

On being questioned, all the witnesses strongly deny that any oppression, in any form, has been or is suffered by the people.

Mr. Craig, who was present throughout the inquiry, on being called, said, in reply to questions,—The police sell the people's goods to pay fines, as they do anywhere else in the world. I have lent people money to pay their fines, and in some cases charged interest. I decline to say how much interest. That is my business. I charge the same prices for goods whether given out on credit or bought for cash.

Mr. Ward, who had been also present throughout the inquiry, on being called, said,—I also have lent money to pay fines, but in no case have I charged interest. I only ask them to pay me when the coffee is sold. I consider myself personally responsible to my employer for such loans. The Government prevent the people from paying their debts by enforcing this illegal *ravi*.

Report No. 2.—On Special Charges made by Craig and Ward.

SIR,—

Mangaia, 13th August, 1897.

I have gone carefully into the inquiry regarding a bag of coffee alleged to have been proved to be stolen and sold to the Government tea-shop. I have the honour to enclose the evidence taken.

There is no evidence either that such coffee was ever stolen, or to connect it with the tea-shop or the Government in any way.

F. J. Moss, Esq., British Resident, Rarotonga.

I have, &c.,

F. G. Moss.

Evidence (12th August, 1897).

Mr. Craig examined: A woman came to me in the early part of May, 1897, and wanted credit. I refused unless she gave security. She said she had a bag of coffee nearly full, which she offered as security. I sent Daniela to mark my name on the bag of coffee. The bag of coffee was to remain in her charge until the *ravi* was broken up. She told me the coffee was hers in her own right. I let her have 10 or 12 dollars (£1 to £1 4s.) credit on the strength of it. Over a month after I looked into her house and found the coffee gone. I informed Daniela, who made inquiries, and told me the woman's husband had taken the coffee away.

Daniela examined: Craig sent me to Taakava Vaine to mark a bag of coffee on account of debt, and afterwards sent me to look. I found it gone. Taakava Vaine said her husband took it away and sold it to the tea-shop.

Ngatama examined: The tea-shop bought coffee from Taakava several times, but not one bag in a lump.

Taakava Vaine examined: I went to Craig about May last for credit. Got \$9.25 goods from him on credit. Told Craig when I got the coffee I would pay him. Daniel came and marked a cross on the wood above the bag. The bag was not a large bag like a cornsack, but about the size of a saltbag, and would hold when full about half a hundredweight. I did not tell Craig I had a bag of coffee in the house which I would hold as security for the \$9.25, and when the *ravi* came off would sell it and repay Craig. I knew Daniela came to mark the bag of coffee for Craig. I have the coffee still in the house, but I have turned it into a larger bag.

To *Craig*: I did tell you that my husband took the coffee and sold it to Ngatama and the tea-shop.

To *Mr. Moss*: I did tell Craig that I had more coffee, and would use that to pay the debt.

Taakava Tane, husband of Taakava Vaine, examined: Know the bag of coffee referred to. It belonged to his wife. Did not take any coffee from the bag under the cross mark. To the best of his belief the coffee is still in the house. He did not take it away.

Daniel (called by *Craig*): Craig told him to go to the woman's house to look at the coffee. The woman went with him. Marked a bag with a chalk cross and the wood above it in the same way. The woman showed him the bag to mark. Taakava Vaine told him afterwards that her husband had sold the coffee to the tea-shop.

Makianga (called by *Craig*): Has no evidence to give.

Ngatama wished to say the tea-shop bought no coffee at 10 cents, only at 15 cents. All the coffee that the tea-shop has bought from Taakava is 37 lb., amounting to \$5.55, in small quantities from time to time, not in one lump.

Davie wished to say that he is a Judge, and was present when Taakava and the tea-shop people were tried and fined by Meringitangi for selling coffee secretly. Did not hear anything about stolen coffee. No charge of that sort was brought up by Craig, who was present, and who with Ward had laid the complaint against the tea-shop which led to the trial and the fine.

This ended the inquiry.

(9.)

ORIGINAL PETITION AGAINST FEDERAL COURT BILL.

[Sent by Clerk of Parliament to Printing-office, and obtained by me this day (22nd November, 1897) from the Clerk (Makea Daniela). The Bill was introduced on the 9th July. This petition was presented on the 27th July by Vaikai, one of the Rarotonga members. It is in Dr. Craig's writing, and one of the signatories (Steve Savage Saville) carried it round for signature, employed, it was said, by Dr. Craig to do so.—F.J.M.]

To the Cook Islands Parliament, now assembled.

WE, the undersigned, residents in Rarotonga, humbly petition the Cook Islands Parliament to reject the Federal Courts Bill now before the House, on the following grounds:—

1. The passing of such a Bill will effect a fundamental and undesirable change in the administration of the Cook Islands, as it will confer very important powers upon the President of the Court, without holding him responsible to the Parliament from which he derives these powers. (*Vide* clause VIII.)

2. That the Bill gives to the President of the Court the power of appointing officers paid with Government money, these officers not being responsible to the Cook Islands Parliament. (*Vide* clauses X., XII., XIV., XV.)

3. That if the Bill become law the Government will be involved in increased expenditure, which, in view of the recent statement of public finances, is not justifiable. (*Vide* clauses XIV. and XV.)

4. That the appointment of solicitors can serve no good purpose in a Court where it is desirable that the procedure should be as simple as possible. (*Vide* clauses XIX. and XX.)

5. That the passing of the Act may involve increased expense to litigants, as it gives the President of the Court the power to compel litigants to employ counsel. (*Vide* clause XX.)

6. That the decision of the President of the Court is not affected by the dissent of any Judges who may sit on the bench with him. (*Vide* clause XI.)

7. That the Bill aims at extorting from the Cook Islands Government the absolute power of administering its laws, and at handing it over to the proposed President of the Federal Court, who, in terms of his office, is not responsible to the Parliament.

Wm. Taylor.
George Craig.
Wm. B. Craig.
H. Ellis.
John Wilson.
G. Monteiro.
W. M. Fitzgerald.
A. C. Avenell.

William Brewer.
Cook Islands Trading Company, per C. Kohn.
R. J. Jessop.
Steve Savage Saville.
Emil Piltz.
Frederick Goodwin.
W. H. Oliver.
H. S. Neumegen.