**FO 371/1201 47209**

**Casement to Spicer**

**2 June 1911**

[stamped:] 3 JUNE 1911

Private

The Savoy

Denham, Bucks,

2 June 1911.

Dear Spicer,

I attended the Board meeting y’day and have read today from the Chairman, Mr. Gielgud, the enclosed synopsis of the result arrived at.

They seem to me to be all at sea – and the Chairman actually began by stating it was a meeting of the Board called to hear “proposals of reform to be laid before them by Mr. Casement.” I objected to this – I pointed out that it was a meeting of the Board of that Company called to discuss their business and themselves to propound such changes of management etc. as were possible; that I had not even seen their Commissioners' reports and I had no intention of stating my views fully without first hearing theirs – and also I wished the proceedings to be recorded in shorthand. They sent out for a typist & she came in when the meeting was nearly over – and you will judge of her capacity from the fact that she describes me as His “Botanical” Majesty's Consul. June may be the month of flowers and this is the coronation year too, but that is a novel description of the King's title that I make you a present of.

I don't think they know what to do or have any ability to carry out a scheme of reform. They are in the hands of Julio C. Arana and his infernal gang of robber cousins and brothers in law out there.

The obvious things to do are first to cancel Pablo Zumaeta's power of attorney and reduce Julio C. Arana to impotency – and then initial steps of reform. I fancy (I may be wrong) will break up the Company.

They have no money. No means to carry on. They have allowed the Zumaeta – Arana gang to rob them right and left in the past – and if they now stop this system they will stop the Company – which indeed from the first has been a fiction so far as any management or control from London was exercised – save just what suited Julio C. Arana to permit.

By the way I got a long letter from that gentleman yesterday morning just before attending the meeting – here it is. You might please return it to me.

A good deal of the conversation yesterday turned on this gentleman – naturally. He had his champion in one of the Directors, a young man named ?? McQuibble who sought to defend him and to protect his innocence and ignorance. I pointed out that no serious reform was possible with him on the Board – and all the Directors felt this and expressed it plainly – save McQuillan, who, however admitted that Arana had been at least “grossly negligent”.

I left them in no doubt as to my view of Arana's culpability since this is the vital step to begin with. If they can't fight Arana here in London and make themselves masters in their own house it is idle to talk of “reforms” on the Putumayo.

I do not think I shall answer Arana's letter at all. Perhaps I should acknowledge its receipt and say that my report so adequately expresses my view of the condition of things on the Putumayo I feel it unnecessary to discuss its bearings – or something brief like that. He will have heard from McQuibben doubtless that I am in no doubt, personally, of his past knowledge of the true state of things.

There was some talk yesterday of the Board meeting again on 16th – but nothing definite was fixed on – when I left at 1:30 after over two hours talking – All the Commissioners were there – including Colonel Bertie, to whose action it was really due that they met so soon. He urged Lister Kaye & the Board the previous day to lose no time and very rightly.

The results are that the Board are moving in the right direction, and if they can succeed in nullifying the Arana influence and then holding together and sending out some decent men to assist Tizon, they can radically change things.

I don't think they will succeed – not for a moment – and over and beyond all is the clear fact to my mind that slavery is an institution in Peru – Every Peruvian from the ?? down is a slaver by blood and instinct when it comes to dealing with a weak, poor man – one weaker than himself. If that man has a brown skin his enslavement is surer still. There is no government or administration as civilized men understand that word. Those “republics” are simply pirate camps. They were founded by pirates – and the pirate gangs rule today just as in the time of Cortez and Pizarro.

 The more I look into it the more overwhelming the evidence is – and Europeans have no business to enter into partnership with these pirates and to profit from their method. The Peruvian Amazon Company as a reformed and sincere institution will not be allowed to go on for six months – that is my opinion. The Pirates will break it up as soon as they see there is no profit to them, and a clear intention to impeach their time honoured methods.

Yours

Roger Casement.