

The Daily Mail

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ST. JOHN'S, N.F.L.D., APRIL 20, 1914

OUR POINT OF VIEW.

THE BOWRING.

When the Coaker Sealing Bill was before the House of Assembly the last winter Bowring Bros. sent the following letter to President Coaker, Sir E. P. Morris and Mr. Kent:

St. John's, Newfoundland, February 11th, 1914.

Dear Sir:—

Referring to the Sealing Bill which is now before the House, we would respectfully point out, as Sealing Ship Owners, that there are several causes in the said Bill which in our opinion are most objectionable, and which we would respectfully submit should be stricken out, viz:

Section 7. In this Section we are of the opinion that the Hood Seals should come under the same category as the Harps for the following reasons:

- (1) There is no proof that this species is being killed out in any greater proportion than the Harps.
- (2) If this regulation was carried into effect it would mean that the Wooden ships would be placed at a tremendous disadvantage, and in fact practically prohibit the chances of their securing anything like saving trips at the Seal fishery.
- (3) We are of the opinion that it would be impossible to prohibit the men from killing these seals, and the wanton destruction of this species of seal would result.
- (4) The Hood seals are protected to a certain extent at present owing to the fact that the Steel ships not carry guns.

Section 8. If this Section must be put in force it would result in endless confusion and trouble, and an entire absence of discipline, and greatly reduce the Captain's authority. For instance if some of the crew desired to be landed, it might be the means of putting the ship out of a trip of seals, owing to the fact that she might take at least three days to get these men to land, and in her meantime weather conditions might arise so that it might be impossible for her to continue the voyage. Another point is a ship might have some Southern men, the crew may be landed at a Northern port, which would mean that it would be impossible for them to proceed to their homes for a considerable time, and the question would arise who would be responsible for their passages, as they would be practically stranded in a Northern port.

In our opinion when the men are signed it should be with the distinct understanding that they prosecute the voyage to the end if necessary, otherwise Owners of Wooden ships are very much handicapped.

We would also like to draw your attention to Section Four. In the matter of recovering fines, we are of the opinion that the informant should be the Captain or any of the crew through the Captain, and that he should recover the fine and divide it amongst the crew.

We have the honour to be, dear Sir, Yours obedient servants,

Bowring Brothers, Limited,

JOHN S. MUNN,

Director.

In reference to Sec. 7, which provided for a close season of two years for Hood seals, Bowring Bros. through Mr. J. S. Munn, states: "We are of opinion that the Hood seals should come under the same category as Harps."

It is therefore apparent that Mr. Munn did not desire any protection afforded the Hood seal. Yet in January 1912 Mr. Munn on behalf of Bowring Bros. signed an agreement made by President Coaker and the Sealing Steamer Owners wherein it was stipulated that no ship should take bitch

hood seals under a fine of two dollars for each seal taken, the same to be paid by the Captain so offending.

In view of this agreement of January 1912, and of Mr. Munn's objection to making any difference between Hoods and Harps, as quoted above, the public will be able to judge as to whether Mr. Crosbie's accusation of bad faith brought against the steamer owners in a speech delivered in the House last winter when he said they signed an agreement they had no intention of carrying out, was altogether an imagination.

Not one of the firms whose honor and integrity had been assailed by Mr. Crosbie in this regard, attempted to defend themselves or deny his assertion.

The above quotation from Mr. Munn's letter to the leaders of the House of Assembly distinctly states that there should be no distinction between Harps and Hoods, yet the agreement he signed two years ago provides that all bitch hoods should be protected and every Captain of Bowring's ships who brought in hood bitch seals were to be fined \$2 each. That agreement was in force when Mr. Munn wrote the above letter and is enforce to-day.

Three months after the agreement referred to was signed the Florizel, Capt. Ab. Kean, arrived and he landed bitch hoods, which matter was well known to Mr. Munn and the public. Did Mr. Munn collect the \$2 per seal from Capt. Kean, as he should in accordance to-day?

The above reference show that Bowring Bros. did not always do the honorable thing, and they should remember that their first duty was to see the mote in their own eye and then proceed to remove the beans in the eyes of others.

Mr. Coaker also included the Kite in the list he named in his letter but Bowring Bros. do not take action because of the Kite but of the Ranger and Viking; but how can they escape the reflections cast against the Kite, a ship they refused to send out themselves but were quite willing to hire out to another?

Mr. Munn states that "it would be impossible to prohibit the men from killing these seals and the wanton destruction of this specie of seal would result."

Now how in the name of common sense could the wanton destruction of the hood result if the law provided a close season for two years. Even if no protection was afforded we fail to see why a wanton destruction of the hood would result any more than has been going on for the last fifty years. There is absolutely no common sense in that statement and it must have been inserted in the letter without thought and probably was one of those brilliant shots from Commodore Kean's wonderful thinking machine. While Mr. Munn states in one breath that it would be impossible to prohibit the killing of the hood seals, yet in the next breath he asserts that the hood seals are to a certain extent protected owing to the prohibition of guns on Steel ships. It would therefore follow that if guns were prohibited from all ships full protection would therefore result. His arguments are therefore nonsensical and worthless.

The wonder will be how a man occupying Mr. Munn's position could have written such nonsense at such an important time, upon a matter that he ought to know at least a little about. The public will be surprised, but the many will conclude that Mr. Munn's anxiety to oblige Capt. Ab. Kean must have got the better of his good judgment and common sense.

Again, Mr. Munn says in Sec. 8— which permitted wooden ships to land part of their crews before April 10th in order to prosecute the hunt for old seals—"was put in force it would result in endless confusion and trouble, and an entire absence of discipline, and greatly reduce the Captain's authority. It might be the means of putting the ship out of a trip of seals owing to the fact that she might take at least three days to get their men to land and the weather condition might alter so that it might be impossible for her to continue the voyage."

What wonderful reasoning. What brilliant conceptions. What tremendous powers of foresight are portrayed in those statements advanced by Mr. Munn.

The Section complained was cut out of the Sealing Bill by the great men of the Upper House, and the conditions as regards the wooden ship crews were exactly as they were for years past, but what has happened this season?

Mr. Munn in his letter above quoted states that Sec. 8 in the Coaker Sealing Bill would result in endless confusion and trouble and cause entire absence of discipline and greatly reduce the authority of the Captain of board of ship.

Now what is the actual results. The Section was removed from the Bill and all—absolutely all—that Mr. Munn claimed would happen if the Section became law, has happened, because it did not become law—thus the public will in future be able to place a proper construction upon Mr. Munn's reasoning and judgment. If a school

boy could not see as far as Mr. Munn did when he wrote this letter, he would never reach the top of his class or set the Thames on fire after he did leave school, even if he lived to be 80 years old.

If the Hon. E. R. Bowring had been at his desk that letter would never have been sent to the Country's leaders by the firm of Bowring Bros.

Mr. Coaker explained why Sec. 8 was included in the Bill when he addressed the House upon the matter, and he again explained the Section at a meeting of the steamer owners, at which Mr. Munn was present, and Mr. Munn must have realized that in no way could the Section prove beneficial to Mr. Coaker if passed, the sole object of the Section was to aid the owners to make the voyage of the wooden ships as successful as possible, to permit one half of the crew to return home after the chances of securing young fat had passed, and allow them to do their own work in preparing for the fishery instead of enduring the miseries and loss of time by remaining out until May, and afford them those who wished to continue the voyage a fair remuneration for the time spent in event of securing any considerable number of old seals.

The Toller who signs for the sealing voyage now is not like the Tollers of twenty-five or even fifteen years ago. Nowadays the most of the experienced sealers refuse to sign on in wooden ships for the front because they know their chances of securing young fat are very small owing to the greater power and weight of the Steel ships, and as soon as the patches of young seals are cut the most of the men want to return as they know that even if their ship secured a half load of old seals they would not make one dollar per day.

Then again, those who do the work in securing old seals—the "gunners"—who seldom exceed ten in number, and their attendants, are not satisfied to spend three weeks racing over ice and working as hard as they can to secure seals while the other three-fourths of the crew are on board with nothing to do but grow miserable eating hard bread and slut tea. Fifty men for hunting old seals are as good and can do as well as two hundred.

Another reason is, that many of the men by returning early can find employment and be sure of earning a fair wage. Fifteen or twenty years ago this chance did not offer as work in spring ashore was not available.

Mr. Coaker knew from the men themselves what they thought and how they viewed matters and he recognized also the necessity of endeavoring to aid the owners of the ships to make two ends meet, he therefore decided that to permit the Wooden ships sailing North to ship their crews in two sections—some for the whole voyage and some to be landed by April 10th would enable the Wooden ships to secure crews, would permit those who desired to return home early in April, and start about their own work or secure employment, to do so would enable those who prosecuted the voyage to the 1st of May to make a few dollars in case some seals were secured, and above all would remove the causes of friction and general dissatisfaction which must exist nowadays on Wooden ships if they do not abandon the voyage by the 10th of April.

Mr. Coaker's endeavors were ridiculed by the men who occupy seats in the Legislative Council—or Dumping Asylum—and by all the steamer owners except Job Brothers, and the result has been that a majority of the crew of the Bloodhound and Ranger "manusured" and compelled the captains to come into port to land them and when those ships arrived the owners could not continue the voyage because the law forbids clearing for the second trip and they had to abandon the voyage. On both ships endless confusion, trouble, total absence of discipline and indifference to the captain's authority resulted.

On the Eagle the same condition prevailed and the majority of her crew boarded the Florizel and were taken to port. On the Diana the same conditions prevailed and one-half of her crew would have boarded the Nascope when coaling the but for the advice of Mr. Coaker.

Last year when the Diana was coaling from the Nascope in the ice the Diana's crew gave trouble and the success of the voyage interfered with, while the Erik's crew manusured and compelled the captain to land them at Bonavista; while in 1911 and 1912 the Diana's crew did the same and the voyage had to be abandoned.

Yet in view of those facts Mr. Coaker's efforts to remove the causes and enable the owners to arrange so as the Wooden ships might stand a chance to secure saving trips, were ridiculed and bitterly opposed by all the owners except Mr. Job and in their efforts to prevent the improvements proposed by Mr. Coaker from becoming effective the owners were aided by the captains of the very ships that were recently forced to return to port.

The men who stood by the Captains of the Eagle, Diana, Ranger and Bloodhound were F.P.U. men. This fact will no doubt cause surprise to the wise-

acres, but to us it is what we expected, for the F.P.U. men know that they are to do their duty and must respect their organization and build up a reputation for it, and they having signed for the voyage intended to stand by their obligation and their captain. If F.P.U. men refused to go in the Wooden ships the owners would be in a good fix for it would not be an easy job to replace them by men who have had sealing experience.

Why the captains acted so foolishly as regards the Sealing Bill can only be explained by the presumption that they were influenced by the clap-net of the man who put 120 of the Newfoundland's crew on the ice in a storm and left them to paddle their own canoe, or they listened to the owners who in turn did not like to oppose the far-seeing and exceedingly brilliant President of the Board of Trade—Mr. J. S. Munn.

We will deal with Mr. Munn's remarks anent the sending home of the men, and the matter of the recovery of the fines in to-morrow's issue.

TO THE EDITOR.

"BALLROOM" SEALER WRITES

(Editor The Daily Mail)

Dear Sir,—While standing on Water Street the other evening I overheard the conversation of two men who had been to the ice. I judged them to be cabin sealers, as they were telling their friends a yarn quite different to the experience of the "ballroom" or "dungeon" sealer. When asked by their friends what they thought of sealing, they said that going to the ice was only a picnic, and couldn't have found much better in a hotel. Hence my idea that they were "saloon sealers" and their ideas as to the real seal haulers' life aboard and on the pan, cannot be taken with any degree of certainty.

We read quite a lot of talk by the saloon sealer, who has his clean warm bed, his water warmed for his bath, his meals cooked for him, plenty of fresh meat, soft bread, tinned foods, etc., all night in, little, if any toil—"and his share." If these people want to write the real thing, sign in one of the old ships and live in the dungeon, eat the common fare and kill and haul his share of fat, and I think he will then forget his hotel and write the facts.

Different Story

We, in the Terra Nova, found it quite different from the saloon sealer, and by no means thought her no hotel, although we had good fortune, and as things went, it was the undisputed idea of most every man that if we had no interest in any ship but the Terra Nova, we could have been home, away ahead of the time of the first arrival. But considering the fate of the poor fellows who are no more, and for whom we are very sorry, we should be thankful that things went as they did with us, and of this I will say no more. We struck well into the patch on the 14th of March, and at about 11 in the forenoon began our work of destruction, and before dark were all aboard with 11,000 panned which was a fair start.

In "The Dungeon"

At this time I was amongst the boys in the main hold, and if one of our friends from the quarter deck had been sleeping and eating with us, he would write or tell his friends how fine it is to sleep "neath an open hatchway, wind and snow blowing into his bunk, together with Cardiff coal dust, as the "coal shift" hove the coal out of her, how he lay with cold feet and his head muffled in order to escape the coal dust which was as thick as fog, and how pleased he was when his coal shift came round and he could warm himself by working. The boy or small stove which was situated so that the smoke stack led up through the scuttle forward of the main hatch, was thrown on deck as we were sending fat below there, so that every man got a heavy cold on his lungs, which in many cases, lasted the whole spring. Our friend could then enjoy the joke of the second hand, when he came at daybreak and roused all hands out to get breakfast.

'Some' Grub

Breakfast consisted of a bowl of black tea, in sealers' parlance called "sluts", hard bread and butter, and when it was light enough, take to the pan with hard tack in your "nunny bag", toll hard till almost dark and come aboard, all hands glaring voraciously at the quarters of fresh beef lashed well up in the mizzen rigging, and vowing in our beards that we are in condition to eat the toughest meat or the hardest duff afloat. We swarm like hungry pirates over her sides and ask the cooks what's for supper. They look vacantly at us and point to the tea kettles, sole occupants of the galley stove. We are speechless and drag our tired frames down to the ball-

room or dungeon, where we sit on our old sea chests, with bowed heads and groan, or pour sea blessings of the deepest water on the cooks and those responsible, and big quarters of meat in the mizzen rigging, big coppers laying idle, capable of holding sufficient beans on brews for all hands, and three or four fat cooks boiling tea.

Great Arrangements

However, we relieve our minds and get our kettles and pans, and then a wild scramble of perhaps a hundred men or more, each trying to get a berth for his kettle or pan in the galley, and the last man or moss may have to wait till ten or eleven at night for his "scoff" to be cooked, and then its his turn to pass coal or stow fat. This happened several times through the spring, and we were very lucky if on coming aboard, we got a pan of pea soup, or beans, or pork and duff. We had raisin duff twice, and the second one contained no more than two raisins in a heavy slice. The pork was real good, and besides our pork and duff three times a week we got about a pound a man per week for our own cooking. Beans were served out each meal, but they were very dirty and several sacks appeared as though they were swept with the usual particles of hay and wood, flour, etc., laying about in ships' holds and freight sheds, and we cooked very little of them. Potatoes were served once a week, but for the first two weeks they were frost-burnt and almost unfit for food. Codfish was served twice for the spring, in all about four pounds per man, this was good fish. Our mess of three men got butter twice, as we didn't get much of it, but it was fairly good.

No Fresh Meat

We didn't taste fresh meat for the spring. We had fresh bread thrice a week, but most of it was very sour and sometimes badly baked, and were it not for our own cooking we would have fared badly. I and all my shipmates thought it about time that men working hard from daylight till dark should at least have some kind of a warm substantial meal cooked for them when they come aboard, as we are the people who do the real work to produce the wealth of the country, and from a reasonable point of view should have at least as good living as the afterguard or the "saloon" sealer. Is it reasonable to think that as sealer with a cake of hard bread and a mug of black tea in his stomach can follow a second hand or a master watch with his belly full of fresh meat, etc., more in his nap-sack and a good feed when he gets aboard? Can he, with such food, stand the hardships of a night on the ice after using all his energy through the day killing and hauling seals? Or can he stand on Water Street and tell his friends that going to the ice is a picnic? A sealer can't do it, but no doubt a "saloon sealer" can, as there is a big difference in the two varieties.

Not Up to Scratch

We had amongst us, a lot of what is advertised as "the ice-grain boot," which article shows how far the manufacturer will go in order that big dividends may be had, for although a few pairs in the hundred may be good, the rest are worthless, and often the cause of serious consequences to the man on the pan. Most every man in our ship vowed that never again would he have such boots, even should he get them for nothing. The heel stiffening was the vilest kind of material and after a day on the ice the heel fell like a rag, and turned over on the rough ice and where a boot wanted strength and stability to protect the foot, it was no better than a moccasin when the foot went into a crack when jumping over rough ice.

In many cases the outer sole was worn off in a few days, owing to the quality of leather, and men who were on the front, some of them from the Ranger told me that men were forced to stay aboard ship as their boots were totally gone. The boot is saturated with oil or grease to such an extent that in frosty weather it draws so much frost that the upper leather is as hard as iron and contracts on the foot so that a man on the ice has to be constantly on the move or else he gets his feet burnt, and we men in the Terra Nova often talked of the consequences of a frosty night on the pan, with such boots.

May Cause Death

A pair of bad boots may be the cause a man's death, for with toes or feet frost-burnt a man is far more liable to perish than a man with good warm feet. When turning out of our bunks in the morning we were often compelled to take our greasy boots to the galley and thaw them as they had frozen near our bunks, when the old skin or leather boot was alright.

'Tis about time that people should be prevented from selling such stuff, for big money is made off such inferior goods, and the idea of some people seems to be to get money anyhow.

Mr. Editor, I hope you will give this room in your paper, as I think we are justified in making a kick and telling the truth, and giving an idea of sealing conditions as experienced, not seen from a high poop by a saloon sealer, but by a man who has slept and eaten and toiled with the real men, and lived in the dungeon.

—A SEALER.

St. John's, April 20, 1914.

LESSONS OF THE DISASTER

(Editor The Daily Mail)

Dear Sir,—As the sad news of the "Newfoundland" sealing tragedy has come to us and has caused heartfelt sorrow amongst us, allow me thru the pages of your valuable journal, on behalf of New Bonaventure Local Council, to express our deep sympathy for the grief-stricken ones who have lost their loved ones. And also as the Southern Cross has doubtless been taken by the angry waves with her hazy Sons of Toil, so will we join in sympathizing with the bereaved families who have lost their breadwinners while trying to earn a livelihood.

Dear Mr. Editor, as time rolls on, men become enlightened in all matters. New ideas sought out and worked. But after all the inventions sought out and worked, none can stay the cold hand of death. The gigantic Titanic with all her equipment, on which you would feel safe as on land. Yet death found many of her people in a short time. And the wonderful Titanic sank to the bottom, and sank as easy as though she were only a jolly boat. No doubt there will be new sealing laws presented and passed in our Legislature in the future, maybe for

every steamer to have wireless. But it is not until a lesson is taught do we try to remedy past evils.

Can new laws bring back the dead?

But one thing death does, it sets an example to the living. Maybe no one is to blame for the Newfoundland disaster. But a lesson should be learnt from it; for as we cannot call back the dead, we should try to preserve the living. For in all disasters that happen on this rock-bound coast, it is the poorest class who suffers. The rich can give money, but you cannot bring a dead body to life.

While many were sitting by the glowing firesides toasting wines to their friends, many a sealer was lying motionless on the frozen pans of the broad Atlantic. And why was he there in that stormy weather? You may say to earn a livelihood. Yes, but is that all? The cream of the poor Toller's labor goes to enrich the gentlemen who is clothed in purple and fine linen.

And so the poor underdog is kept just a bit from hand to mouth. If he makes a good year's wages he is in the same position right along. All because he does not receive the rewards of his labor.

Then death claims him on some icy floe or in some lumbering area, and then what a calamity! Donations are handed out to the bereaved.

But can they fill the vacant chair? I am sure, Mr. Editor, this awful calamity should give us warning, both on temporal and spiritual lines and thus prepare ourselves to be more ready for the future.

HENRY GEO. KING,

Chairman F.P.U.

New Bonaventure.

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