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| Whaling |     |
| Strike  |     |
| No.     | 91. |

C.S.

S.M., Sth. Georgia

SUBJECT.

1918

18<sup>th</sup> December

Previous Paper.

Strike of employes of Southern Whaling & Sealing Company, South Georgia.

MINUTES.

Copy sent to Sec of State in despatches  
no 24 of 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 1919.

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Subsequent Paper.

550/19.

S.G.No. 77/18

The Magistrate's Office,

South Georgia.

18th. December 1918.



Sir,

I have the honour to report to you that during this month there has been much labour trouble in the Dependency, practically every station being more or less affected.

The commencement of the trouble took place at the station of the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company's ~~station~~ at Stromness Harbour. The workmen sent a letter to the manager demanding higher wages, higher bonus, and a reduction in the prices of the articles sold in the store, and that unless their demands were acceded to they were to stop work. The terms stated the wages should be raised 20 percent per month and the bonus of 2 cre per barrel raised to 4 cre for labourers; artisans and skilled workmen were to have a corresponding increase in wages and bonus according to the original contract. This meant an increase of 25% on the wages and 100% on the bonus.

At the Manager's request I went to Stromness Station and endeavoured to get the men to return to work. I got the manager to inform the men that I wished to see them separately as I considered meeting a deputation unsatisfactory as one never knows how many of the men the deputation represents, and it is always possible for a minority to intimidate the majority. The men, however, replied that they left the matter to the deputation.

The reasons put forward by the deputation for the strike were:

The Honourable

The Colonial Secretary, Stanley

The men had been signed on in Buenos Aires by the former manager of the station who had informed them that the Contract was merely a matter of form and that they would all get better jobs on their arrival here. Naturally they all could not get better jobs, therefore, there was dissatisfaction. Then the prices of the articles sold in the store were so high and the quality of the goods so poor that it was impossible to save money. They had been told also in Buenos Aires that the company would operate with eight whale catchers whereas only six were fishing; and that there was sufficient coal to keep both stations going ( Stromness Gr. and Prince Claf's Hr.) whereas Prince Claf's had no coal and could not work, and the supply at Stromness was so short that the station could only keep going for about another three weeks, and as their contracts stated that the bonus would be on the output of both stations they were losing a considerable amount of money. They informed me that unless the terms asked for were granted they wished to be sent to Buenos Aires. The manager considered the increase demanded was too much and it was decided to send the men to Buenos Aires by whalers which would return with fresh men. On this being presented to the strikers they informed us that they refused to go in the whalers.

On the following day the deputation asked the manager what terms he was prepared to offer them. He offered them the increase in pay demanded and three cre on the barrel instead of the four cre demanded, and that he would guarantee them a bonus on 53,000 barrels which represented 40,000 for the station and an additional 13,000 barrels to cover

the non-working of Prince Claf's station and the two more catchers which the men were informed would be used.

The deputation returned the next day and informed us that the offer was refused and that the men would not accept less than their original demands and further that the mess-room boys and night watchmen who did not appear in the first demands, should receive double pay for overtime work before 6 am. and after 6 pm. and that new contracts would have to be made and the old ones returned to the men.

After six days we found it impossible to get the workmen to resume their work for less than their demands. The manager had in consequence to give way and new contracts were opened and the men returned to work. Prince Claf's Hr. also resumed work when they heard that their terms had to be granted.

The cause of the strike is entirely due to the action of the previous manager who signed the men on in Buenos Aires. The men were with a few exceptions "beachcombers" and men who were in the strike at Leith Harbour in July. The strike occurred at a very unfortunate time for the company. The season was in full swing and to have kept the station closed any longer would have caused the company enormous loss. There is no means of dealing with the men here and the Companies can only hold out for a very short time and try to make the best terms possible. The men are aware that nothing can be done here since the strike at Leith Harbour ended so disastrously for that Company. In my opinion had the strikers from Leith Hr. not been paid on their arrival in Buenos Aires there would not have been a recurrence of the

the strike here this season at least. It is impossible to say where these strikes will stop unless something is done. The men at present have the whip hand and know it and as soon as it becomes known on the other stations that the workers at Stranmillis have got the terms demanded - and it very soon will - strikes will take place over all.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'W. B. B. B.', written in dark ink. The signature is slanted and has a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Subsidiary Magistrate.