

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

APIA, SATURDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER.

The Chairman : I will ask the Secretary to read the Commissions.

The Secretary read the Commissions.

The Chairman : Who appears before the Commission ?

Mr. Baxter : I appear on behalf of the Mau, which includes the Citizens Committee.

Mr. Slipper : I appear with my friend Mr. Baxter.

Mr. Meredith : I appear on behalf of the New Zealand Government.

Mr. McCarthy : I appear with my friend Mr. Meredith.

Mr. Klinkmueller : I also appear with my friend Mr. Meredith.

The Chairman : When you speak of the Mau, Mr. Baxter, I understand you to mean the Natives who are associated with the Citizens Committee ?

Mr. Baxter : I used the term "Mau" in order to make the expression wide enough.

The Chairman : That is understandable, Mr. Baxter. [To Mr. Meredith :] When you refer to the New Zealand Government, I suppose you mean that you represent the Samoan Administration. There is no attack upon the New Zealand Government. Whatever charges are made they are exclusive to the Samoan Administration.

Mr. Meredith : That is the position.

The Chairman : I understand that you have been instructed by the New Zealand Government to appear on behalf of the Samoan Administration and the officers of the Samoan Administration who may be subjected to attack.

Mr. Meredith : That is the position.

Mr. Slipper : May I observe that in a notice that has been supplied to us the first question to be investigated is, "Whether, having regard to the duties undertaken under the mandate, there is just or reasonable cause for the complaints and objections which have been made concerning the Administration of Western Samoa." That does not appear to be borne out by the Commission as read to-day.

The Chairman : You need not trouble about that notice ; you will have regard to the terms of the Commission.

Mr. Slipper : I saw by the printed paper—

The Chairman : You need not refer to that—that has nothing to do with the Commission.

Mr. Slipper : My point is this : the Commission as read refers to the administration of Western Samoa, and it might embrace consideration of the New Zealand Government.

The Chairman : We will come to that later on.

Mr. Slipper : I just mentioned the point at this stage.

The Chairman : What have you to say about the question of procedure, Mr. Baxter ?

Mr. Baxter : I wish to say that I discussed the matter with Mr. Meredith yesterday morning, and we quite agreed that it was the duty of the committee to put its case first and for the Administration to proceed with its case later on. I also mentioned to my friend the points which we are bound to raise, and they are under several headings so as to clear the ground. The points we are proposing to cover are—(1) Interference by the Administration in the copra trade ; (2) prohibition ; (3) Medical Department ; (4) general expenditure ; (5) growth of the present Mau movement ; (6) Legislative Council (local) ; (7) excess of authority on the part of officials ; (8) banishment of chiefs and the removal of titles ; (9) Native affairs generally. The latter includes the present system of administration. I should like to mention that from the form of the Commission it would appear under the second heading that there is going to be an attack as to the honesty or the character of the officials. I believe that something was mentioned in New Zealand on this point. What it is I do not know ; but I want to assure the Commission that nothing under that heading will be brought before this Commission, and it is my idea to try and keep the evidence as clean as possible, and I do not think there will be any attack from our side. If there is, ample notice will be given to the other side, but I know of no evidence at present respecting this.

The Chairman : That means that there is no intention to attack the integrity of the officers of the Administration apart from the performance of their duties.

Mr. Baxter : That is so. I should also like, if possible, to leave it open, if evidence should come in—if it should be within the scope—to mention it later if it arises. I am sure that my friend Mr. Meredith will not refuse any reasonable application. I wish also to point out another matter, and it is this : owing to the shortness of time in the preparation of our case, and the number of headings to be dealt with, and the extent of ground to cover, it is essential that Mr. Slipper and myself should separate the various matters and each confine himself to the matter that he has taken in hand. There will be no attempt on our part to go over the whole ground, and I should therefore respectfully request that if a witness is called to give evidence on more than one matter both counsel be allowed to examine him or cross-examine him, as the case may be, each counsel to confine himself to the points which he is working out. I mentioned the matter to my friend Mr. Meredith, and he does not appear to raise any objection to it so long as we confine ourselves to the respective points of our case.