

RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE FISHING INDUSTRY HELD AT THE COURT HOUSE, FORT JOHNSTON, ON THE 8<sup>TH</sup> AND 9<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1956.<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.

The meeting opened at 9 o'clock on the 8<sup>th</sup> June, and Mr. R. Jana, Head Clerk in the District Commissioner's Office, Fort Johnston was sworn as interpreter.

The first witness was the Hon. H.B. Chimpembere, and being duly sworn he stated:

I am Henry Blasius Chipembere, a member of the Nyasaland Legislative Council. I am interested very much in the section of the terms of reference of the Commission which deal with the competition between locally caught fish and imported fish, whether locally caught fish can compete with imported fish. As far as I know, speaking as a consumer, imported fish has very little chance of competing with locally caught fish. The African is the chief consumer of fish in the country. The taste of imported fish is not familiar to the people here, it differs so much from the fish that is caught in the Lake. I have known very few people who buy tinned fish in times of great scarcity of local fish, and people would rather go without fish, or would rather eat beans and vegetables and other foods than go into a shop and get tinned fish.

Some time ago when I was at a Scout camp I had a very interesting experience in which a boy vomited after eating tinned fish. Of course, that was an extreme case, but at least it did occur once. I know also a friend who told me that some people eat some of these foreign imported fish in the tins get some kind of rash; I have no first hand information, I only know what my friend told me.

Secondly, the price of tinned fish in the shops is generally a bit higher than the fish that is caught locally in the rivers and in the Lake. Since the income of the majority of Africans is low it is not often within their means to go and buy fish from the shops. For these two reasons I think that

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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.

Please reference as: Malawi National Archives, C.O.M. 9-3-1. Commission of Inquiry into the Fishing Industry (1956). Transcribed by Milo Gough. Accessed via Lessons from Lake Malawi, <https://www.lessonsfromlakemalawi.com>.

imported fish would not compete very well with locally caught fish. I think locally caught fish has a better market than imported fish.

Another aspect of the Commission's work in which I have been interested is the inquiry into the possibility of exporting fish to Southern Rhodesia. I look on exportation as something that is done when internal demand has been satisfied. A good mother would not give any of her food to any neighbours when there were starving children in the house. As far as I know, the demand for internally caught fish is very high. Of course, a few marketing centres such as Blantyre, Limbe, Lilongwe and so on have got a lot of fish, and actually I have seen fish going bad because it has been on the market too long. In most of the upland areas, far from the Lake and far from urban areas in which one generally finds marketing centres for fish, there is still a great scarcity of fish. Even place along the main road between Fort Johnston and Blantyre are not so well supplied with fish. Almost ironically Fort Johnston itself, where the fish is caught, people go without fish because it goes to be sold in the bigger towns.

Some the bigger African fish business men have got the idea of having agents along the road between here and Blantyre selling fish for them while they themselves proceed with the remainder of the fish to the towns. I think that is an idea which could be used by the other fish business men and which could help to reduce the scarcity of fish along this area. The distribution of fish is certainly very erratic in the country. As I said in the beginning, some place are very well supplied and others are not supplied at all, and I think the chief difficulty is transport. Not only have we got a shortage of trucks for carrying fish to various parts of the country but also the roads in the country are bad, so that trucks cannot get into certain areas because their way is blocked, perhaps by a broken bridge or by a badly maintained road. Men carrying fish by bicycles are doing a lot to supply fish in areas which are not accessible to trucks, but they are far from adequate. We still have large areas which are crying out for more and more fish and yet are unable to get fish.

I would therefore request that this Commission recommends to government that Africans should be helped in finding means of transport, for instance, to enable them to have trucks to carry fish.

One idea which is becoming quite popular with the majority of African leaders, and to which I subscribe, is that of forming fish co-operative societies which would be helped with loans from the Government along the same lines as rice co-operative societies. Government is reluctant to give loan to individual business men, but I think if co-operative societies were formed it would be much easier for Government to grant loans to these societies where it would be safer to give public funds to a number of people rather than to individuals.

All this I have been saying in order to prove that there is certainly a very great demand in the country for fish, and for the reason that there is this very high demand I would not support the idea of exporting fish to Southern Rhodesia, for the present time at least. Fish producers who feel that they produce an excessive amount of fish should perhaps be helped in finding more and more markets within the country, and I know that there are such markets if only transport could be made easier.

The idea of exporting fish to Southern Rhodesia would certainly bring in a lot of money to the country. I have myself lived in Southern Rhodesia for two years and have experienced that there is a very great demand for fish in the country, especially among the Nyasas who are working in the mines, in the factories and in the towns. Supplying fish to Southern Rhodesia would be

indirectly helping our own people who are working there and at the same time would be helping a neighbouring country which has already done quite a lot to help this country. Still, this country is not in a position to practise this generosity, at least for the present time.

As far as I know, Africans do not like salted fish very much, but they like dried fish.

I know of at least two African business men who employ agents at Domasi. The men were carrying fresh fish to Blantyre in a small box body, and on their way they dropped about 10 dozen chamba at Domasi. I heard that one of them had other agents, but I am not sure about this.

Some of the places which are crying out for fish, both fresh and dried, and cannot get it are Dedza district, mission centres such as Bembeke Mission, Ntendere, Kasina Mission, Dedza Secondary School, and a number of other villages in that District. Fish from the southern end of the lake does reach Dedza, but those who carry it concentrate on Dedza Township, Linthipe Market and other bigger markets.

By village standards, I think the people in these bigger villages who want fish are fairly wealthy, for this agriculture is quite profitable. I can only give a guess at the amounts which would be taken at these villages if fish were available, but at N.A. Kachere's headquarters, for example, there might be a demand for perhaps 200 dozen a week. I think the people prefer fresh fish, but it is so scarce that they may have grown to like dried fish. The road to N.A. Kachere's headquarters is not very good, and I have not known of any lorries going down there, although it is used by bicycles.

Tinned fish is of no importance as far as the Africans are concerned, because, from the point of view of price, taste, etc., they are not interested.

Regarding the fishermen selling on the most profitable market, I agree that they should get the best price they can but they must be fair to those who buy and the prices must not be exorbitant. I would not go so far as to say there should not be a free market, but at the present time, even without any Government control, there is a sort of agreed price which is recognised by all people, sellers and buyers alike, and which I think is the best possible price, and which emerges from the local supplies meeting the local demand. If the demand is increased the price would rise, and if fish were exported the demand would increase and that would raise the price. That would be good for the man who sells the fish, but the majority, who are just consumers, would be dissatisfied. I do not think that controlling the price of fish would help the consumer much, but I feel that we should refuse to export fish while there are places in this country suffering from a shortage.

I feel that a lot of fish goes bad because there is not the transport to take it to places where it could be sold. In the dry season there is a shortage of fish caught in the Lake and the supply is taken up, but in the wet season when there are plenty of fish and supplies do go bad. Because of this lack of transport the fishermen sometimes do not catch as much as they could. They stop catching fish when they have enough to go the lorries that are available.

The man who was dropping off fish at Domasi was going three or four times a week and would off-load about ten dozen each time. When the lorries go through to Blantyre and Cholo they very often just stop hoping to sell, they have no agents. But they usually go right through to Blantyre, because the fish might go bad.

In Southern Rhodesia there is a considerable demand for fish from all the Africans, but it is most popular with our own Africans.

When I quoted the figure of 200 dozen which might be taken by N.A. Kachere's village I was trying to take two points into consideration, the buying abilities and the amount that could be consumed. It is not only the bad road that stops that trucks going to this village: by the time the trucks get there the fish is sold. If dried fish could be got to the village I think the demand would be a bit less than the demand for fresh fish, and that is my opinion regarding all the villages which would like more fish. In N.A. Kachere's village a chamba which costs 1d or 2d from the fishermen here (Yiannakis sells it at a higher price) sells at between 9d and 1s, and a dried chamba of the same size would command the same price.

I intend becoming a fisherman in the future, and I would not mind if the prices went up, but at the same time I would like them to remain fair to those who buy from me. There seems to be general satisfaction among consumers at the present price, but some of the fishermen have been complaining that the prices are just a bit too low. I think that they should be low enough for all Africans to be able to afford to buy fish, but if they are too low some of the fishermen would give up their business because it would not pay them, and again there would be a shortage of fish.

Mr. Sanson, being duly sworn, stated:

I am Alexander Drummond Sanson, Fisheries Officer for the Nyasaland Government. Some three or four weeks ago I made investigations at Blantyre and Limbe markets which to my mind, revealed very conflicting results. I might summarise these results in various ways. I have prepared a series of curves, which I submit as Appendix C, to illustrate various features. These refer to the first side of the investigation when we tried to gain a general impression as to what was on in the markets in Limbe and Blantyre. I was really much more concerned about the arrival of fresh fish which is produced by the non-African commercial fisheries.

The first curve, marked "A", is the time of arrival of the fish at the depots in Limbe and the time of arrival at Blantyre market and at Limbe market. As is to be expected, there is a remarkable similarity between the 3 curves. Fish arrives at Limbe some time after it arrives at the depot, and shortly after that some fish arrives at Blantyre markets. To my mind, it is obvious that the time lag between the arrival of the fish at the depots and its arrival at Limbe and Blantyre is far too great. If fish arrives at a depot at, say, 6 a.m. there is no excuse for no fish getting to Blantyre before 9 a.m. That is, of course, assuming that there is a genuine desire to put fish on to the Blantyre market. I will come to the point later that it appears that the greatest sales actually take place at the depots. I am driven to the conclusion that no provision is made to off-load a given quantity of fish as soon as it arrives at the depot and send it off to Blantyre and another quantity to Limbe. What appears to have happened is that the lorry calls at the depot, and when it has sold all that can be sold there it then takes the remainder to Blantyre. The general ups and down of that curve, of course, reflect the times of landing of fish on the Lake shore and also the state of the roads. The investigation took place at Easter, the worst time of the year.

Curve "B" shows the average price received and the total quantity over the period in Blantyre market. One would expect some sort of pattern in a curve like that. For example, when there is a large quantity of fish in the market one might expect to see a lower price received. The curve should, if anything, for from the left hand side down towards the bottom at the right hand side,

but it does the other thing, it goes up. I suggest that the curve has no pattern whatsoever and there is no relation between the actual price of fish and the quantity on the market. Of course, it may be that the curve merely reflects the variable condition in which the fish arrives at the market, the fact that some days Africans will not buy fish, and at the end of the month they tend to buy more than in the middle of the month, and likewise at the end of the week instead of in the middle of the week.

Curve "C" is the time taken to sell fish and the total quantity available. This was taken over an average of both commercial concerns. Again you would expect to find some relation between the two factors, but again I submit that the curve has no real pattern at all. I have noted at the bottom the average time taken to sell fish at Blantyre and Limbe, given separately for both commercial firms. From these figure it would appear that Limbe is a much better market than Blantyre. We shall see in a few minutes that the prices obtained at Limbe were slightly less than those obtained at Blantyre. On that curve I actually plotted Easter Thursday, when the fish just went like wildfire, but I have not included it in the curve because there was obviously a very special reason for it disappearing so quickly

Curve D shows the total quantities which were put on the markets daily over the period. It is obvious that Blantyre is the most uniform. The surprising thing is the small actual quantity which is made available in the markets. It is obvious from that that most of the sales take place in the depots.

Curve E shows the average price received per day for both firms' supply at both Blantyre and Limbe. Blantyre has received a slightly higher price throughout the period. As I said before, the average quantity of fish on Blantyre market was always less than that on Limbe market. I have actually stated on the curve the average prices which were paid for the fish at these markets. That is, over the period. I also attempted to plot the rate of sale against the price and quantity of fish. I soon realised that it was of no value. The other curves are in themselves so erratic that it was quite impossible to make anything of them. This is entirely due to erratic arrivals and varying conditions of the fish, and it is my impression that the price was only changed when fish were getting in a very bad condition and not because there was a large quantity which required to be sold quickly.

My overall impression of that is that no attempt has been made to estimate the capacity of either Blantyre or Limbe markets and to supply that estimate. Further, no attempt has been made to estimate the capacity of either Blantyre or Limbe markets and to supply that estimate. Further, no attempt has been made to average the price received over a period and to put fish on sale at that price. Of course, it is quite obvious that if an attempt had been made to estimate the capacity of the market and to average a price and to put fish on sale at that price, that would have curtailed the sales at the depot, where, as we found out, by far the largest sales take place and at the highest prices.

I have prepared a statement, which I now hand over as Appendix D, showing the percentages of commercial non-African catches which were marketed in various places observed over a period of 20 days. These are the percentages of the total catch landed on the beach here which were put on the various markets. These, to my mind, are quite remarkable figures. Above the dotted line I have put a percentage which arrived at the depot. Below that I have put my estimate of what happened to the catch. In other words, where I have shown Limbe a certain percentage, that is included in the 27 above. Above the dotted line is not included in the total at the bottom.

You will notice that my totals only amount to about 94 instead of 100. That is the result of slight inaccuracies which must take place in such a survey as we carried out. I think to have arrived at that total is quite remarkable with the means we had to take the survey.

I will give you a brief note of general observation on the African market of fish, that is, the dried fish put on the markets there. In Limbe market there was an average of about 25 sellers per day. The average price received by these sellers was about 6d for a 7 oz. dried chambo. The total quantity of African dried fish available on the market varied between 2 and 3 tons per day. Blantyre had about 30 African sellers and received a slightly higher price. The total quantity of African fish available at times on Blantyre market was as much as 5 tons. I hope it is quite understood that when I am making these estimates they are necessarily quite rough. They are gauged on basketfuls of fish, and a heavy basketful of fish varies from 120 to as much as 400lbs. Cholo market had 23 African sellers on the average, and I am referring to what is known as Conforzi's market. They average slightly over  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton fish available for sale every day. Lilongwe shows about 30 African sellers. I am referring to bicycle sellers and not to Africans who arrive with lorries. There was always up to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons of African dried fish available for sale. These are all the observations I wish to make.

I have omitted to state the quantity of fresh fish which arrived at Cholo over the period. There was a total of 228 dozen arrived from one firm. It arrived in dribs and drabs, mostly by Africans who were buying quantities up to 10 to 15 dozen and selling it at Cholo, and that particular firm did not send any of its own transport out with fresh fish. The other firm did on one occasion send out a lorry load of 200 dozen fish.

It took 3 hours 6 minutes at Limbe on the average to sell 102 dozen fish. The speed of sale of dried fish is exceedingly variable. In Limbe it takes up to 3 weeks for a man to sell 300 lbs of fish, one bicycle seller. In Blantyre it takes about 6 days. In Cholo anything up to a week. In Lilongwe it has taken several people at this time of the year up to 3 weeks to sell a basket of fish.

I think the reason that low quantities sell at a low price, instead of the opposite, is because the small quantities did not reach the market until very late in the day and therefore the condition was bad. But it remains a fact that many Africans in Limbe and Blantyre will wait before they attempt to buy. They are waiting for the price to be lowered. I can amplify that by saying to a large extent I agree with the practice of selling most at the depot when it arrives. From the producer's point of view it gets maximum price. The African middle men fill their baskets at 6/- a dozen and pedal away to Cholo and into the surrounding villages to sell. It is more than likely that, if one of the firms concerned decided to put 50 dozen on Blantyre market as soon as it arrived at the depot at 7 a.m., where it would have sold at the depot at 6d the buyer on the market would wait until the price was reduced to 3d or 4d before buying.

Discriminating buyers who are prepared to pay the maximum price of 6d are exceedingly small in number. I am convinced that a lot of houseboys who are sent to buy fresh fish purposely wait in the market until the price goes down and pocket the difference. When they get back the fish is bad and they get the fish as well as the balance in price. Certainly the only way to combat that sort of thing is to put the fish on the market at the same time each day and for the price to remain at 6d until 8 or 9 o'clock so that people do know what the price is. These figures show that fish is not arriving until 10 o'clock, and often the price goes down within quarter of an hour.

Regarding the length of time taken to sell a basketful of dried fish, I do not think there is any agreement between the sellers as to price: they all sell at very much the same price, and it is only

if there a few left at the end of the day that he will take them home and bring them again next day. He seems to prefer to get the maximum price no matter how long it takes home to get it.

One of the firms has a depot in Limbe, a place where he has an office and a cold room. This is Mr. Yiannakis, and the depot is on the outskirts of Limbe, on the Blantyre road near the soap factory. Dr. Malachias uses a garage near by his office, and the lorry arrives there. I might point out that we have counted as many as 60 boys waiting with baskets and bicycles for the arrival of lorries from 4 o'clock in the morning.

There may be a few fish sold from the depots to householders, but it is almost exclusively sold to bicycle buyers, to a few Africans who come with box bodies, Indians, and a few estates send in their lorries. One day we had 100 dozen removed by one of the tea estates.

At the Cholo (Conforzi's) Market the  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton fish available daily is all dried. There are 23 or 24 sellers there, and they sit there for a week until they have sold their baskets and somebody else turns up with baskets. At 6d a fish the sellers collect about £10 a day between them.

400 lbs. dried fish take approximately 3 weeks to sell in Limbe and Lilongwe, and about a week in Cholo and Blantyre. It does not appear that the absence of fresh fish in Lilongwe, and in Dedza, increases the sale of dried fish.

The firm market "A" is Yiannakis, and that marked "B" is Malachias. It was Malachias Bros. who send the fresh fish to Cholo during the period of my investigations. I have no details of the average price of the fish, nor how long it took to sell it. I understand that this has been done more than once fairly regularly. The lorry stopped to sell at the market before the Boma, then went to Conforzi's market. I have one instance, I believe it was an Indian and an African in box bodes, who took a total of 72 dozen on to Cholo market bought from Mr. Yiannakis, and of that 60 dozen was sold in 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

When the fish arrives at Blantyre market, there may be a few people, no more than 12, who rush to buy, particularly if there is a small quantity. These are the discriminating buyers who are willing to pay 6d. The others wait.

The baskets containing 200 and 400 lbs fish are carried by motor transport.

When the fish is taken from the depots to the markets it is sold there at the same price as it is sold to those who buy at the depots. The Africans who buy from the depots sell at a higher price.

It might be that some of the Africans who wait until the fish is cheaper cannot afford 6d a fish, but there are some Africans who prefer their fish in a slightly "off" condition. You will see people on the Lake shore buy a fresh fish and hang it on a tree for hours before eating it.

Fish that is sold outside the townships mostly fetches a price of 8d, the 2d differential being for the service performed by the bicycle boys.

I have prepared a statement, which I hand in as Appendix E, of the non-African commercial catches in the south east arm of the Lake from 1947 to 1955. The south west arm has only recently begun to produce.

I have also prepared a statement, which I now produce as Appendix F, of the monthly landings by the non-African commercial firms. The average catch was 211 tons per month, with the lowest of 47 tons in August and the highest of 411 in March, which means that the fishing

companies have to cope with the difference in catches varying from 47 to 411 tons. The pattern is the same throughout the years.

As Appendix G I now produce a statement showing the average daily catches in four months of the year, January, April, August and November. The statement shows that there is a considerable variation. January and April approach each other. This statement is representative of past years, too. It does illustrate the extreme difficulty of the fishing concerns in their arranging set quotas for the markets. They do not know from day to day what they are going to catch. They try equally hard all the year round, but sometimes, if they know the roads are bad and the lorries might not get through, they do not get quite so many fish because they know it will be wasted. I do not think, however, that this restriction of fishing is very significant.

With a very few exceptions, all African fishermen are merely subsistence fishermen, that is, fishermen who own a net and throw the net or set it when they require something to eat or when they want to make a few shillings. Once they have obtained that few shillings they do not throw the nets.

The difference between the figures shown for August and September in Appendix F, 47 tons and 77 dozens, and 66 tons and 5,667 dozens respectively, is because the fisheries were catching large barble. The reason I have quoted tilapia is because it is by far the most important part of the catches.

Since 1950 there have been a few Africans who have attempted to set up fisheries on a real business basis. I think I am right in saying that not one is originally a fisherman himself. They are all African business men, some from other parts of the country, and some of them belong to this part of the country and have spent most of their lives in South Africa or Southern Rhodesia and have come back to set up business. Local fishermen are employed. There are no co-operative fishing concerns; every one of these businesses is being run by one man.

I would say that the time for co-operative fishing societies is still 10 years hence; I am speaking of the southern half of the lake. My reasons for saying this is that I have tried to get societies working, but they have failed. In one instance a very go ahead individual attempted to start a co-operative concern in his village, but failed because of trouble with his villagers. He had to pay his labour more than I pay mine. I tried to get two people to work together, but it only lasted 2 or 3 months and one went off with half the nets and the other with the boats. Another instance is where I obtained a loan from the Native Treasury to set up 2 individuals in boat building. They built one boat, and then one man walked away with the tools. I think things will not change unless there is education.

I have made an estimate of catches made by Africans in certain areas. I would like the Commission to understand that I am not very satisfied in my answers regarding this, because it is an exceedingly difficult thing to make an estimate. I would point out that I have records of certain portions of the catches at these various places; usually the figures are necessarily a rough guess. The figures are for the whole of the south east arm, excluding south of the Bar. At the moment I estimate that the Africans, with the exception of one or two commercial Africans themselves, two at least, land 100 tons each. On the Salima Lake shore, stretching from Islands just south of Grand Beach, the African landings there are 100 tons a year. The same figure applies to Domira Bay within the bay, that is, round Chief Makenjere's headquarters. Further north, Chia and Kota Kota, the estimate is 150 tons at the present time. The estimate at the



present time for Lake Malombe is 200 tons, and for Lake Chilwa 300 tons landed on the Nyasaland side of the lake.

There is not the same extent of variation in catches as in the non-African concerns, they are much more spread throughout the year. The reason for that is that the non-African catches are made with the type of equipment which is not available to the Africans, whose fishing is more general. Non-African landings for 3 months July to September are the worst, while for the African fisheries they are the best so far. One of the African fisheries had a far larger catch than in combined February to June, which is the height of the commercial season. There is a partial explanation, I do not know if it is the whole one. This particular fishery used only one kind of net throughout the whole year. The true explanation of why the commercial catches go down is that the chamba disappears during the cold weather and they give up using their ring nets and revert to gill nets in the cold weather, which brings in very small catches. The experience of these African fisheries, and my own experience of netting, shows that gill net catches keep as high in the off season as in the on season. The total quantities are insignificant compared with the commercial catches.

In my experience of both African fisheries and my own fishing (I do a considerable amount of experimental fishing and keep records) I have been able to get an idea of what sort of price must be charged to make it economic. I am absolutely convinced, on the evidence before me, that the African fisherman who has invested any sum of money, a few hundreds of pounds, must receive 5d per fish on the Lake shore. I am talking of chambo, using it as my yard stick.

Regarding the minimum overall average price, this remains fairly uniform throughout the year. The commercial fisheries will not sell at less than 4d, very small ones 2d or 3d. Subsistence fishermen can only obtain 1d, or 1 ½ d at the most, which is not sufficient. It happened that both our African commercial fisheries have got no means of transport and they refuse to sell their fish at local prices, which are at the moment about 1d per fish. If they cannot find buyers they dry it and transport it themselves to market.

I produce as Appendix "H" figures of average prices of African fish at various stations, caught by individual African fish at various stations, caught by individual African fishermen, not commercial fishermen. This list of prices suggests that in actual fact the Lake shore fisherman is not getting an economic price for his fish.

The commercial fishermen sell above the prevailing price to buyers from up country. There buyer do obtain fish sometimes from subsistence fishermen, but they prefer to buy from commercial fishermen as they have to wait sometimes for 3 weeks to fill their baskets from the subsistence fishermen.

My previous remark about the African fisherman's necessity of obtaining 5d a fish is based on information I have been able to gather from them about the cost of their equipment, labour costs, the cost of petrol and the amount of sales they make, the purchase of boats. I regret to say that I have not found any of them making a profit yet. It is easy to assume they do not operate at a loss, but they do. They do not yet know how to keep records of what their expenses are. I doubt if even at 5d a fish they would get 10% profit. Their only answer would be to make some marketing arrangements of their own. The buyers obtain it for 4d and sell in Lilongwe for as much as 1/-: the profit is going into the middleman's pockets, not the fishermen's.

The average fisherman manages to carry on even at the prevailing price because half his time is spent making nets. Once he has sold his catch and has collected 5s or 10s he is perfectly happy.

Putting a certain value on his time, he has lost money but he has turned a great deal of time into a comparatively small amount of cash.

Another point arises. In several instances Native Authorities try to impose price control upon their African fishermen. It is happening at the present time here. I understand the price is now 1d: 10 miles up the Lake shore it is 4d. I have it on very good authority that N.As. have no legal powers to impose prices on the fish but it is generally done by the N.A. just saying, "You will do it". That is the impression I get. It happened 2 years ago when there was a meeting of the District Council. The fishermen were called in and there was a general discussion: they were told by the District Council they must sell their fish at 1d. I was not present at this meeting, and this has been going on for some considerable time. Round the N.A. headquarters the fishermen have been told they must charge 1d for chambo.

The commercial African is in a very difficult position at the moment. This must be mere a matter of opinion, but I feel that if there is ever to be a controlled fishery, when we can estimate production, we must have a fairly large African fishery run on business lines. I believe in Uganda all Africans must land their fish at certain beaches so that their catches can be counted.

The African fishermen still fish by permission of the local chief, no tenure of land or bays, and more than one has asked if Government could license them in the same way as the non-Africans are licensed. They want some security. One example I can give at Chia. The fishermen wanted an economic price, but told they must sell at 1d. They said they could not afford to do it, but the chief said they must do so or he would not allow them to fish from their boats.

I have some figure with me which show that the buyers who go to Yiannakis fisheries wait up to 3 weeks before they fill their baskets. At the moment they pay Mr. Yiannakis 5d a fish and dry them themselves. It might take them 3 weeks more to sell the fish at Lilongwe market. They sell it for up to 1/-, and the large baskets weigh 400 lbs. A boy can carry a basket on the back of his bicycle up to nearly 1 cwt. A large basket contains about 1,000 fish, and 600 fish weigh approximately 220 lbs. Large baskets are carried by lorry to the market. Gros profit on a large basket would be roughly 60%, £20, but net profit is perhaps about £4. The difference is absorbed by wages, transport, etc.

I quote the example of an individual who bought 32 dozen fish for £3.4s. from Africans on the Lake shore. His transport to Chiradzulu cost him £1, and his own bus far £1.6s. return. He sold the fish at 4d each. His expenses were £5 10s. and he received £6 8s. He thought he was making a good profit, forgetting that it took him 4-6 weeks to sell the fish.

The price of commercial fish has definitely gone up during recent years. It used to be 4d to 6d, and now the commercial fisheries charge 6d, the same as Blantyre and Limbe. The price of the African caught fish has gone up very little if it is anywhere near a Native Authority. Prices of other commodities have gone up by about twice as much. In my own area the price of fish is 4d, it used to be 2d.

I cannot give a correct answer regarding how much of the Lake shore is at the 1d level and how much at the free trade level. All my records are essentially from Native Authorities, and from my experience the further you get away from them the higher the prices.

Dried fish lasts 1 ½ to 2 months. It takes 4-5 days to dry. Many Africans cure the fish better than the commercial fisheries because they give each fish individual attention and it lasts longer.

As a general principle I would agree that the more mechanical equipment a firm has the more fish it should produce and therefore the price should be cheaper. With regard to the economics of the subsistence fisherman who sells for 1d because his N.A. says he must, I should say that there are no economics at all about spending half the year making nets and only throwing the net about half-a-dozen times in a season. I have only studied the commercial fisheries, and I still say that to make a profit they ought to get 5d a fish.

Fred Sinclair, duly sworn, stated:

I am Fred Sinclair, and I own Sinclair Bros. I use gill nets, about 1,000 yds. I pay £14.7.6 per 100 yds for the nets.

I have 3 sheds, for which I paid £70 altogether. One I use as an office, one is for drying fish in and the other is where I repair my nets.

I have 2 boats, which cost £80 for the two. The engines cost £143 altogether. There are no more capital expenses.

From January to May the maximum payments for labour, posho, etc. amount to £36. The 1,000 yds. of net last for that length of time. The income for these 5 months shows £394.

I charged 4s a dozen for fish, sometimes 3s a dozen, for chambo. It is difficult to sell bigger fish, as it goes bad more quickly. When I do sell the bigger fish I get 1/6, 1s, 9d, according to size.

I cannot give you the figure for May to December, as I was away and did not get back in time to look through the books.

Mr. Yiannakis using ring nets does not get as many fish in the cold weather as I do. I use gill nets and go everywhere with them. The people who gather at Mr. Yiannakis' come to me when he has not got the fish but do not buy from me when he had plenty.

I sell at the beach, but do not sell so much there from December to March, because this is the time when people are looking after their gardens. Then I go to market, and I get more money from the fish sold in the market. The cost from January to May of taking fish to market was £194, which includes everything, and the £26 includes wages to everybody. I take the fish dried to market, as it is difficult to transport fresh fish. I use a box body, and take 4 or 5 baskets, about 500 lbs. on an average at a time.

To avoid delay and waste of my time I do not sell to bicycle boys. I sell at a low price, 6d to 8d, where other vendor charge 10d and 1/-, so that I only take 2 to 3 days, at Limbe or Lilongwe. I sell larger fish at same price. In Blantyre there is a price control, but I never heard of one here.

I have only been in business 2 ½ years, so I can't say how much the price of fish has changed during the past 5 or 6 years.

I did not make very much profit last year.

I do not hold a lease on the land where my buildings are, they are there by permission of the native authority.

To get permission to fish from the beach, first of all I asked the N.A. who said to go and find out the place. I did so and reported that I had seen the place. I did not know anything more of

the fish, so I saw the Fisheries Officer and he gave me my instructions. I do not pay any rent for the beach, and no one else is allowed to fish from it.

There is no profit in taking the fish to Blantyre, Limbe and Lilongwe. It took me a long time to find this out. Perhaps I ought to say that there is a profit, but very little. I will still take my fish to market, because I have plenty from January to May and there is nowhere to sell. Permission is not given to export. I bought the box body specially for fish, and when I have customers at the beach I leave it idle. It is only used for transporting fish.

When I take the fish to Blantyre I sell it quickly. If I go at the month end I do not stay long. If I go in the middle of the month, when people have nothing in their pockets, I have to wait.

Glab Khan, being duly sworn, stated:

I am Glab Khan, and I am a fisherman fishing in the Lake here, including Lake Malombe.

In 1953 I started catching fish, using shore seine and gill nets. In 1954 I was not catching much fish, so I decided to buy a ring net, for which I paid £500. I had 3 boats, coasting £90 altogether, and 3 engines, which cost altogether £235. It cost about £20 for the buildings I put up.

I sold fish at the beach, chambo and nchila. For chambo I charged the villagers 1d, but if one was taking them for business I charged 4d. I got 4d all the year round. But when I changed my business to Lake Malombe I only got 1d for them.

I cannot produce figures of what my expenses were, as I have given up the work. I was getting no profit from it. One reason was that the £500 net only lasted 3 months, and I had to buy another one. I went to Malombe in the hope that I would get plenty fish, but that was not the case. Selling at 1d I could not cover my expenses. I would not go back to fishing on my own without a capital of £80,000.

In 1936 local Africans were catching fish by their fish baskets and sometimes with other type of nets, and they were catching a lot of fish. That was before Mr. Yiannakis started fishing. When the Africans were catching such quantities Mr. Yiannakis used to buy from them. Then he also tried to do the same as the Africans by using the same type of net, made of local fibre. He caught a lot of fish. In 1945 the Africans were not catching so many fish. Mr. Yiannakis could cast his nets in the middle of the Lake, which they could not do. He also has lorries which take his fish out from the district, which we have not. That is why I say I would need £80,000.

The cost of the nets was one of the chief reasons why my business failed.

I am employed by Mr. Nielsen at present.

It happened that when I killed 100 dozen fish there used to be only about 30 dozen sold because many people did not come to buy. I used to dry what I could not sell. The beach was 5 miles beyond Mr. Yiannakis' place. When I could not sell the fish at Malombe it was because I had caught fish that were not good.

Perhaps one of the reasons that I did not sell fish here was because of the lorries got to Mr. Yiannakis first and would not come on to me.

I could not sell at 4d to my local villagers because I have received an order from N.A. Mphona to sell at 1d.

The meeting adjourned at 3.45 p.m.

The meeting reassembled at 9 a.m. on 9<sup>th</sup> June.

Amos Charles, being duly sworn, stated:

I am not at the moment a practising fisherman, but I am very pleased that I have been called on this Commission. For a long time I have been a fisherman. I started at Kota Kota, when I have been with a European in the Fisheries Department in May, 1950, when Mr. Donald was Fisheries Officer at Kota Kota. It is true that it is a good work, but I have to give different points of the Lake.

Firstly, I will have to point out different times for catching fish. I will start with the first point. October to December plenty of fish are caught and we make good business. As far as I know in my business as a fisherman all good price, in which case the buyer or fisherman is happy with the prices. From January to March fish are obtained in even more plentiful quantities. At this time it is difficult to look after the properly because there is much rain. Fish cannot be dried properly. If a fisherman has a truck or lorry he is able to take fish to the market, where he can ask any price he chooses. At that time the price is very low on the beach. I have noticed fishermen can sell at 3 different prices, 1d, 2d and 3d. If the fisherman wished to raise his price it would be difficult for him to get customers because fish is plentiful and people are not willing to pay much money. For that reason a clever fisherman would sell his fish cheaper in order not to let his fish go bad.

From April to June very difficult to catch fish. Only a few fish are caught by gill nets and prices are good, 4d, 5d, 6d for each fish. Average price is 4d. July to September fish is plentiful on every beach and different kinds are obtained. It is a very pleasant time for a fisherman because fish is plentiful and customers are plentiful at this time.

I noticed in my fishing business fish can be caught plentifully at each time of casting the net, sometimes 200 to 400 dozen each time. With a catch like that a fisherman selling only at 1d or 2d each fish will not sell at a loss.

The time of catching plenty fish is a short time, and people are accustomed to eating fish as a relish, there being no cattle here to use as relish, and so for a large part of the year fish is scarce. Sometimes there is a rumour that plenty of fish has been caught in a certain area, but when you go there not one to be seen on the market. There is very little fish sold on the market here. The fish are not enough for the people.

One day in February I myself caught 400 dozen at each casting. My biggest catch during July to September was 50 to 100 dozen, and the same in October. I was using shore seine nets, and fishing at Kota Kota and Malombe. I got better prices at Kota Kota than at Malombe.

I was planning to start fishing again when I got good capital. I was in business on my own before, and I used canoes and nets. I still have the nets, and I stopped working because I had not enough money to carry on with the business. I hope to start again shortly, but I cannot tell when.

At the moment I am a building contractor, and when I get enough capital to start fishing again I might keep on both businesses. I think I shall need £500 - £600 to start again my fishing. Of that I intend to use a quarter for nets, a quarter for a boat and engine, a quarter for expenses for working capital and a quarter for reserve. I think I shall make a profit if I continue to sell at the prices which I sold at when I was fishing before.

I have had thoughts about buying my own lorry for transporting fish, but nothing definite has been settled.

I confirm that the prices I shall sell at will be 1d and 2d from January to March and 3d and 4d for the rest of the year.

I do not know whether I shall fish in Lake Malombe. When I fished there before I was not told by the chief that I could charge so much for each fish, and I never heard of any control. I have heard a rumour that on various beaches there is a controlled price. I could not fish from beaches where the controlled price was 1d.

When I want permission to fish from a certain beach I ask the village headman, not the N.A. I have never been stopped from fishing from a beach where I have been given permission to fish. If I was stopped from fishing there I would go somewhere else. I don not pay rent for the use of the beach.

When I was fishing before I had about 20 workers. If I start again the number I employ will depend on how much money I have.

Before I was in the fishing business I worked in Tanganyika, Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia.

Crispo Gwedela, being duly sworn, stated:

I am a fisherman, and at present I am using a canoe instead of a boat, and I have got 900 yds. of Nylon net. I have 1 shed only for the drying of the nets and keeping the nets clean. They must be dried in the shed.

The following is a list of my equipment and the cost of it:

	£	s.	d.
Nets	126	-	-
Mounting twine and ropes	21	-	-
Floats	18	-	-
Canoe	16	10	-
Building	4	15	-
	<u>186</u>	5	-

From September, 1955 to May 1956 the sales and expenditure figures are:

	Sales			Expenditure		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
September	51	15	6	18	14	6
October	68	9	-	27	14	6
November	57	16	9	31	-	7

December	22	14	1	12	7	6
February	9	11	5	4	13	-
April	36	16	2	23	10	-
May	53	7	2	22	3	2
	<u>300</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>140</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
				Balanc	16	6
				e		10
					<u>300</u>	<u>10</u>
						<u>1</u>

In January I had difficulties due to my transport a second hand lorry, which had overturned at Liwonde. I had to struggle for a month to get it fixed up and I did not operate in January; any expenditure there was I used my own money for it. In February I only worked 3 days, and in March there was another accident. I was in Blantyre for 21 days. Being alone in my business I got no fish for that month. I have not counted the damage to my lorry in the expenditure, but the money for that was put away safely and did not come from fishing. I have no other business, only fishing.

I bought the lorry so that, when I had plenty of fish and no customers at the beach, I could dry the fish and send it to market. The lorry went to Blantyre for registration and on the way back the driver overturned it at Liwonde. I have only started using the lorry this week, and it is not yet back from Lilongwe, so I do not know how well my fish are selling there. The profit I have quoted was obtained from selling fresh fish on the beach.

I used to be a fisherman here some years ago. In 1950 I was in South Africa and was operated on, then sent back to Nyasaland for 12 months. I decided to buy a net to supply my family with relish. I paid £23 for the twine and made it myself, taking 3 months. After using it I found that I was catching fish in good quantity. The villagers wanted to buy from me at a low price, but I could not do it. I went to the Railway people at Monkey Bay and they allowed me to supply fish for 6 months, a maximum of 400 fish per week. During this time I had trouble with my labour. 4 times they stole fish from me and sold it zig-zag fashion. I employed natives and these people did try to pull my neck stealing this and that. I decided in future I was not going to employ any neighbours otherwise the same would happen. I had ordered a new net from Dr. Sanderson when I got a letter from South Africa calling me back for another operation.

Then I decided to settle here. In 1954 I applied to Government for a loan of £500, and I heard nothing for 6 months, when I was told that it was difficult here to get the loan of such amount from the Native Treasury since our area here is not in the position of having such an amount. I struggled for nearly 6 months, then I heard that they could give me £25 only. This was not enough, so with the £200 capital I had I spent £186, and still I am having difficulty because the business still seemed to be low, because I have no more money to improve my business.

If I had more money I could buy 2,000 yds. of nylon nets, a big building for the curing of fish, a big shed for drying nets, a boat, an engine, good labourers, and so on. With £200 I can do nothing; £500 would be needed to start a business like I want to.

The nylon nets have lasted very well. I have used them from September up to date, and shall need new ones in about 3 months.

The occasions when I get too much fish for selling at the beach do not occur frequently, but only during the rainy season when we do not have buyers because of the bad roads and so on.

That was why I bought the truck, so that I could dry the fish and send it to market. When it is not carrying fish the truck could be used to carry maize to Blantyre. I can make a bit of money on other business with the truck.

I am fishing at Ulande Village on the way to Monkey Bay, 23 miles from here. There was a meeting, for which I was unfortunately not called, and it was decided that fish should only be charged 1d. I did not take that law for selling my fish at such a low price. The villagers buy from me, but I charge them 4d. There is no trouble, because the other people who fish do not catch enough for all the villagers, and the villagers are willing to pay my price in order to obtain fish.

It is at my own village I am fishing, so I did not need to ask permission. Sometimes I go to a village nearby and then I get permission from the Fisheries Officer to fish. I do not ask the village headman or the N.A. When I want to use a seine net I go to the chief near the beach as a matter of courtesy and say that I want to fish.

The driver of the lorry when it had its first accident was my partner. We agreed in South African that we would buy a lorry and collected the money for one. The accident was not his fault, as the roads were bad. He was driving slowly, or the accident would have been a worse one. The accident on the second occasion was due to the assistant not putting in enough oil.

I sell my fish to bicycle boys. I use my own kitchen for drying the fish.

Robert Jana, Head Clerk, District Commissioner's Office, being duly sworn, stated:

I live in Fort Johnston and I buy fish. I have a wife and 6 children. I have difficulty in buying fish as there is none in the local market. I have to go to the beaches to buy. Even there it is difficult, because there are many lorries and the fishermen prefer to sell to these drivers they get more money for the fish. I pay 1d for chambo.

I eat dried fish, but I prefer fresh fish. I can get dried fish from the market, but I have to pay 4d. There is no control on the price of dried fish.

If fish is brought from the beach the price is 3d in the market. Chief Mphonda gave orders that fish sold on the beach is to be 1d, and 3d in the market is the price fixed by the sellers themselves. Most people send to the beach.

I buy fish once a week, and I go to Mtundu beach to buy it. My wife goes often to market, myself not at all, but she finds no fish. I would like to eat fish daily if I could get it, because of no vegetables. I would like to get 6 fish daily.

There are different kinds of fish. Those Mr. Yiannakis catches are from the middle of the Lake and are bigger.

If the fish were 1d, I could afford to buy 6 daily, but if they were 2d I would only buy perhaps 4. Other inhabitants of Fort Johnston who are not paid as much as I am would be more affected and would not be able to buy.

I agree that if there was a clever African here who bought fish at 1d from the beaches he could sell on the market for 3d, but I think the reason that there is no one like that is because the fisherman prefer to sell to the lorry drivers. They know the local people will only pay 1d because



of the order from the chief, so they sell as much as they can to the drivers and the remainder to the local people.

I like control of the price, and my own feeling is that I would rather have control and no fish than plenty fish and no control.

If I had no relish and my wife could get no fish, and I saw a man from Yiannakis with fish at 6d, I would buy one.

The meeting closed at 10.30 a.m., and a visit was made to Mr. Yiannakis' wharf. Mr. Yiannakis was not at home, but Mrs. Yiannakis gave the Commission permission to inspect the buildings, etc.

The Commission saw nchila which had just been landed; fish drying on the racks in the open air, the barn where dried fish was being smoked; the shed where salted fish was stored. They paid a visit to the village next to the wharf where Africans who had bought fish from Mr. Yiannakis were preparing it for drying and smoking

It was decided to hold the next meeting at Blantyre on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> July in the Chiefs' Council Chamber.