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SATURDAY, the 19th inst., 1924

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The Enquiry Conducted By T. Hollis Walker, K.C.

(Continued from page 5.)

COMMISSIONER—It is a matter which requires a certain amount of competence and confidence. He sees the private messages and you must appoint a man of absolute integrity. Do you agree to that?

A—I certainly do and that was the reason why certain members of the Government refused to carry it.

Q—Did you ever put it to the Executive Government?

A—I did to certain members and there was a strong objection made on the ground that they would not like to trust him with the messages.

MR. WARREN—So that your opinion of Mr. Meaney had altered?

A—I did not say that. I heard an individual say that he was not prepared to concur with this appointment.

Q—And that influenced you in making him Acting Controller instead of the superintendent of Posts?

A—The political situation was such that—

Q—Never mind that. I asked you if that report from the member of the Executive that his integrity was not to be relied upon was of sufficient importance to influence you in not making him Minister of Posts but of making him Acting Controller.

A—It decided me that I could not recommend him to the Executive Government and carry the point with the Executive Government.

Q—But you never asked the Government?

A—No, I never did.

COMMISSIONER—You were sure you could not carry it?

MR. WARREN—So that your confidence in Mr. Meaney must have been considerably shaken?

A—I did not regard Mr. Meaney at that time as a terrible rogue; as far as I was concerned I was prepared for him to see my messages that passed through my office; but certain parties were not.

MR. WARREN—In September 1919 you wrote to Mr. Meaney. "Reads paragraph." That was what you thought of him in 1919?

A—That was true and if I had been strong enough in the Executive Government at the time, I would have done so.

Q—But you did not do it because one member of the Government told you he was not satisfied with Mr. Meaney's integrity?

A—I don't know if it was one or not.

COMMISSIONER—When you saw there was going to be opposition if you brought this recommendation before the Executive, and rightly and wrongly you did not court a possible reverse.

A—I felt the Opposition was sufficient to cause a division.

COMMISSIONER—You thought you had better drop that particular appointment at the time; but you say at the time you had not materially changed your views as to Mr. Meaney's honesty and respectability?

WITNESS—There was no reason why I should.

MR. WARREN—You made him acting controller in 1920?

WITNESS—The Executive Government made him acting controller.

Q—On your recommendation?

A—I am not quite sure whether I personally recommended him or not; every member of the Executive voted for him.

(Attorney General quotes from evidence.)

COMMISSIONER—Please stop the noise in the gallery. I can hardly hear the Attorney General speaking.

(Attorney General continues to quote evidence.)

MR. WARREN—Now why was it less probable that Mr. Meaney would get the appointment?

A—The appointment of Mr. Meaney as Controller would have to be an Executive Government appointment, and the Executive Government would have to be supported by the Government Party. It would have to be an appointment that would be satisfactory to the Government Party. At that time there had been a considerable number of deputations and individuals waiting upon me, and it was becoming more apparent every day that the appointment of Mr. Meaney or anyone else as a Controller would be inadvisable. Several were asking for reorganization of the department. I had a programme of my own in mind for the reorganization of the department under a committee of three, with the chairman of the Committee to be the permanent official head.

COMMISSIONER—You never submitted that programme of reorganization to your Council?

A—No.

MR. WARREN—And it was getting less and less probable that the

appointment of a controller as it existed would continue to exist, getting less and less probable that the appointment of a Controller under the Act, as the Act stood, would continue as a permanent appointment?

Q—It was improbable that a full appointment would be continued under the Act?

A—I was anticipating at each Session of the Legislature, an entire revision of the Act itself.

Q—You did not express that to any of your colleagues?

A—There was always discussion between the members of the party as to some very material amendments being brought into the Act. That started as a ripple in the House of Assembly and became a matter of very considerable magnitude.

COMMISSIONER—The change then was not because of any change in Mr. Meaney, but because, you say, the office itself was going to be modified?

A—The office might be modified, I had no intention of throwing him out of office.

COMMISSIONER—But there was greater and greater probability, as time went on, that the office would be modified?

A—Yes, I had my own public programme in connection with the matter.

MR. WARREN—You did not discuss it. Did you discuss his full appointment with the Executive?

WITNESS—Shortly before the election, the Minister of Finance and Customs, who was head of the Department and to whom he was responsible, recommended to the Executive Government that he should be appointed to full control.

COMMISSIONER—When was that?

WITNESS—Shortly before the election of 1923. The Minister of Finance and Customs, who was the proper official to do so, recommended to the Government that Mr. Meaney should be appointed to full control.

MR. WARREN—What happened to that recommendation, Sir Richard?

WITNESS—I think one or two members of the Council supported the idea, and I think some of the members said nothing about the idea; there was no vote taken on it, and no Minute made. It was not a matter which was regularly on the Agenda, and I was speaking entirely from memory. On the other hand, it may have been a matter deferred until the election was over.

Q—You think that, well, then, have another think as to what happened to that recommendation of the Minister of Finance?

A—On that matter, you would have to refer to the official records, which would be in the hands of the Deputy Colonial Secretary. As far as I can remember, it was not regularly on the Agenda, if so, it was merely added in my own handwriting. I don't think it was on the Agenda of Council. If so, it was an item written in afterwards, and my recollection is of there being no vote taken on it, and of some of the members of the Committee of Council expressing an urgent desire that the thing would stand over until after the Election, and that Mr. Meaney would then get his appointment. I am speaking entirely from memory, and my recollection of any one of the thousands of transactions of the Council is not very exact. I would ask you to produce the records.

Q—You say I have not got them; that it was not on the Agenda. If it was not on the Agenda, it would not be in my possession. I was a member of that Council, was I not?

A—Yes.

Q—Was I present at the Meeting to which you refer?

A—You probably were.

Q—I was. Now you say that this question was brought up—this question of the full appointment of Mr. Meaney was brought up by the Minister of Finance and Customs. Are you sure about that?

A—No, but that is my recollection.

Q—That the Minister of Finance at that meeting of Council recommended that Mr. Meaney get the full appointment; that he got some support; that it was not on the regular Agenda and nothing was done.

A—Mr. Brownrigg saw me personally.

Q—Why do you say no vote was taken? Have you ever known a vote to be taken by the Council?

A—Yes.

Q—Many times?

A—Not often.

Q—Certainly not. Why then do you say no vote was taken?

A—In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, I would find out if the members assented or dissented by nodding around to each man.

COMMISSIONER—It was done by nods? If so, I can quite understand a vote being taken by any part of one's anatomy. Did you all have to nod in one direction?

WITNESS—The practice, sir, is much the same as that which is followed at a meeting of the directors of a small company where they are all

friends. The members of the Committee were all friends and associates. I would start with the man on my left and ask him what his views were, and then drop along all around the Council. There was no formal vote taken, no show of hands.

COMMISSIONER—Then it was never known at the end whether the question had a majority or not?

WITNESS—It would be known if it was unanimous. It was exceedingly seldom that it was not unanimous.

COMMISSIONER—Would not the heads or hands be counted to see whether there was a majority or not? Or was it only such matters as were unanimous that were decided on?

MR. WARREN—I have in mind one case only on which there was any discussion. Only one case. A question was either turned down or agreed to.

WITNESS—Any matter upon which there would be discussion, I would not bring forward or would defer.

Q—I am talking about matters that were brought forward.

A—If I brought a thing forward and found it was causing general discussion, it would not be put to them at that particular meeting.

Q—Now this question of Mr. Meaney's full appointment was introduced, you say, by Mr. Brownrigg?

A—My recollection was that it was.

Q—Yes. Am I correct in stating that Mr. Meaney's appointment as full controller was agreed to?

A—My recollection is that it was agreed to let it rest at that time, as it was shortly before the probabilities of a general election, and it was not considered desirable by the Committee of Council that an appointment

should be finally made in connection with any department during the heat of the political situation.

COMMISSIONER—Was it agreed that he was to be appointed after the election?

A—I think it was.

MR. WARREN—That is a different story from what you told us yesterday.

COMMISSIONER—Whether it was a matter of his being appointed or not, or whether he was to be appointed, were you all agreed as to whether he was to keep his job?

A—My impression was that the Council were favorable to his appointment, but not at that time.

COMMISSIONER—Not at the moment. But you agreed he was to have the appointment?

A—I think that is correct. To my recollection, my associates were favorable to his having the appointment.

COMMISSIONER—Very well then, you had agreed that he was to have the appointment, but not that it should be gazetted or brought before the Governor or what is the next step?

WITNESS—The next step would be a formal Minute of Council submitted to His Excellency the Governor, and then the appointment would be made.

COMMISSIONER—But you agreed that it would not formally be made until after the Election?

WITNESS—Yes. That is as Mr. Warren outlines it from his joint recollection and mine. That is the size of it.

MR. WARREN—That is the size of it. That Mr. Meaney was actually appointed, and that somebody suggested that the appointment should not be made until after Polling Day. It was decided that Mr. Meaney would be

appointed. In that direction you concurred?

WITNESS—I did not oppose it.

Q—Did you concur or not?

A—I do not remember I expressed any definite opinion or not.

COMMISSIONER—I suppose your head had the opportunity of nodding like the others?

WITNESS—I don't have that privilege. I am Chairman of the Assembly.

COMMISSIONER—You might put it to all the other heads, and—

WITNESS—Keep my own head. The Chairman keeps his head while the others nod.

MR. WARREN—You kept your head level.

WITNESS—My recollection concurs with yours, now that you have outlined it to me. I think it was referred to by Mr. Brownrigg, and that some individual members spoke in favor of it, and I believe my associates of the Board decided that it should be done.

Q—And you concurred?

A—Certainly, I accepted the decision of my colleagues, as I always did.

Q—As you always did.

COMMISSIONER—That was before the election of 1923. About April?

WITNESS—I don't recollect the date. My recollection is that it was before the Election. The reason why we did not go through the usual form and send up a Minute of Council was the impending election.

COMMISSIONER—When was the election—about June?

WITNESS—The Election was on the 3rd day of May.

COMMISSIONER—And this was prior to it?

WITNESS—Yes.

(Continued on page 7.)

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Too Deep for Billy.

BY BEN BATSFORD