

Do you know what they are paying at Apia ?

The Chairman : You should obtain your information from Mr. Meredith as to the amount of the advance and base your questions on that.

Mr. Meredith : At Mulifanua, $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents.

The Chairman.] Does that agree with your information ?—I thought it was less than that.

The Chairman : The records will show what the advances were. This shows the futility of going on like this.

Mr. Baxter : Do you mind giving us the amounts at all the centres ?

Mr. Meredith : Apia, $3\frac{3}{4}$ cents ; Vaitele, $3\frac{5}{8}$ cents ; Vailele, the same ; Mulifanua, $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents ; and Fagamalo, $3\frac{1}{4}$ cents.

The Chairman.] Have you any reasons to doubt these official records ?—No ; with one exception, they agree with mine.

Mr. Baxter.] Do you know of your own knowledge when the Government first started carrying operations in advances against copra ?—Early in 1927.

How did the price received in London before October compare with the price being received at the beginning of this year ?—The price at the beginning of this year was approximately £4 per ton lower.

The Chairman.] Give me the London price per ton at the beginning of 1927 ?—On the 17th January it was £24 15s. per ton c.i.f.

Can you give the previous October, 1926, price ?—On the 5th October, about the time the market started to seriously decline—

Before that date. I want to compare the higher price before the falling prices. Select your own date ?—On a parcel of copra from our Hapaai branch, shipped there in April, 1926, and arrived Home about the end of June or July, sold at £29 1s. 3d. c.i.f.

Mr. Baxter.] How much have the merchants reduced the price they have been paying to the Natives as a result of that fall in pounds per ton ?—£2 5s. per ton.

The Chairman.] That does not give us much information. I want to know if there was any considerable reduction in the price paid to the Natives ?—The reduction was brought into effect on the 7th October, 1926.

What was the price paid ?—Various prices were paid, according to the localities.

Give us the maximum and minimum prices paid ?—The maximum price would be in the vicinity of £17 prior to the fall, and the minimum about £11.

You undertake the carriage and transportation of the material to your store ?—Yes.

Judge MacCormick.] You pay solely on account of the locality, and not on account of the quality ?—The price is based on the locality only, and the quality must be up to a certain standard set by the Government.

The Chairman.] You pay one price throughout the islands ?—Yes.

Mr. Baxter.] What profit are you making at the present time on copra ? Could you show us what it costs to get a ton of copra from various districts to London ?—Yes. I have a list here showing the costs with respect to copra from the Native producers until delivered c.i.f. London.

The Chairman : Put it in please. I will look at it at my leisure. [Exhibit No. 1.]

Mr. Baxter.] On that list is shown various districts and various rates of shrinkage ; also how the various shrinkages occur ?—In some districts the rainfall is much heavier than in others, particularly on the other side of the island. The copra on this side of the island shows a much lower shrinkage.

The Chairman.] You have included shrinkage as a debit against your profit ?—Yes.

Mr. Baxter.] These are the shrinkages in the various districts ?—Yes. I have based this list on three shrinkages. The copra that we buy is not always of the same quality. In some cases the shrinkage is 10 per cent. In some districts where the rainfall is greater and the trader has a number of sheds under his control the shrinkage varies ; and, furthermore, if we have to rely on the Natives it is higher. It goes as high as 16 per cent. My figures are based, however, on $10\frac{1}{2}$, $12\frac{1}{2}$, and 15 per cent.

Judge MacCormick.] Shrinkage after being bought ?—Yes, from the time it is bought from the Natives until it is delivered into the shed in Apia.

Mr. Baxter.] And these prices along the top ?—The prices on top are the prices paid to the Natives. They are the rates in the districts concerned.

What district is Mulifanua in ?—Mulifanua is in an A district.

What is the price paid there ?—£11 4s. 1d., or $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents.

As against $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents advance ?—Yes.

What district is Apia in ?—Apia has a price of its own. It is considered separately from the other villages adjacent.

Can you call to mind the Apia prices ?—Apia prices are 3 cents.

Against $3\frac{3}{4}$ by the Administration ?—Yes. Three cents is the price extending to Faleula, taking in Vaitele, where the Administration are paying $3\frac{5}{8}$ cents.

What about Vailele ?—Vailele is in an A district, where we pay $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents.

What about Fagamalo ?—That is a B district, where we pay $2\frac{1}{4}$ cents.

As against their $3\frac{1}{4}$? I believe in Samoa you buy in cents : that is the custom ?—Yes.

Now, the item of freight appears, 12s. 6d. The freight is on your own boats. You charge up 12s. 6d. for freight ?—Yes, 12s. 6d. per 1,000 lb.

How do you account for that freight charge ?—It is necessary to cover the heavy working expenses of those boats. They are really oil-launches mostly under the care of Natives.