subjects, provided they fulfil the conditions prescribed by the Law and by the decrees promulgated by His Majesty the Emperor, may be designated officers of the army or civil office-holders, or may be appointed to any other offices or posts in the service of the State.

Article 20.

All those who belong to the Ethiopian army owe absolute allegiance and obedience to the Emperor according to provisions of law.

Article 21.

The nation is held to the payment of any legally imposed taxes.

Article 22.

Ethiopian subjects have the right within the limits prescribed by law to move freely from one place to another.

Article 23.

No Ethiopian subject may be arrested, condemned or imprisoned except by due process of law.

Article 24.

No Ethiopian subject may be deprived against his will of having his case tried by the legally established court.

Article 25.

Except in the instances for which legal provision has been made, there shall be no search of domicile.

Article 26.

Except in the instances for which legal provision has been made, no one shall have the right to violate the secrecy of the correspondence of Ethiopian subjects.

Article 27.

Except in the cases of public interest fixed by law, no one shall have the right to confiscate from an Ethiopian subject neither his movable property nor the real estate which he possesses.

Article 28.

The right to present petitions to the Government, within legal forms, is recognized to all Ethiopian subjects.

Article 29.

The provisions of this chapter shall not prevent the measures which the Emperor by virtue of his supreme power may take in case of war or public disasters which threaten the interests of the nation.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE DELIBERATIVE CHAMBERS OF THE
EMPIRE.

Article 30.

The deliberative chambers of the Empire are the two following; (a) the first: the Senate (Yheggue meouessagna meker biet); (b) the second: the Chamber of Deputies (Yheggue memriya meker biet).

Article 31.

The members of the Senate will be designated by His Majesty the Emperor, from among the dignitaries (mekuanent) who have served the Empire for a long time in the ranks of Princes or Ministers, Judges or Chiefs of the army.

Article 32.

Provisionally, and until that time when the people are in a position to elect them themselves, the members of the Chamber of Deputies shall be chosen from among the dignitaries (mekuanent) and the local chiefs (choumotch).

Article 33.

Anyone who has been designated member of the Senate may not in the same parliamentary session become

a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and anyone who has been chosen member of the Chamber of Deputies may not in the same parliamentary session become a member of the Senate.

Article 34.

No law may be put into force without having been deliberated in the Chambers, and without having received the approval of the Emperor.

Article 35.

The members of the Chamber of Deputies will be legally bound to accept and to deliberate bills proposed by the Ministers of the respective departments. However, when the deputies have a project of possible use to the Empire or the nation, the right to communicate it to the Emperor through their president is reserved to them by law, and the Chamber will consider this project should the Emperor consent.

Article 36.

Each of the two Chambers shall have the right to express separately to His Majesty the Emperor its opinion on a legislative question or on any other matter. If the Emperor does not accept its opinion, the Chamber is not allowed to bring up the same question again in that parliamentary session.

Article 37.

The two Chambers will be summoned annually and will sit for _____ months. If necessary, the Emperor may have them remain in session for a longer time.

Article 38.

The Chambers will be summoned for special sessions if such is necessary. In these instances it is the Emperor's right to fix the length of the session.

Article 39.

The opening and closing, and the length of

sessions and vacations, will be made identical for the two Chambers. If the Chamber of Deputies is dissolved, the Senate will adjourn its session until a later time.

Article 40.

If the Emperor has exercised his right to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies completely, he will arrange that a new Chamber assemble within four months.

Article 41.

Neither of the Chambers will open debates, discuss, or vote unless two-thirds of its members are present.

Article 42.

In the event that in the deliberations of the Chambers, the vote is equally divided, the opinion of the group which the president of the Chamber supports will be the deciding one.

Article 43.

The President of the Chamber will announce in advance whether the questions under discussion are of a public or secret nature.

If a matter once has been declared secret any member who brings it to the knowledge of the public by means of speeches, the press, writings, or any other means, shall be punished according to penal law.

Article 44.

The Emperor will establish in the form of a law the regulations controlling the work of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies. ✓

Article 45.

Otherwise than in criminal cases, the trials of which cannot be delayed, no member of the Chamber of Deputies shall be subject to legal prosecution during the period of a parliamentary session.

Article 46.

If the two Chambers reach different conclusions in the deliberation of an important matter, the Emperor upon receiving a written summary of their respective opinions will investigate the reasons for their disagreement, and when he forms his own opinion on the matter, he will try to reach a compromise likely to reconcile them to a final agreement, selecting what he considers the best in the two conclusions.

In case it is impossible to reconcile the opinions of the two Chambers, the Emperor has by law the right either to choose and promulgate the conclusion of one or the other, or to postpone the question. ✓

Article 47.

Without obtaining the consent of the Emperor the Chambers may not invite the Ministers to their sessions even if they feel the need to do so. As for the Ministers, they may not attend the sessions of the Chambers and take part in the deliberations without the consent of His Majesty. ✓

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CHAPTER V.

THE MINISTERS OF THE EMPIRE.

Article 48.

The Ministers will present their opinions in writing to His Majesty the Emperor on matters pertaining to their respective departments; they will be responsible for these opinions. Laws, decrees, and all other acts issued by the Emperor on matters of the Empire will bear the Imperial signature; and then the keeper of the Seal (Tsafi-teezaz) will communicate them under his signature to the competent Minister.

Article 49.

When the Emperor requests the opinion of the Ministers on an important government matter, they will deliberate together according to regulations

before submitting it to Him.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE JUDICIARY.

Article 50.

The officially constituted judges will administer justice, according to the laws, in the name of His Majesty the Emperor. The organization of the courts will be governed by law.

Article 51.

Judges shall be chosen from among men who have had experience in judicial matters.

Article 52.

The judges shall hold court in public. In those cases which might affect public tranquility, or which might violate good morals, the session may legally be held behind closed doors.

Article 53.

The jurisdiction of each court will be determined by law.

Article 54.

Special Courts will hear all cases concerning administrative matters which are outside the competence of other courts.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE BUDGET OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT.

Article 55.

The law provides that receipts of the Government Treasury of whatever kind shall be expended only in conformity with the annual budget which shall decide the amounts allotted to each department. The annual

budget shall be prepared on the basis of the proposals made by the Minister of Finance in the deliberations of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate, whose conclusions will be submitted to the approval of His Majesty, the Emperor.

Done at Addis Ababa, Hamlic 9th, Year of Grace 1923 (July 16, 1931).

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONSTITUTION

The drafting of the Constitution, the original of which was in the official Ethiopian language, Amharic, was done under the direct supervision of Emperor Haile Selassie, by a select group of foreign advisers, assisted by several of the young Ethiopians whom the Emperor had sent abroad to be educated.

The Constitution is composed of seven chapters and fifty-five articles. Article 1 relates to a united Empire "like the members of one family, without divisions". This article relates, more specifically, to the fact that hereafter there will be more rigid supervision by the central government at Addis Ababa over the previously loosely controlled states of the Empire.

The Ethiopians are assured, by Article 2, that there will not be one law for the rich and one for the poor, for His Majesty proclaims that the law "shall be enforced upon all, without exception, whether it rewards or punishes".

By far the most important part of the whole Constitution is Article 3, which reserves the right to the Imperial Throne to the present dynasty. Ever since the Age of Dissolution, it has been customary for the chieftain who could muster a force strong enough to subject all other aspiring chieftains, to ascend the throne as "king of kings". The Emperor's position has been strengthened considerably with the signing of the Constitution by such powerful princes as those who govern Tigre, Gojjam, and Amhara. The royal houses of these provinces, all of which ruled over the whole of Ethiopia

at one time, have renounced any future right to the throne. Even the second most important member of the Royal line of Shoa, the powerful Ras Kassa, has signed the Constitution, thereby renouncing any future claim.

Article 4 is concerned with the succession to the throne. Under the Law of the Imperial Household, to which the Constitution refers, succession to the throne in Ethiopia, on the death or deposition of the Emperor, which is limited to one of the royal line of Solomon, is inherited as to family, but not necessarily as to individual. Under this traditional law, the strongest or most astute member of the family rather than the one in most direct descent may, and often does, succeed to the Imperial crown. Thus we may have the anomaly of a Crown Prince witnessing the crowning of another member of the family instead of himself.

There can be no system of checks on the final decisions of the Emperor, for Article 5 guarantees "His dignity inviolate and His power incontestable".

Under Chapter II--The Emperor's Powers and Attributes--Articles 7, 8, 9 and 10 are concerned with the establishment of a bi-cameral legislative body, a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. In setting up the two deliberative Houses, the Emperor states, "It is necessary that the modern Ethiopian accustom himself to collaborate in the workings of the whole machinery of the State". The Emperor is given the power to call special sessions of the Houses, as well as to announce



their opening and closing. The Chamber of Deputies may be dissolved by him. It may be stated, however, that notwithstanding the provisions herein made, the two chambers operate more in a consultative than a legislative capacity. ✕

A similarity to the American policy of permitting the President to make "recess" appointments when Congress is not in session, may be seen in Article 9, which grants the Emperor the right of promulgating decrees having the full force of law when the Chambers are not in session. Any decrees so promulgated are to be submitted to the Chambers at their subsequent session, and are to be regarded as abrogated and invalid if they are not approved.

The whole burden of coordinating administrative and personnel matters is placed squarely upon the shoulders of the Emperor for, under Article 11, not only must he "determine the organization and regulations of all the administrative departments", but it falls to his lot to "designate and to discharge officers of the army as well as civil office-holders, and to define their respective powers and salaries." This appears to be the continuation of a previous policy. ✕

Unlike the head of the American Government, the Emperor may declare war, conclude peace, and negotiate and sign treaties without the usual advice and consent of the legislative bodies.

The Emperor retains the right to confer titles, such as Ras, Dedjazmatch, Fitaurari, etc., and to make land-grants.

Article 15 merely constitutionalizes the old system of allotting provinces and sub-provinces to the deserving chieftains.

Article 17 is reminiscent of the days of Menelik and Lij Yasu, for it provides for the appointment of a Regent to exercise the supreme power in the Emperor's name, in case he becomes incapacitated by reasons of illness or old age.

Chapter III of the Constitution, which comprises Articles 18 to 29, concerns itself with "The Rights Acknowledged to the Nation by the Emperor, and the Duties incumbent upon the nation". The most important part of this chapter appears to be Articles 22 to 27 inclusive, which tend to incorporate a modification of the American conception of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". The Ethiopian peoples are granted the limited right of moving freely from one place to another, and may not be arrested, condemned or imprisoned "except by due process of law". The subjects are guaranteed that they shall not be deprived, against their will, of having their cases tried by legally established courts, or be subject to unlawful visit and search of their domiciles, or have the secrecy of their mail violated, "except in the instances for which legal provision has been made". The Constitution further assures the Ethiopian that no one shall have the right to seize him, or confiscate any movable property and real estate which he may possess "except in the cases of public interest fixed by law".

Chapter IV, comprising Articles 30 to 47, concerns itself

with the operations of "The Deliberative Chambers of the Empire", which were established in Article 7.

Provision is made under Article 31 for the appointment of the members of the Senate by the Emperor. These members are to be chosen from among those who have served the Empire for a long time "in the ranks of Princes or Ministers, Judges or Chiefs of the army". While in theory the Lower House is to be elected by the people, the next article provides that they shall be chosen from among the lesser officials and minor chiefs "until that time when the people are in a position to elect them themselves". The Constitution does not state who is to do the choosing of the members of the Chamber of Deputies.

The American Congress has the right to pass legislation over the veto of the president. But the Ethiopian legislature has no such power for Article 34 provides that "No law may be put into force without having been deliberated in the Chambers, and without having received the approval "of the Emperor".

The Ministers of the various departments are permitted to submit propositions to the Chamber of Deputies which "it is legally bound to accept and to deliberate. ..."

Article 37 which provides for the annual meeting of the Chambers, is an anomaly, for it is incomplete. Officially, therefore, no definite time has been provided in the Constitution for the Chambers to sit. Subsequently, however, it was

decreed that the Chambers should sit annually from November to May. The length of the sessions are identical for both Chambers.

In Britain the House of Commons may be dissolved at any time by the crown on the advice of the whole cabinet. In France the president may dissolve the Chamber of Deputies if the Upper House concurs. The American House of Representatives cannot be dissolved under any circumstances. But the Ethiopian Chamber of Deputies may be dissolved by the Emperor on his own authority without the advice or consent of anybody. When the Chamber is dissolved, Article 39 provides that the Senate "will adjourn its session until a later time".

An important part of any constitution is that which designates the number of members for each of the Chambers. Article 41 provides that no proceedings may take place in either Chamber unless two-thirds of its members are present, but nowhere in the whole Constitution is provision made for the number of members which each Chamber is to have! It was subsequently decreed, subject to modification, that the Senate should consist of 27 members, and the Chamber of Deputies forty-two or more.

Under Article 47 the Ministers are prohibited from visiting the Chambers and from participating in their deliberations, without first obtaining the consent of the Emperor.

Chapter V is devoted to the individual and collective duties of the Ministers of the Empire. Each Minister is

responsible for the written opinions on the matters pertaining to his department, which he submits to the Emperor. The collective duty of the Ministers is provided for in Article 49 which stipulates that on the request of the Emperor for their opinion on matters of importance to the Government, "they will deliberate together according to regulations before submitting it to Him".

The Judiciary is given consideration in Chapter VI. The judges shall, as in former times, hold court in public, except in those cases which might "affect public tranquility", or which might "violate good morals".

Cases involving foreigners are not mentioned in the Constitution, but such cases will probably be taken care of under Article 54, which provides Special Courts for the hearing of all cases "relating to administrative matters which are outside the competence of other courts". The Emperor remains, of course, the final appeal in the Court of Law.

Without a sound financial policy at the center, it would be impossible to raise the country out of its feudalistic state. To this end the Emperor has sought the help of an American as financial adviser. The State Bank, formerly a British institution, has been taken over by the Ethiopian Government. A currency system has been introduced, and the Bank of Ethiopia has recently begun to issue paper currency based on the silver content of the Maria Theresa thaler, the standard money of Ethiopia for many years. The fractional

coins of Menelik's time have been replaced by a decimal coinage in nickel and bronze. Through the aid of the adviser, taxing is being systematized.

The influence of the American financial adviser manifests itself in the final Article of the Constitution which provides for the drawing up of an annual budget to which the expenditures of the Government Treasury are to conform.

The Ethiopian Constitution is notable for its omissions, the most conspicuous of which is the lack of a provision for amendments.

There has been much comment in America recently concerning our "horse and buggy" Constitution. It has been stated, too, that the framers of our Constitution could not see far enough ahead.

It cannot be said that Emperor Haile Selassie "could not see far enough ahead." He could see the pitfalls inherent in a constitutional monarchy, especially for a people who were not quite ready to assume the burden of Government. In proclaiming the Constitution, he decreed that "in the future it shall serve as the basis and authority for the promulgation of such additional laws as shall be deemed necessary for upholding its principles, attaining its objectives, and preserving the Ethiopian State."

The Emperor could see that elasticity in a modern constitution is one of the characteristics which distinguish "cultured and independent nations." With respect to the

elasticity of the Ethiopian Constitution, attention is directed to a very significant sentence in the Decree proclaiming the Constitution:

"It is Our hope that such elaboration shall be carried out in the future as circumstances require, and in the afere-mentioned objectives."