

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE FISHING INDUSTRY HELD IN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBERS AT ZOMBA ON THURSDAY, 3<sup>RD</sup> MAY, 1956, AT 2 P.M.<sup>1</sup>

Present:

The Hon. J.B. Hobson, Q.C., Chairman

The Hon. J.H. Ingham, C.M.G. M.B.E.

The Hon. F.G. Collins

The Hon. N.D. Kwenje

H.J.H. Borley, Esq.

Miss P.B. Clewes, Secretary.

Before the meeting commenced the oaths were administered to members by the Deputy Chief Secretary, Mr. P.W. Youens.

The Chairman opened the meeting by saying that at this stage all that could be done was to try and work out a system under which the Commission could work, to fix a plan as to where meetings were to be held, what evidence was to be heard and how the Commission was to proceed generally.

Mr. Collins said that he thought the first thing to do was to take the separate heads of the terms of reference and deal with them one by one. He also pointed out, and this was stressed by the Chairman, that members ought not to discuss matters concerning the fishing industry with members of the public. The Commission had been established for this purpose, and any members of the public who wished to speak on the subject should be asked to give his evidence before the Commission.

Head (a) of the terms of reference. Mr. Borley, in answer to a question by Mr. Collins, said that he could give fairly full information about the fish caught by the two non-African concerns. There was not very much detailed information about African fishing concerns, but he could get some idea. It was agreed that Mr. Sanson, Fisheries Officer, should furnish the Commission with a report on the figures contained in the returns submitted by Mr. Chris. Yiannakis and Messrs' Malachias Bros. Answering Mr. Ingham, the Chairman said that Mr. Sanson need not appear personally before the Commission for this purpose but could send in the report.

Referring to the African side of the industry, Mr. Collins said it would not be easy to find out details of catches. It was within his knowledge that a large number of fish, amounting to some truck loads, had been taken out of the Lake in the vicinity of Salima from the marsh land which

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<sup>1</sup> This is a transcription from the Commission of Inquiry into the Fishing Industry (1956) conducted during the Nyasaland Protectorate. The original material is held in a single file (C.O.M. 9-3-1) at the Malawi National Archives in Zomba. It was collected for the Lessons from Lake Malawi project by Dr Bryson Nkhoma and transcribed by Dr Milo Gough.

had been flooded this year. Mr. Borley said that a certain amount of information regarding this could be obtained from the fish capitao, and more would probably be forthcoming in an examination of the Fisheries Officer, but it would only be an approximation. It was agreed that Mr. Sanson should be summoned.

Mr. Kwenje said that fishermen from both Lake Nyasa and Lake Chilwa ought to be summoned to give evidence both about their catches of fish and how they dispose of the fish. Mr. Borley said there were two Africans, Khan and Sinclair, who were fishing in a commercial manner in Lake Nyasa, and it was agreed that they should be summoned to give evidence. It was also agreed that the District Commissioner, Zomba, should be asked to produce two African fishermen from Lake Chilwa.

Mr. Ingham asked if it was contemplated that, as well as summoning witnesses, future meetings were to be advertised so that the public could give evidence, and it was agreed that this should be the case.

With regard to non-African fishing concerns, it was agreed that Mr. Chris Yiannakis, a representative of Messrs. Malachias Bros. and also Mr. Kettle should be asked to give evidence.

Mr. Collins thought that the first part of (a) was extremely difficult. Mr. Ingham asked if it could not be divided into wide categories, i.e. the tea industry, for example, could no doubt furnish their demand for fish at present prices and what the demand might be at varying price levels. It was agreed to summon a representative from the Tea Association, the Town Manager of Zomba, the Town Clerk of Limbe and Blantyre and a representative of the hotel and catering industry. It was also decided that the Fisheries Officer should be asked to give the record of sales of fish at Blantyre, Limbe and Cholo markets which had been kept over the period of the preceding two weeks, and that District Commissioners should be asked to produce African consumers at different income levels so that some idea could be obtained from them of their present consumption and if it would increase if the prices were lowered. Mr. Ingham thought that the Central Province Association, as representative of the tobacco planters in the Central Province, might wish to be heard, and Mr. Collins thought that the Nyasaland Farmers' Union, which embraced a large percentage of those in the Southern Province not connected with tea, might also be interested. It was agreed that representatives of these two bodies should be called.

Head (b) of the terms of reference. It was agreed that this would be covered by the same witnesses as for (a). In addition, Mr. Borley thought that some of the African traders, particularly the larger concerns, ought to be summoned. He could provide the names of these traders, and it was agreed that he should do so.

Mr. Collins said that the Chambers of Commerce ought to be consulted, as they would have strong views on both the distribution and sale of fish. It was agreed that the Indian Chamber of Commerce and the Nyasaland Chamber of Commerce should be invited to submit evidence.

Head (c) of the terms of reference. As importers of fish, it was agreed to summon Mr. Abbey, of the Ntondwe Tobacco Co., and Mr. Del Fereira, of the Limbe garage and Transport Co.

After a certain amount of discussion, it was decided to hold all meetings in public, but if a witness requested that some of his evidence be given in private his request would be granted. It was also agreed that traders would be given an undertaking that figures quoted from their profit and loss accounts, etc., would be treated confidentially and would not be published in the Commission's report. Average figures only would be published.

Head (d) of the terms of reference. It was agreed that on this point direct evidence could not be taken but that it would emerge as a result of the evidence taken on points (a), (b) and (c).

Mr. Ingham thought that evidence ought to be taken from a Medical Officer as to the nutritional value of fish, and it was agreed that the Director of Medical Services and the Medical Officers of Health of Blantyre and Lilongwe should be asked to provide this evidence.

Head (e) of the terms of reference. On this point it was agreed that evidence would emerge as a result of that taken on points (a), (b) and (c). Mr. Borley suggested that the Fisheries Officer should be summoned to give evidence on difficulty of controlling prices.

Finally, it was agreed that the Commission should sit at Zomba, Fort Johnston, Blantyre, Lilongwe and Salima, the first sitting to be at Zomba on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> May, at 9 a.m. in the Zomba Town Hall. An advertisement to this effect was to be inserted in the "The Nyasaland Times", "Msimbi" and "Bwalo". The Town Manager was to be asked to attend, along with anyone else whom he thought could give useful evidence. The District Commissioner was to be asked to produce two African fishermen from Lake Chilwa and also African consumers at different income levels. The Director of Medical Services was to be asked to arrange for someone to give evidence regarding the nutritional value of fish in its various forms.

The meeting closed at 3.45 p.m.