

Right Hon. Sir J G Ward: I have no objection to the members of the Press being present.

Mr Massey Neither have I, I believe in it being as public as possible. It is very well known that I have been in favour of these matters being referred to two Judges of the Supreme Court from the very first. I stated in the House that I had much more confidence in the Judges than in any parliamentary Committee, because it is quite impossible to keep party bias away from such a matter as this. However, the House decided otherwise, and Mr Hine has made his arrangements in accordance with the decision arrived at by the House two or three weeks ago, and this motion has been sprung upon us rather by way of surprise. I think, before we come to a decision upon it we should have time to consider, and I would ask that in a matter of this kind notice should be given. The Committee is bound to meet to-morrow morning if it is to go on at all, and I suggest that the Committee adjourn, and Sir Joseph Ward's motion be taken to-morrow morning, or at the next meeting we decide on.

Right Hon. Sir J G Ward I have no objection whatever to that, except that it will be personally rather inconvenient for me to be here to-morrow. I wanted to have a meeting of the Lands Committee in connection with the Land Bill, as a matter of fact. I suggest that we should meet to-morrow morning at 10 o'clock, and will give notice of my motion, so that we shall have ample time to consider the matter. I have no strong feeling in connection with this matter. What strikes me as important is this: I believe that, now the cases and names have been given, it will be more satisfactory if two Judges of the Supreme Court investigate the charges and report on them, but I could not set up any sort of Commission until I had the names.

Notice of motion given. "*Right Hon Sir J G. Ward* to move at the next meeting of the Committee, That, as the names and charges have been formulated and submitted by Mr Hine to this Committee, the Committee report to the House, and recommend that the charges be referred to two Judges of the Supreme Court, sitting as a Royal Commission, to investigate and report on."

Mr Allen We understand that it is open to Mr Hine to mention other charges?

The Chairman Mr Hine has stated that he has one other charge.

Mr Fraser He said, other charges, not one. There is no use your trying to put something in his mouth which he did not say.

The Chairman He did say that.

Right Hon. Sir J G Ward I move, That a copy of each of these charges be sent to each of the individuals against whom the charges have been made.

Motion agreed to.

The Committee adjourned until 10 o'clock next day

THURSDAY, 13TH OCTOBER, 1910

On the motion, That the minutes of the previous meeting, as read, be confirmed,—

Mr Allen Mr Massey moved a motion yesterday, which was not put, that Mr Hine be represented by counsel. That is not in the minutes.

The Clerk explained that it was superseded by a motion put by the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Ward.

The shorthand-writer produced the transcript of notes taken at the meeting, showing that Mr Massey had moved that Mr Hine be represented by counsel, but that Sir Joseph Ward stated that he had a motion to move before that, and proceeded with his motion.

The Clerk was instructed to amend the minutes accordingly.

The Chairman The first business, I take it, will be the consideration of the motion notice of which has been given by the Right Hon. Sir J G Ward.

Mr Massey I am quite willing to allow my motion relative to counsel appearing for Mr Hine to stand over until the motion given notice of by the Right Hon Sir J G Ward is dealt with.

The Chairman Is it the wish of the Committee that representatives of the Press be allowed to be present?

Assent having been given, representatives of the Press were admitted.

Right Hon. Sir J G Ward: In speaking to the motion, I want to say that, after further consideration of the motion which was postponed until this morning at the request of the leader of the Opposition, so that time should be given to the Committee to think over the proposal I made, I have fully considered it myself, and am of opinion that the course I am suggesting is the right one. I want to say, and make it quite clear, that members of the House should try their fellow-members against whom charges are made, that they are the right body to do so, and that I believe that to be absolutely right constitutionally, but, on looking at the whole position, I am of opinion that, in the interests of the country, these charges should be referred to two Judges of the Supreme Court, and I want to say again that from the very first I was prepared to take that course if the names and cases had been submitted, so that the Government could prepare a submission to two Judges of the Supreme Court. It has been published abroad that I proposed to submit this matter in the first instance to the Lands Committee for consideration, and very strong criticism in the Press opposed to the Government—or some of them, at least—was shown to that course. Again, when I proposed a Select Committee very strong exception was taken to the members of it. There may be other cases that may require to come before the Committee for consideration, and I think it is important that the predominant party in the House should not be in the position of having it alleged that they are using their majority, in connection with matters that may come up, for party purposes. My opinion is that the matter is so important that we should, if possible, be relieved from any possibility of any statement of that kind being made either inside or outside of Parliament. Moreover, since Mr Hine has made his charges, I noticed, immediately he made them, he introduced one case which I am quite satisfied he did not include when he made his charges in the