

CONFIDENTIAL

C.S.

1936

No. C/32/36.

S. of S. Conf. despatch

SUBJECT.

1936.
17th October.

BOYCOTT DECLARED BY NORWEGIAN TRADE UNIONS
AGAINST BRITISH WHALING COMPANIES.

Previous Paper.

MINUTES.

1-8

S. of S. Confidential despatch of 17/10/36.

Y.E.

Submitted. Restriction of
whaling operations during the
present season has been carried
out.

mch
cd
14. XII. 36.

Attttll 22/11

✓ P. A. men

9-10

S. of S. Confidential despatch of 28/2/36.

Subsequent Paper.

Pr.

Submitted.

mcH

27. 1. 27

~~mcH~~ 27/1/27

8

FALKLAND ISLANDS.

CONFIDENTIAL.



Downing Street.

17 October, 1936.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No.180 of the 18th September and my despatch No.184 of the 2nd October, concerning a boycott declared by Norwegian trade unions against British whaling companies, I have the honour to transmit to you copies of a despatch from His Majesty's Representative at Oslo, and of the reply returned thereto:

2. Copies of a note dated 23rd September from the Norwegian Minister in London, and of a despatch dated 24th September to His Majesty's Representative at Oslo are also enclosed.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

(Signed) W. ORMSBY GORE.

Recd 108
109-171
W.P.D/19/32
No. 358 -
29.8.36.
No. 298 -
10.9.36.
No. 200 -
23.9.36.
No. 315 -
24.9.36.

GOVERNOR

H. ARMITAGE-HEATON, ESQ., C.M.G.,

etc., etc., etc.

Copy.

No.200/1936.

ROYAL NORWEGIAN LEGATION,

(W 12024/78/50)

London.

23rd September, 1936.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of and to thank you for your note of the 22nd instant, No. W 11383/78/50, the contents of which I have not failed at once to bring to the knowledge of my Government.

I have been instructed to inform you to the effect that the Norwegian Government, as stated in my note of the 12th instant, No. 191/36, do not wish to interpose obstacles to the arrangements proposed by the British Government in your note of the 9th instant, No. W 10702/78/50. The Norwegian Government have noted with satisfaction that the British Government will take the necessary measures in order to ensure that the arrangements agreed upon shall be carried out.

The Norwegian Government have no objection to these arrangements being regarded as being in force as from to-day.

The Norwegian Government are aware of the fact that certain expeditions, also British ones, are at present operating south of Equator. It has not been the intention of the Norwegian Government to exclude these expeditions from a possible participation in the Antarctic whaling during the coming season, and they take it that the British Government share this view.

In so far as the proposal to exclude expeditions whaling in the Antarctic from participating in the catching of baleen whales north of Equator is concerned, the

Norwegian

The Right Honourable

Anthony Eden, M.C., M.P.,

etc., etc., etc.

(6)

Norwegian Government, in particular when bearing in mind the future prospects of whaling, would like to say that they have considered it as an important principle that all the expeditions participating in the Antarctic whaling shall abstain from any whaling in other regions during the remaining part of the year (please see M. Berg's note of September 1st, 1936, No.181/36). The Norwegian Government consider this principle as an important measure for the protection of the stock of whales as a whole, as they are of opinion that the stock of whales north of Equator is even more in need of protection than the stock of whales south of Equator. The Norwegian Government will express the hope that the British Government may be able to adhere to this view.

I have, etc.

(Sgd.) Erik Colban.

Copy.

No.318.

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

(W 12024/78/50)

24th September, 1936.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No.316 of the 24th September, and to previous correspondence on the question of whaling, I transmit to you herewith a copy of a further note on the subject from the Norwegian Minister in London, communicated on the 23rd September, from which date, as will be seen from the terms of the note, the Agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Norwegian Government for the restriction of whaling in the Antarctic during the coming season is regarded as having entered into force.

2. The Minister was informed, when he handed in the note, that His Majesty's Government agreed with the view expressed in the fourth paragraph thereof. As regards the last paragraph, however, it was still not understood why the Norwegian Government should wish to exclude expeditions proceeding to the Antarctic, but not others, from whaling north of the Equator.

3. On this point M. Colban explained confidentially that his Government were looking to the future, when German and Japanese expeditions would be regularly operating in the Antarctic, and wished His Majesty's Government to help them in establishing a principle which would keep within bounds the operations of such expeditions, particularly those

C. F. J. Dormer, Esq., M.V.O.,
etc., etc., etc.,
Oslo.

those from Japan, where the necessity for restrictions was less likely to be appreciated than in Germany. When asked why this could not be effected by a total prohibition of the catch of whales north of the Equator, he was understood to reply that it should be easier to persuade the Japanese interests to agree to a partial, than to a total prohibition, and that a partial prohibition would be sufficient, in their case since they were not likely to build ships exclusively for whaling outside the Antarctic regions.

4. The Minister was finally informed that a further note on the point would be addressed to him in due course, after the position had been investigated in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

I am, etc.

(For the Secretary of State)

(Sgd.) LAURENCE COLLIER.

SCANDINAVIA AND BALTIC STATES.

September 7, 1936.

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1.

[W 10680/78/50]

Copy No.

113

Mr. Dormer to Mr. Eden.—(Received September 7.)

(No. 358.)

Sir,

Oslo, August 29, 1936.

IN my recent telegrams I have had the honour to report briefly the various developments arising out of the Norwegian unions' blockade of the British whaling vessels at Sandefjord, and it may be convenient if I now summarise the events in the order in which they occurred.

2. As you pointed out in your telegram No. 33 of the 18th instant, whilst His Majesty's Government were awaiting the reply of the Norwegian Government to their proposals concerning the regulation of whaling during the coming season, the three Norwegian unions anticipated that reply by dictating terms to the British companies and threatening a boycott and blockade unless their terms were accepted. In accordance with my instructions I asked the Norwegian Government whether, as had been stated, the attitude of the unions had their support, and, in particular, whether it was their intention to enforce it by legal regulations against Norwegian subjects wishing to engage in service on British ships or in connexion with British companies. I pointed out, *inter alia*, that should the threatened blockade become effective, and, *a fortiori*, receive the support of the Norwegian Government, His Majesty's Government, by every means in their power, would facilitate the substitution of British for Norwegian personnel. To this note the Norwegian Government replied on the 21st instant that they had "no previous knowledge" of the union's ultimatum and no intention at present of applying the law referred to.

3. On the 19th instant, as reported in my telegram No. 47, Mr. A. C. Olsen, agent for the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company at Sandefjord (and British vice-consul) informed the Legation by telephone that owing to the presence of pickets posted by the unions around the vessels he was having difficulty in obtaining and loading provisions and stores and transferring fuel oil to the catchers and factories. I called on the Secretary-General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in the absence of M. Koht, and handed him a *note verbale* requesting the necessary protection, and I informed him that the agent had told me that crews were being sent out from England in order to take the vessels away.

4. On the 21st instant the Ministry replied, as reported in my telegram No. 52 and despatch No. 351, that the authorities had made enquiries, but had no information of any difficulties such as I had described and asked for specific instances. The note also stated that care would be taken to maintain Norwegian law and justice for all British floating factories in Norway.

5. On the morning of the 25th I received a visit from Mr. Humphreys, representing Messrs. Unilevers, who had just arrived from England, and who informed me, as reported in my telegram No. 55, that 120 British seamen would be arriving the following day at Bergen and would proceed overland to Sandefjord to join the company's vessels there. In addition, eighteen men, who were arriving by the Fred. Olsen line in Oslo, would also proceed there. He requested me to ask the Norwegian Government for an assurance of protection. I called at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and informed M. Aubert, who undertook to inform the Minister of Justice, M. Lie, and added that I could rest assured that the necessary protection would be afforded in accordance with the statement contained in the Norwegian Government's note of the 21st August.

6. There was clearly need of protection, because the excitement prevailing at Sandefjord was likely to be increased once it became known that the vessels were to be removed from Norwegian waters, and that the Norwegian unions were urging the unions in England to support their blockade. There was an obvious possibility of trouble when the British seamen arrived to remove the vessels unless effective protection was given them. M. Aubert himself admitted the possibility of trouble.

[818 g-1]

7. That afternoon, the 25th, Mr. Humphreys arrived in Sandefjord and telephoned to me in the evening that the crowd was at a high pitch of excitement; that work in connexion with the vessels was made impossible; that the men working on them were alarmed for their own safety; and that there was no adequate police force available on the spot. He therefore renewed his appeal. I immediately informed the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the state of affairs, as reported to me. Early the next morning Mr. Humphreys telephoned that during the night numbers of the blockade men had gone out to the vessels in motor boats, swarmed on board and let down one of the anchors which had been raised, thus preventing the vessel from moving. They had also locked the engine room and thrown the key overboard. These acts amounted to definite obstruction. I communicated at once by telephone with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and as a result was later informed that the Ministry of Justice was sending thirty State police to Sandefjord, who should arrive that morning. For this information, as reported in my telegram No. 56. I expressed my thanks, but added that what I was asking for was that whatever protection was furnished should be adequate, and that it was for the authorities to decide whether the thirty State police would suffice for the purpose. That was a point which I must leave to them.

8. To complicate matters still further the efforts of the Norwegian unions to win over the English ones, efforts which were carried out in England and on the boat bringing the British crews out, were reported to have been successful, and Mr. Humphreys telephoned to me that the "International Seamen's Union" [*sic*] had informed the Norwegian unions that they were supporting them in their action to prevent the sailing of the company's vessels. Mr. Humphreys feared troubled at Bergen, so I again telephoned to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and intimated in a friendly but definite manner that I was sure that my Government would take a very serious view if further unjustified obstruction occurred to prevent the sailing of the vessels. In reply I was informed later that the necessary instructions had been sent to Bergen and that the Minister of Justice had told the unions at Sandefjord that they must allow the crews to join their vessels without making trouble.

9. The agents of Messrs. Unilever decided that the safest way of bringing the 120 men arriving at Bergen to Sandefjord was that they should come by train to Hønefoss and thence proceed by motor coaches, either direct to Sandefjord, or to some small port where they could be fetched by boat; and they asked for protection both at Hønefoss and on the road. In the normal course one might have expected that the arrangements for getting them to Sandefjord and on to the ships should have been taken in consultation between the agents and the police; but this was not feasible, partly because the State police cannot be utilised without direct orders from the Ministry of Justice.

10. When the 120 (or 110) men arrived at Hønefoss, they were met by representatives of the Norwegian unions, who, on the strength of assurances of support from the British unions, urged them to come over to their side. What exactly happened then I do not yet know, but at 8 p.m. that evening the agent at Sandefjord telephoned that the motor coaches, after leaving Hønefoss, had been held up by Norwegian union men at a village; that seventy-four or so of the crew had gone off with the Norwegian unionists to Oslo and intended to return to England, while about fifty (the number was given later as thirty-five) who were willing to join the vessels at Sandefjord were left stranded and in urgent need of protection. Had the Minister of Justice sent police to escort the men from Hønefoss as I requested, the incident would probably not have happened, but not only did he not send them, but he actually told the chief of police at Hønefoss that no trouble was likely and that he could have the day off. It seems not unlikely that he hoped that the whole of the men sent out from England would refuse to handle the vessels. I cannot also help feeling that my requests for protection, though made in a friendly manner, met with a somewhat grudging response. The last thing that the company's agents can have wanted was a show of protection, unless they really considered it necessary. As I pointed out, the question at issue was that British crews were being prevented from joining British ships and that the free movement of British ships in Norwegian ports was being obstructed.

11. The fifty stranded men spent the night as best they could at a village called Sollihøgda, and after my informing the Ministry for Foreign Affairs by

telephone of the position, a body of State police were sent out there and the next day escorted them to the ships at Sandefjord.

12. As regards the sixteen men sent out by the Fred. Olsen steamer direct to Oslo, eight or ten appear to have gone over to the side of the Norwegian unions, whilst the remainder, including officers, were stopped by the crowd at Sandefjord and for some time during the night were lost sight of. With the help of Mr. Consul Vorley and of the British vice-consul at Drammen, efforts were made to trace them. They finally met some State police, who offered to escort them back to Sandefjord and who ultimately contrived to get them through to the vessels in the early hours of the morning.

13. There were a few other minor difficulties, but it is unnecessary to recount them.

14. By the 27th enough men had got on to the ships to enable one floating factory and four catchers to leave during the day, being towed by tugs sent out from Holland and Germany. The other floating factory and four other catchers left yesterday, and the remaining four catchers are to follow when fresh tugs from Germany arrive.

15. The State police seem to have performed admirable service, as apparently they always do, and after the hold-up near Hønefoss, the Minister of Justice took prompt action, with the result that there was no further trouble. I must admit that he was in a difficult position, because he had, so to speak, to take action which was likely to be misinterpreted as taking sides against the unions. That the latter were in the wrong in obstructing the free movement of British shipping and access of British crews to their vessels was recognised by some of the Norwegian whaling men themselves, as a conversation between them which was overheard showed.

16. Great praise is due to the British vice-consul at Sandefjord, Mr. Olsen, who, as a Sandefjord man and with his private interests centred there, was placed in an unenviable position.

17. The situation is now restored and no further action on my part is likely to be needed. The burning question at the moment is how to reach a settlement of the various restriction proposals in time for the whaling season.

18. Since the above was written, I have received a despatch, copies of which I have the honour to enclose, from His Majesty's consul at Oslo, with regard to the incident at Hønefoss, showing how the attitude of the British unions was misrepresented to the British crews by the Norwegian union men.⁽¹⁾

I have, &c.

CECIL DORMER.

⁽¹⁾ Not printed.

SCANDINAVIA AND BALTIC STATES.

September 10, 1936.

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1.

[W 10680/78/50]

Copy No. 113

Mr. Eden to Mr. Dormer (Oslo).

(No. 298.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, September 10, 1936.

I HAVE read with much interest your despatch No. 358 of the 29th August last recording the events resulting from the boycott declared by Norwegian trade unions against British whaling companies.

2. I have already expressed to you, in my telegram No. 42 of the 28th August last, my appreciation of your efforts to obtain adequate protection for the British seamen involved in this dispute; and I now request you to convey a similar expression of my appreciation to the consular officers concerned, who, as you report, appear to have acted with commendable judgment and energy.

3. The representatives of Unilevers have also expressed their gratitude for your assistance in this matter.

I am, &c.

ANTHONY EDEN.

[818 k—1]

SCANDINAVIA AND BALTIC STATES.

October 6, 1936.

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 3.

[W 13058/78/50]

Copy No. 109

Memorandum on the Whaling Dispute with Norway.

THE following memorandum is intended to summarise the main features of this dispute in so far as they are not recorded in the despatches on the subject which have been printed.⁽¹⁾

2. Restrictions on the number of whales to be killed in the Antarctic have been in force for some years, with a view to the preservation of the stock of whales. Last year the restrictions took the form of a "close season" for all but three and a half months of the year for the capture of whales south of 40° south latitude, together with a voluntary agreement between the whaling companies to limit their production of whale oil to stated figures. This year there were various conversations between representatives of the British and Norwegian whaling companies, sometimes attended also by representatives of the two Governments, with a view to agreement on restrictions for the 1936-37 season. The British companies could not accept the restriction schemes put forward by some Norwegian interests; and on the 3rd July His Majesty's Minister at Oslo was instructed to inform the Norwegian Government that no voluntary agreement on quotas appeared feasible, and to suggest that the whaling season south of the equator, and not only south of 40° south, should be restricted to three months. The Norwegian Government replied that they would accept a three months' season, but that this would not in itself provide enough limitation: they therefore proposed that no whaling factory ship should produce more than 90,000 barrels of whale oil in the coming season. The British companies would not accept this: but they modified their previous attitude to the extent of agreeing to a restriction scheme whereby they should produce 900,000 barrels of whale oil and the Norwegian companies 1,499,000 barrels, the allotment of quotas to individual companies being settled by the two groups independently.

3. At this stage it may be useful briefly to review the various interests involved in this question and to suggest the motives which prompted the action taken by either side. British whaling interests consist of the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company, which is a subsidiary of Unilevers, Messrs. Salvesen, and ~~two~~ ^{four} companies whose capital is largely Norwegian and which, though registered in the United Kingdom, are largely under the control of their Norwegian backers. The Norwegian companies are on the whole smaller than the British and carry on whaling generally with one expedition each. (The term expedition is used to refer to a whaling factory ship with its attendant whale catchers. Factory ships are large vessels up to 30,000 tons which convert whales into whale oil and other products. Whale catchers are about the size of trawlers. Several of the ~~British~~ factory ships are capable of producing considerably more than 90,000 barrels of oil in three months.) All the companies, both British and Norwegian, have hitherto employed Norwegian crews. The reasons for any particular proposal for restriction are often to be found in considerations of the relative advantage to its authors of a high or low price for whale oil. In this connexion the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company are in a peculiar position; for Unilevers, their parent company, are the largest consumers of whale oil. They have, therefore, no interest in keeping up the price, and, from their point of view, the fewer restrictions the better. This is not the case with the other companies, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Norwegian companies' efforts to secure stringent restrictions were largely due to their desire to obtain a high price for whale oil. (It is difficult to obtain data about the effect of whaling operations on the stock of whales, except from the whaling companies themselves. No objective biological view of the question as a whole is available.) The Norwegian trade unions of seamen and engineers have warmly taken up the cause of restriction, partly,

⁽¹⁾ "Scandinavia and Baltic States," September 4, Section 1, and September 7, Section 1.

no doubt, from sincere anxiety as to the effect of indiscriminate production on the future of the industry, partly perhaps from a general feeling of Norwegian solidarity, and partly from the knowledge that the practical monopoly of the supply of crews to whaling ships of all nationalities, which they have hitherto enjoyed and sometimes abused, was not likely to be tolerated indefinitely by the British companies and that their future chances of employment were therefore better under the Norwegian than under the British flag. The Norwegian Government, a minority Labour Government with a general election imminent, naturally supported the combined views of the Norwegian companies and trade unions, though they did not approve of the independent action taken by the latter. His Majesty's Government, for their part, have consistently realised the desirability of securing some limitation of production in order to preserve the stock of whales. They have no strong views about the methods to be employed to this end. They have powers to regulate only the length of the season, not, as the Norwegian Government can do, the amount of oil produced; and they have always held that agreements on quota restrictions should be entered into voluntarily by the companies concerned.

4. The Norwegian trade unions had been trying for some time past to put pressure on the British companies in connexion with restriction schemes and personnel matters, and when the negotiations had reached the stage described at the end of the second paragraph above, they suddenly imposed a boycott, the course of which is described in the printed despatches referred to above. The boycott was abandoned after His Majesty's Government had announced that, as a result of it, they must facilitate the engagement of British crews on British whaling ships and that as these would be less efficient than the Norwegian crews all close season restrictions whatever would be removed from British whaling ships in order that these might have a reasonable chance of securing a profitable catch.

5. While the boycott was still in operation the Norwegian Chargé d'Affaires in London sent in three notes: the first rejected the last British proposals (three months' season and total production of 2,529,000 barrels) and suggested a three months' season and total production of 2,265,000 barrels, no expedition to produce more than 90,000. This was superseded by the second note, which proposed a conference in Oslo at three days' notice. When this suggestion was rejected by His Majesty's Government, the third note put forward an entirely new system of restriction, by which the number of whale catchers working with each factory ship should be limited in proportion to its capacity, while the season for all expeditions should be limited to three months. The area affected would be that south of 40° south, not south of the equator. As soon as the boycott had been removed, the principle of limitation incorporated in those proposals was accepted by His Majesty's Government in a note addressed to the Norwegian Chargé d'Affaires on the 5th September, but special terms were requested for three expeditions, two belonging to the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company and one to Messrs. Salvesen. It was proposed that the first two expeditions should have no limit on the number of their whale catchers, that the other should be allowed one more whale catcher than was suggested by the Norwegian Government, and that all three should be freed from the "close season" restriction at one end of the whaling season, on condition that their production of whale oil was limited to a stated maximum figure. This modification was insisted on in order to allow the companies concerned to make sure of a reasonable profit to recoup themselves in part for the losses incurred through the boycott. The Norwegian Government objected to this amendment of their proposals; but His Majesty's Government could secure no further concessions from the British companies, except that the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company agreed to limit their two ships to a number of whale catchers one in excess of that proposed by the Norwegian Government. His Majesty's Government accordingly reiterated their proposed modifications with further arguments; and the Norwegian Government finally agreed to them on the 23rd September.

6. One stipulation in the final agreement between the Governments was that official inspectors responsible to the Governments should be carried upon all whaling factory ships to check the number of whale catchers used. His Majesty's Government have, for some years past, appointed inspectors to British whaling ships; and the consent of the Governments of the Irish Free State and New Zealand has now been obtained to the appointment of such inspectors on

the ships owned by British companies registered in those Dominions, while that of the South African Government is being sought. The agreed arrangement covers the area south of 40° south only but no expedition which has fished in that area is to be allowed to fish between the Equator and 40° south, and other expeditions may catch only humpback, not blue or fin whales, in the latter area. The position as regards the area north of the Equator has not yet been finally settled; but the whaling there is of no great importance.

7. There was no explicit reference to personnel in the notes which constituted the agreement; but His Majesty's Government stated in their note of the 5th September that the British companies felt "entitled to expect that in return for their acceptance of these restrictions no further difficulties will be placed in the way of their operating their expeditions to the best possible advantage," and it was explained to the Norwegian Chargé d'Affaires that His Majesty's Government, while realising that the Norwegian Government could hardly prevent their seamen using every possible means to obtain better terms for themselves, were similarly unable to force British companies to employ foreigners. Some further attempts were made by the Norwegian seamen to obstruct the engagement of crews by the British companies and to force the latter to employ 100 per cent. Norwegian personnel, but these difficulties have now all been settled by compromise. A certain number of British seamen will be employed on the whaling ships, but work will also be found for most of the Norwegians previously employed.

8. A consideration which has influenced the negotiations has been the likelihood that German and Japanese whaling expeditions will soon begin to play a large part in Antarctic whaling. A German expedition is being sent out this year for the first time, and the German Government have so far refused to enter into a scheme of restriction, maintaining that they must gain experience from this expedition before they can say what restrictions, if any, they can accept in future. Japanese interests sent out ~~two~~ expeditions last year, and they are now building a large whaling factory ship, on a Norwegian model, which is intended to operate in the present season. They, also, have refused to agree to any restrictions. It is certain that the fear of unrestricted competition from these quarters has made the Norwegian interests more anxious than ever to impose as much restriction as possible this year, so that, when German and Japanese competition becomes a reality, there may be a good precedent for severe general limitation.

B. A. B. BURROWS.

October 6, 1936.
