

the warning received by you comes from Australia, and that it is from Australia that a large proportion of the shearers employed on the Waitaki come, after the shearing is finished, in November.

As stated in my previous letter, you have made arrangements with a person named Alexander McCallum, an Oamaru shearer now in New South Wales, and have authorised him to bring over sixteen men. In your letter under reply you have not denied that this is the case. This being so, the conclusion is correct that what has been reported is absolutely accurate. You are also aware of the fact that during this session of Parliament the Arbitration and Conciliation Bill has been passed, and that, Parliament having made provision to meet the disputes as between employers and employés, action in the direction you asked was unnecessary.

Knowing that your agent is not on good terms with the shearers in the district, the action taken by you might reasonably be construed to be a deliberate attempt to provoke hostilities, and what gives colour to this is your application for protection two months in anticipation of the time the shearers are expected to arrive at Benmore Station.

Had the Minister thought fit to grant your request it would have been inferred that the Government was encouraging you in the extreme and inadvisable course you have embarked upon, and, armed with the promised protection, your agent would no doubt have been communicated with and told to take action without regard to consequences.

I am directed to inform you that the Minister looks upon your conduct in this matter as that of a man who has made up his mind on a given date to set fire to his premises, and, as a prelude thereto, notified the fire-brigade that he so intended to destroy his property. A wiser course would be to refrain from applying the match. The Government having been assured that there was no likelihood of the shearers breaking the law, or interfering with the work on your station, the Minister therefore directed me to inform you that it is unnecessary to comply with your unusual and unreasonable request.

The Government further resent the very grave reflection you have cast upon the shearers of New Zealand by stating they are lawless spirits. They have ever proved themselves to be law-abiding colonists, and the Government is of opinion that your fears as to the lives of the men who are coming, or your own life and property being in danger, are entirely unfounded.

You are, of course, aware that it is against the law for any person to deliberately and of malice aforethought provoke a breach of the peace. Any one doing so is held to be an offender against the commonwealth. After what has been reported to me in connection with this matter, and which has not been denied, the Minister directs me to inform you that he does not think it is the duty of the State to encourage you in the unusual course you have evidently made up in your mind to pursue.

Should, however, the occasion arise, and the peace be broken in any way, the Government will do its duty as it has already done in similar cases. At the same time, anything that would tend to cause the serious troubles that have occurred elsewhere, and the loss of life consequent thereon, should be strenuously avoided by every right-thinking colonist.

In your letter to Constable Bradshaw, of the 27th August, you say there are "rash spirits" amongst the members of the Shearers' Union, and you further refer to what has occurred in Australia. You also refer to the mischief attempted last season to prevent shearing at the Benmore Station. This being so, conciliation and not provocation would, the Minister thinks, have been the most reasonable way of ending your difficulties once and for all, and that in a manner satisfactory to you, and with profit to your employers. It would have been considered by me more in keeping with a desire to promote peace and good-will had you acted with moderation, and first informed the Government of your intentions in regard to authorising Mr. McCallum—whom you do not deny is on bad terms with the shearers in the district—to import some of the men you have designated as "rash spirits," instead of hastily instructing him to procure the men you have mentioned. Having thus acted, you feared the result of your own actions, and for the first time acquainted the Government of the course you had taken.

The Minister directs me to say that he does not question your right to obtain men from Australia or elsewhere should you consider yourself justified in so doing. If, however, the consequences are to be such as you fear may be precipitated owing to the introduction of men, and the consequent disturbance of the peace and other serious evils, it might with force be urged that such a course, unless in an extreme case, should be avoided. Further, so far as the Minister is aware, the men coming from Australia are entirely in ignorance of the fact that they will be subject to the law which has been passed this session, and that in case of a dispute both employer and employés will be compelled by law to place their case before the Court of Arbitration. The Government considers the Compulsory Arbitration and Conciliation Act to be all-powerful; hence, relying upon this, it is considered there is no necessity for special police protection.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME, Commissioner.

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