

Toilers Final Fight For Liberty

F.P.U. Fight Now Against Bowring's, Whose Word Is No Longer Their Bond, History of Trickery and Dishonor Exposed. Munn and Eric Bowring Responsible.

Mr. Coaker Exposes the Trickery of the Local Branch of Bowring's—Agreed To Submit Dispute to Head Office for Their Decision

HEAD OFFICE ADVISED THAT ABRAHAM KEAN BE KEPT ASHORE

Eric Bowring and J. S. Munn Ate Crow And Refused to Abide by That Decision—Some Wire Pulling and Head Office Says Did Not Understand Full Tenor of Question, and Recind First Judgment

WHEN the Supreme Council of the F.P.U. met at Catalina last Fall the delegates devoted the largest portion of the sessions to the consideration of the Sealing Disaster, and after much discussion the following resolutions were unanimously adopted, each delegate rising to vote.

The Sealing Disaster Resolution.

THAT WHEREAS seventy-eight of the crew of the steamship "Newfoundland" lost their lives on the 31st day of March and the first day of April last, by exposure from a blizzard;

AND WHEREAS these men left the steamer "Stephano" just as the blizzard broke and were left on the icefloes several miles from any ship;

AND WHEREAS Abraham Kean, Master of the "Stephano," took no measures to ascertain whether these men were left exposed to the blizzard, and took no steps to inform by wireless other ships within that vicinity;

AND WHEREAS these men might have been saved had Abraham Kean exerted himself to locate them and called upon the other ships to search for them;

AND WHEREAS on April 1st the dying observed the steamship "Bellaventure" steaming within a half a mile of them, which ship's officers failed to recognize the dying men; not knowing they had been exposed to the blizzard which resulted in the death of about 50 men because Capt. Kean failed to inform the ships equipped with wireless, of his action on March 31st in placing the Newfoundland's men on the ice as the storm came on;

RESOLVED, that the Members of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union sign a petition to the House of Assembly requesting that Chamber to pass a law prohibiting Abram Kean from ever again sailing from any port in Newfoundland as the Master of a ship, in punishment for his conduct in relation to the loss by exposure of seventy-eight of the crew of the "Newfoundland" off Trinity Bay, in the blizzard which raged on March 31st and April 1st, 1914.

RESOLVED, that the Petition to be circulated for signatures be as follows: To the Honourable House of Assembly in Legislative Session Convened: The Petition of the Supreme Council of the F.P.U. of Newfoundland, humbly sheweth:—

1. That during a blizzard which raged on March 31st and April 1st last, seventy-eight of the crew of the sealing steamer "Newfoundland" lost their lives, and several others were maimed for life.
2. That in the opinion of your Petitioners these men would not have died had proper measures for their rescue been taken by the Captain of the "Stephano" which Captain placed the men on the icefloes just as the blizzard came on, and knew their position and all the circumstances.
3. That in the opinion of your Petitioners Captain Abraham Kean of the "Stephano" should have secured the aid of the other powerful ships in that vicinity which were fitted with wireless tele-

graphy, and should have done all possible to find the exposed men, instead of remaining absolutely inactive, even failing to inform by wireless the other ships in the vicinity of what had transpired.

4. That in the opinion of your Petitioners Captain Kean seriously erred in judgment, which error cost the lives of seventy-eight of the "Newfoundland's" crew.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE PRAY that your Honourable House will pass a Bill to prevent Captain Abraham Kean from ever sailing as Master of any ship from a port in Newfoundland. And as in duty bound they will ever pray.

It was further resolved that the President take any steps he might deem necessary, even to organize a strike, should Bowring Bros. so defy public opinion as to attempt to place Abraham Kean in command of one of the ships cleared by them for seal fishery or coastal service, and every Union man is expected to back the President in carrying out this resolution, even by using force if called upon to do so.

Those resolutions, backed by 20,000 fishermen, laid the blame on Abraham Kean—held him responsible for the disaster. They were all more or less personally acquainted with Kean. Many of them were his neighbours at Wesleyville, Newtown, Brookfield, Greenspond, and other places. They know the man well. They knew his life history. They knew his virtues and some of his vices. They resolved that some punishment should be administered. The punishment proposed was as chips and porridge to the punishment he deserved.

Their verdict—the verdict of 150 delegates—was that he should not again command a sealing steamer. That decision was to be backed by a petition to the House of Assembly praying that a law be passed to carry out the verdict of the people respecting Kean's punishment for the loss of 78 sealers of the Newfoundland's crew.

Those men went further and resolved that if the House did not open in time to deal with this matter, and Bowring's refused to comply with the People's reasonable request, that a strike should be called in event of Bowring's deciding to place Abraham Kean in command of a sealing steamer.

President Coaker interview Messrs. Munn and Eric Bowring soon after the Convention closed and laid the matter before them. They seemed to think very lightly of the matter and rather felt inclined to consider it as of little importance, but said the Stephano might not be engaged in the seal fishery.

Time passed, and the Union Councils of Conception Bay were to meet at Coley's Point and would require to know what was doing. President Coaker thereupon wrote Bowring's firm here enquiring what they intended to do. The letter reads thus:

St. John's, January 11th, '15.
Messrs. Bowring Bros.,
Water Street.

Gentlemen,—On behalf of the F.P.U. of Newfoundland, I ask whether your firm intends to give Captain Abraham Kean the command of a sealing steamer the coming Spring. I have already laid before your Messrs. Munn and Eric Bowring the decision of the sealers as expressed at the F.P.U. Convention recently held at Catalina and had hoped that when your firm had given serious consideration to the Sealers' request, it would not go as far as to defy their very just and reasonable demand.

I have been informed, however, that Captain Abraham Kean is engaging a crew and that each man he engages has to sign an agreement in which he promises to stand by Capt. Abraham Kean in the event of a strike or mob. I cannot believe that your firm is a party to such proceedings and I am directed to intimate that the F.P.U. will use all its influence

and strength to prevent Capt. Kean from sailing as Commander of a Sealing Steamer during the coming Spring.

I further lay upon your shoulders the responsibility for anything which may happen as a result of your decision to defy the F.P.U.'s request laid before you by me personally and repeated in this communication.

I will stand by any resolution which the men may make, and if that resolution be to take Captain Abraham Kean by force from one of your ships, I intend to lead the men in that act. Any trouble in this matter will be a national calamity and upon you will rest the responsibility, for if anything does happen, it will be only because of your determination to defy the people and back up a man who is chiefly responsible for the death of the seventy-eight of the crew which sailed last March in the "Newfoundland."

Why the whole Country should be agitated and more lives risked in order to please the whim of Captain Abraham Kean is a matter over which the people will not be silent much longer.

In God's name, I ask again whether you intend to be the cause of more strife and probable loss of life and a revolution throughout the land, which must needs be the result of your defying the people's just demands in reference to Capt. Kean.

I shall await your reply with much anxiety, for upon it will depend largely the name and future of our Native Land.

Yours sincerely,

W. F. COAKER,
President F.P.U.

To which Bowring's replied as follows:

St. John's, January 12, 15.

W. F. Coaker, Esq.,
President Fishermen's
Protective Union.

Dear Sir,—Replying to your's of 11th inst., we beg to say we have sent your communication to our Head-Office, Messrs. C. T. Bowring & Co. Ltd., Liverpool, Managing Owners of the Steamers "Florizel" and "Stephano."

Yours very truly,

BOWRING BROTHERS, LIMITED.
John S. Munn, Director.

By Munn's reply our readers will recognize that he felt the matter was one he could not decide. That it was a matter for the Managing Owners of the Florizel and Stephano to decide and not one for the Agents here who are Bowring's Agents in connection with the voyage.

Mr. Munn would not assume the responsibility of deciding then and he transmitted Mr. Coaker's letter of the 11th to the Managing Owners at Liverpool, the day following (or the 12th) and advised Mr. Coaker accordingly.

Mr. Halfyard replied to Bowring's letter of January 12th, as follows:

St. John's, January 13th, 1915.
Mr. J. S. Munn,
City.

Dear Sir,—We beg to acknowledge receipt of your communication of yesterday's date in which you say that the matter referred to in our letter has been forwarded to your Head Office in Liverpool, England, and that you will be governed by their decision.

Will you kindly ask your principals to cable that reply, if necessary at our expense, as this is a matter which vitally affects the interest of the fishermen who are anxiously awaiting your decision?

We would request an early reply.

Yours faithfully,

W. W. HALFYARD,
Secretary F.P.U.

Not hearing from the firm here as we had expected, in view of the letter of Mr. Halfyard, President Coaker called upon Mr. Munn last Wednesday and was informed that no reply had been received, thereupon Mr. Coaker cabled the Bow-

ring firm at Liverpool, referred to by Mr. Munn as the "Managing directors of the Florizel and Stephano," as follows:

St. John's, Feb. 10, '15.

Bowring,
Liverpool.

What your decision request Fishermen's Union concerning Kean not commanding sealing steamer. Kindly reply. Munn says our letter sent you.

(Sgd.) COAKER.

To which this reply was received the following day:

From Liverpool, Feb. 11, '15.

To Coaker,
Fishermen's Protective Union,
St. John's.

Reply your cable decided withdraw Stephano also Kean this season's sealing voyage.

(Sgd.) BOWRING.

To which President Coaker replied thus:

St. John's, Feby. 11, '15.

To Bowring,
Liverpool.

Thanks will show appreciation your important decision.

(Sgd.) COAKER.

By the above cable Bowring's engaged to withdraw Kean from this season's seal fishery, and President Coaker considered the matter as settled as thanked the Managing Directors of the Florizel and Stephano for their decision.

We refrained from publishing this cable on Thursday and Friday, owing to our wish to refrain from introducing any matter relative to Kean, pending the trial of the libel case which was set for Friday.

The case having been postponed, on Saturday we published Bowring's decision, and in the meantime President Coaker had written all the F.P.U. Councils, acquainting them with Bowring's decision and asking them to permit the Kean matter to drop as he had now considered the matter settled. Most of the Union Councils are to-day in receipt of this intimation of President Coaker.

Nothing had been heard from Bowring's local firm.

On last Sunday morning, the 14th inst.,—four days after the receipt of the Bowring Liverpool cable of the 11th,—the following collect cable was received by President Coaker:

Liverpool, Feb. 13, '15.

To Coaker, St. John's.

Our reply your cable sent without full knowledge arrangements previously made must now leave matter Florizel sealing master entirely in hands local directors.

(Sgd.) BOWRING.

The strangest point in connection with this cable is that the firm here had referred President Coaker's letter of Jan. 11th to the Liverpool firm who were Managing Directors of the Florizel for a decision or a reply as regards the F.P.U.'s demands for the withdrawal of Captain Abraham Kean.

The firm here were well aware of this fact, yet although they had submitted the request to their principals at Liverpool, who were the proper authorities to decide this matter, and who they, by their action in submitting the letter entirely regarded as the proper authorities to so decide they now wish to make Newfoundland believe that they (the local firm) had taken upon themselves the right to sign on Abraham Kean as Master of the Florizel for the coming sealing voyage.

They either willfully misled the Liverpool firm and the Fishermen's Protective Union by pretending to submit the matter for their decision or they deliberately concocted a scheme to place Kean in command of the Florizel with or without the consent of the Managing Directors at Liverpool, and if without their consent, why did they attempt such deceit

towards President Coaker by a pretence of making him think they had not the power to decide but that the Liverpool House alone did?

To the last cable quoted above President Coaker replied as follows:

St. John's, Feby. 15, '15.

To Bowring,
Liverpool.

Your first cabled decision published paper Saturday. Country will look upon last cable as act of deception, dishonourable. Ruination firm's interests Newfoundland. Only solution withdraw Florizel otherwise matter will cause strike and probably riot. Reply to-day, otherwise will initiate agitation paper immediately.

(Sgd.) COAKER.

To which the following reply was received the following morning:

Liverpool, Feby. 15, '15.

To Coaker,
Fishermen's Protective Union,
St. John's.

Decline interfere decision St. John's directors.

(Sgd.) BOWRING.

On the 15th (Monday) the day following the receipt of the Liverpool Managing Directors' cable dishonouring their cable of the 11th, President Coaker wrote the Local firm as follows:

St. John's, Feby. 15, '15.
Messrs. Bowring Bros., Limited,
City.

Gentlemen,—The most astounding piece of deception I ever heard of was contained in a cable received by me yesterday from your Liverpool house saying that "their former cable re Kean" was sent without full knowledge arrangements previously made and that the matter Florizel sealing master was in the hands of the local directors."

Needless to say I consider the cable as dishonourable in the highest degree and so will the country. I now ask that you give me your decision within twenty four hours as to who you intend placing in command of the Florizel at the coming sealing voyage.

If you confirm the position taken by the Liverpool firm wherein they having had submitted for their decision by you our request regarding Captain Kean contained in my letter of Jan. 11th addressed to you cabled me saying that they had decided to withdraw Kean from this year's sealing voyage, I shall not then expose this matter or call upon the fishermen to treat this act of treachery and deceit as it deserves.

Otherwise an agitation such as this Colony never experienced, in the interests of the fishermen and to protect their lives, will be immediately initiated and there will be no let up by us until this act of deception receives its just desserts.

I understand that your local directors went so far as to threaten their resignation as directors in the event of their Liverpool principals not rescinding their first decision cabled me on last Thursday, if this is so then Heaven protect our poor unfortunate country.

Yours truly,

W. F. COAKER,
President F.P.U.

No reply was sent by the two brilliant boys in charge of the firm's business here but Mr. Munn conversed with the Union's Solicitor about the matter and intimated that Abraham Kean was going in the Florizel as Master.

Mr. Munn could just as readily have stated that on January 12th, in reply to President Coaker's query, about Kean, as he did on Monday, but he preferred pretending to place the decision in the hands of the Managing Directors at Liverpool, in the hope that they would treat our request with contempt, and score a triumph in that way.

(To be continued from day to-day).

WATCH FOR THE PAPER TO-MORROW