

THURSDAY, 24TH NOVEMBER, 1910

The Committee met at 10 30 a.m., pursuant to notice.

Present Mr Hanan (Chairman), Mr Allen, Mr Graham, Mr Myers, Mr Buchanan, Mr Massey, Mr Reed, Mr Fraser, Hon. Mr Millar, Right Hon. Sir J G Ward.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

The Chairman read a draft report, with a statement of the evidence, and his finding as Chairman *re* allegation No. 4.

The Right Hon. Sir J G Ward gave notice to move at a later period, "That the Committee is of opinion that, for the purpose both of the protection of public life and of the reputation of public men, legislation should be passed making it illegal for a member of Parliament to act on his own behalf or on behalf of any other person in negotiating the sale of an estate to the Crown.

Resolved, on the motion of the Chairman, to proceed with allegation No. 1

The Chairman's draft report, with a statement of the evidence, and his finding as Chairman, reads as follows:—

CHARGES AGAINST MR. MAJOR.

1 The Select Committee to which was referred the charges brought by the honourable member for Stratford, Mr Hine, against Mr Charles E. Major, has to report as follows:—

The first charge against Mr. Major is as follows:—

"That Charles Edwin Major, in or about the year 1904, while a member of Parliament, conducted the sale to the Government of a property of Frederick Bayly at Toko, and received from the said Frederick Bayly a commission or sum of money for so doing."

The second charge against Mr. Major is as follows:—

"That Charles Edwin Major and Walter Symes, or one of them, in or about the year 1905, while both members of Parliament, conducted the sale to the Government of a property of Alfred Bayly at Toko, and received from the said Alfred Bayly a commission or sum of money, which the said Charles Edwin Major and Walter Symes divided."

2 At the hearing there appeared before your Committee Mr M. Myers as counsel for Mr Hine; and Mr Major appeared, but was not represented by counsel.

The evidence taken at length shows,—

- (a.) That Mr Major was in the year 1903 a member of the House of Representatives, and ceased to be a member after the general election of 1908.
- (b.) That before and in the year 1903 he carried on the business of a land and commission agent.
- (c.) That in March, 1903, he negotiated in the ordinary way as a land agent a sale to the Government of Mr F Bayly's property at Toko, and received commission from Mr Bayly at the usual rate paid on the sale of such properties.
- (d.) These negotiations were conducted entirely by correspondence, which was put in evidence.
- (e.) That in these negotiations Mr Major acted as agent for the vendors, and not in any way as agent for the Government.
- (f.) That the sale was conducted through the Land Purchase Board strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Land for Settlements Act, and not through any Minister of the Crown, and no influence or pressure at any time was brought or attempted to be brought by any one upon the members of that Board.
- (g.) That no irregularity, favour, or interference took place either on the part of the late Right Hon. Mr Seddon (who was at that time Minister in Charge of the Land Purchase Department, as well as being Prime Minister) or on the part of any member of his Government.
- (h.) As to the second charge, That Mr Major did not, in the year 1905, or at any time, conduct the sale to the Government of Mr Alfred Bayly's property at Toko, and did not receive from Mr Alfred Bayly a commission or sum of money which he divided with Mr Walter Symes or any one else.

Finding

3 Your Committee is therefore of opinion that, as regards the first charge, the evidence taken did not show any breach of any rule of law or of any established parliamentary practice; and, as regards the second charge, it has been disproved so far as Mr Major is concerned.

Report agreed to down to paragraph (a).

Paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) read and agreed to.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Massey, That paragraph (d) be amended as follows:—" (d.) There is no evidence to show that the negotiations were conducted other than by correspondence."

Paragraphs (e) to (h) read and agreed to.

Finding *Resolved*, on the motion of Mr Massey, That the finding be amended to read as follows:—"3 Your Committee is therefore of opinion that, as regards the first charge, the evidence taken did not show any breach of any rule of law, but is a direct contravention of a resolution of the House agreed to on the 14th July, 1886. As regards the second charge, it has been disproved so far as Mr Major is concerned."

Report as amended adopted.