

Whaling

C.S.

Strikes

No.

92.

S. M., S. G. Georgia

SUBJECT.

1919

10<sup>th</sup> January

Previous Paper.

90/19

Strike of employees of South Georgia Company  
(June 1918)

MINUTES.

C.S. letter of 7.11.18 via M.P. 329/18

Copy sent to Sec of State in despatch  
no 24 of the 19 Feb 1919.

D.  
19.2.19

File

Subsequent Paper.

440  
~~567~~/19.



S.G.No. 21/19

The Magistrate's Office,

South Georgia.

10th. January 1918. 9

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No.329/18 of 7th. Nov. on the subject of a strike among the employees at Leith Harbour.

2. It is difficult to say exactly what the cause of the strike was and the only ostensible reason given by the men themselves is as follows :

In the month of June a fire broke out on the station among the dwelling houses of the men which resulted in the loss of the whole block. The fire spread so rapidly that little was saved, the consequence being that the men wrote a letter to the Manager demanding compensation for loss of clothing etc. The Manager informed them that they could obtain new outfits from the store and that he would write the owners recommending a certain compensation for each man according to their losses. The men answered that if he, the manager, could not give them a written guarantee for compensation, higher wages, reduction in sleepers prices, better food, less working hours, fire escape to each building, extra water pumps in case of fire, etc. etc. they absolutely refused to work. On the 27th. June the Manager asked Mr. Barlas and myself to assist him in smoothing matters over, so we proceeded to Leith Harbour when a deputation of the workers asked to see us. They placed all their wants before us and said that if these were not

The Honourable

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granted they required to be sent back to Buencs Aires. I informed them that they were guilty of a breach of contract and according to the terms they forfeited all their earnings and urged them to be sensible and go to work, promising as far as was possible to meet their numerous demands.

The next morning about 150 men assembled in front of the villa and requested to see the Magistrate. On going out to see what they wished I was informed by their interpreter that they wanted their accounts and sent to Buencs Aires. At the same time they were all more or less inclined to be threatening. I could see that nothing else could be done, so on speaking with the manager he agreed to send them to Buencs Aires. At the time there were three transports in harbor; the "Sellasia" was due to leave the same day so about 70 were put aboard, 20 on "Crwell" and the remainder were sent by whale catchers.

It is possible that if the ringleaders were picked out and sent to Buencs Aires the remainder would have resumed work, but they refused to break up the company which they had formed and we could in no way force them.

The Manager wrote to the Company's agent in Buencs Aires informing him of the strike and on no account to pay the men as the accounts were given them under protest. But on their arrival they made so much trouble for the Agent, threatening to burn down the building and shoot both the manager and Cashier, that eventually each man received his payment.

It was agreed between the local managers that a list of these men should be compiled and that none of them should

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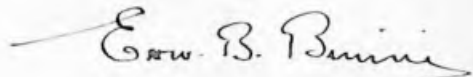
be employed on any of the stations. However the manager of messrs Irvin & sons engaged several of them and since their arrival in the Dependency each station in turn has been troubled with strikes ,accounts of which will be dealt with separately.

In my opinion the only way out of the difficulty was to send the men away though at considerable loss to the company. These men are generally picked up in the Boca at Buenos Aires and are the outcasts of ships and other countries. When they come to South Georgia they discover that we have no means of to hand, such as telegraphic communication, warships etc, and they do exactly as they wish, and will continue to do so. I think it would be of considerable value if ocular demonstration of the Government authority, in the shape of a warship could be given.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,



Stipendiary Magistrate