**Lord Salisbury to Casement**

**TNA FO 491/96**

FO STATIONERY

MR. CASEMENT. NO. 16

13 June 1901

 The Law Officer's Report on Messrs. Holt and Co’s case. If I rightly understand it, casts doubt on the right of the French Government to grant to private corporations any land within the Free Trade zone of the Berlin Act in such a manner as to deprive the natives from collecting the produce of the land and selling it to whomsoever they please. The Congo Govt have gone further and prohibit the native from selling without the permission of the Government timber the produce of the land acknowledged to belong to the native.

 I think that the action of the Congo Government would be justified if it was done to prevent such a denudation of land as would injure not only native in question, but the climate of all the surrounding region "Salus populi" will cover much.

 But if permission is very generally refused and is in fact worked so as to force traders to buy all the timber they want from the Government, I certainly think that the arrangement is an infraction of the free trade provision of the act and also an infraction of the provision against monopolies.

 But I do not suppose we can usefully do anything until a concrete case is brought before us by some trader.

 ? Copy to Brussels and Berlin for information only.

H.F. July 20

Lord Salisbury.