

# SECRETARIAT

ROY/GEN/1#14

1964	964

(Formerly)

1964  
Roy

## PETITIONS TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.

### CONNECTED FILES.

NUMBER	
1966	Currie v Dean Brothers.
2011	James Currie

Saving

From the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

To the Officer Administering the Government of FAKLAND ISLANDS

Date 26 August, 1959.

No. 94 Saving

--- I enclose a petition addressed to Her Majesty The Queen from certain workers in the Falkland Islands complaining about their conditions of employment with, presumably, private employers in the Colony.

2. As no address was given on the petition it is assumed that the petitioners do not expect a reply. I should, however, be grateful for your comments on the state of affairs which seems to have inspired these representations.

SECEP

2

*Very early please. Who and where employed and by whom brought out.*

*[Signature]*  
10.9.59

Reply at 7 ~~3~~





4 #

Name

Brought out by

Working at present

Vaughan	Fitzroy	Public Works
Fraser	North Arm	" "
Donnachie	Pebble	Pebble
Currie	"	Public Works
Hicks	"	Pebble
J. Lee	Fitzroy	"
B. Peck - Falkland Islander		"
G. H. Thompson " "		"
John Betts " "		"
H. Betts " "		"
T. Llamosa " "	(same settlement on a contract & below)	"
B. Betts " "		"
S. P. Llamosa - Londener - wife of T. Llamosa		"
L. Middleton	Chartres	"

S #

H.C.S.

Above is the employment position of the persons who signed the petition.

DR

12.9.59



F. I. ref: 1964

O. O. ref: FST/B13

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SAVING TELEGRAM.

From: The Officer Administering the Government of the Falkland Islands.

To: The Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Date: 15th September, 1959.

No. 156. SAVING. COLONY

Your Savingram No. 94 of the 26th August, 1959. The petition addressed to Her Majesty the Queen from certain workers in the Falkland Islands.

2. This petition, which I understand was circulated and for the most part signed during a cinema performance on Pebble Island, was drafted and organised by Mr. J. Currie who is the plaintiff in the Supreme Court action referred to in your Immediate Telegram No. 96 of 11th September, 1959, and which is set down for hearing on the 6th October. As I shall be the Judge in that particular action I should prefer to comment only in very general terms at this stage. I should perhaps mention, however, that I understand Mr. Currie has also written to one or more Labour Members of Parliament and consequently you may be receiving other enquiries inspired from the same source.

3. Of the signatories to this document, no less than six are Falkland Islanders (and I understand that a seventh is the London born wife of one of the six) who have for the main part been employed for many years by Dean Brothers, the owners of Pebble Island and the defendants in the forthcoming case. The other signatories of the petition are men from the United Kingdom who came out to the Falkland Islands under contract with Dean Brothers, the Falkland Islands Company or Chartres Farm. All these men are now employed either by the management of Pebble Island or by the Public Works Department in Stanley. Currie himself is employed by the Public Works Department.

4. Whatever may or may not be the merits of any one individual case (and Currie may have a perfectly legitimate grievance), the petition as it stands is inaccurate and misleading. There is of course nothing new in the criticism that people recruited in the United Kingdom for service in the Colonial territories are misled as to the conditions and terms under which they will be required to live and work and there is no reason why the Falklands should be immune from this type of complaint with which, for instance, the Overseas Service Division and the Appointments Branch of the Crown Agents must be only too familiar. For all that the complaint is not an easy one to deal with as it is not very often that you can get the two people principally concerned to agree on precisely what was said at the interview and of course it is sometimes fully justified. In my personal experience, however, it is often the complaint of the misfit or the person who finds that life is not quite so easy as he was hoping it would be. I am in no position to say what these men were told when they were interviewed and in some cases it may be that they were given misleading information or did not fully understand the conditions under which they would be required to work. When, however, it is remembered that a disappointed farm hand from overseas, quite apart from being a serious nuisance on a farm, is likely also to be an expensive proposition since he must be repatriated at the farm's expense if he becomes a charge on the public within twelve months of arriving in the Colony, it seems unlikely that managers or owners, who themselves often interview applicants when they are on leave in the United Kingdom or

alternatively/.....

F. I. ref:

C. O. ref:

~~14~~  
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SAVING TELEGRAM.

*From:* The Officer Administering the Government of the Falkland Islands.

*To:* The Secretary of State for the Colonies.

*Date:*

*No.* SAVING.

- 2 -

alternatively arrange to have the men interviewed by people with first hand knowledge of conditions in the Falklands (Currie was interviewed by someone who knew the Islands well and who has since returned as Manager of Pebble), will mislead people, and by doing so lay themselves open to a lot of additional expense and labour trouble if they can possibly avoid doing so. In fact they have a vested interest in doing their best to see that people are not misled.

5. I cannot agree that people are "constrained to serve without hope of marriage, without proper recompense and without holidays fitting to the remoteness of the situation". So far as the general conditions of employment are concerned, every person employed on a farm in the Falkland Islands is employed in accordance with terms and conditions negotiated and agreed annually between the Sheep Owners Association on the one hand and the Labour Federation, the principal Trade Union, on the other. I enclose a copy of the current Agreement for your information and would point out firstly that the conditions embodied in this Agreement apply with equal force in the case of any person recruited from Overseas and employed on any farm. If, after an "Overseas" contract has been signed there is any improvement in wages and conditions as the result of negotiations between employers and employees or for any other reason, then such improved wages and conditions automatically apply in the case of the employee concerned irrespective of the fact that the terms of the contract he signed before coming out to the Falklands are somewhat less favourable. Secondly, the conditions embodied in this Agreement can in certain respects be regarded as minimum conditions in as much as they do not include and fully cover the details of Provident Fund benefits, contract opportunities and prosperity bonuses. It is a fact that a number of men who have come to these islands on five years contracts: who have lived moderately and who have taken the opportunities that have come their way to earn extra money from farm contracts (e.g. fencing contracts) have left after five years with close on £1,000 in savings.

6. There is a shortage of labour in these Islands and there are empty shepherds' houses on a number of farms. The great majority of managers and owners are in fact only too glad to offer good accommodation (and there are many families in England who would be glad of a Falkland Islands farm house) to a satisfactory employee from overseas who wants to settle down and get married. Obviously, however, they cannot be expected to offer such facilities to the misfits and drunks. Generally speaking it must be admitted that our farms in the Falklands cannot offer the same recreational facilities, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say the same type of recreational facilities, as are available these days to the great majority of farm labourers in England. Nevertheless, in many other respects, particularly as far as wages, opportunities for increased earnings and the standard of living in the way of food and housing are concerned, conditions in the Falkland Islands are at least comparable with conditions in the United Kingdom and in some instances are perhaps even better. I know of no place in England where the average farm worker can be sure of a thoroughly

good and sound/.....



F. I. ref:

C. O. ref:

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SAVING TELEGRAM.

*From:* The Officer Administering the Government of the Falkland Islands.

*To:* The Secretary of State for the Colonies.

*Date:*

*No.* SAVING.

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good and sound boarding school education for his children at a cost of £12 a year. Moreover, when contributions are taken into account, basic health and medical services, particularly hospital and maternity facilities are not only a good deal better but also a good deal cheaper than those available in many English rural districts and even towns. The question as to what constitutes a proper holiday, to revert to one of the specific points raised in the petition, is really a matter of opinion. You will observe from the enclosed copy of the current S.O.A./Labour Federation Agreement, however, that in addition to the traditional Battle of the Falklands Day holiday on the 8th of December, the statutory minimum entitlement in the camp is fifteen working days on pay. There are, moreover, very few farms indeed, if any, on which in the course of the year the minimum is not exceeded by quite a few days for one reason or other. Again this applies to the farm worker recruited from Overseas and I don't think it is unreasonable.

1-the  
7. It would be idle to pretend that there is no room for improvement and it would be foolish to be complacent about the conditions that exist here and way people feel about those conditions. On the other hand it is significant that it is many years since there has been a strike or even a serious labour dispute in the Falkland Islands and it would be a mistake to attribute this to complacency or apathy on the part of organised labour. A week or so ago the General Secretary of the Labour Federation told me that he could not remember a time when relations between the two sides of the industry had been so satisfactory as they are at the present time. In fact I very much doubt whether it would be extravagant to suggest that there are a number of employers and unions in the United Kingdom that might with some advantage to themselves and perhaps even to the country learn something from the present relationship between the two sides of the farming industry in the Falklands, the system of annual negotiations on wages and conditions for the ensuing year, the manner in which they are conducted and the manner in which both sides adhere to the terms of the agreements once they have been negotiated and signed.

OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT.

AGDT/FH



Y.H.

The pp. at b.c. shd. be returned to Mr Bates (?)  
Mr. Bruce (?) pl.

16.9.59

10.

Yes please. Then the papers should be brought up -  
in case there is anything to add - after judgement in  
Cumie v. Dean Brothers.

17.9.59

11.

Y.H.

10. Dick B. v. cumy. pl.

18.9.59

10/10/59

19.9.59

J.E.

From J.1 on this file and the papers on 1966

J. i.

I am rather doubtful about the next move because really there is nothing very much that one can add to the savingsgram to the S.G.S at J.7 or the judgment at J.7 on 1966. I could have said that Currie was obviously an eccentric and had been expelled from the Labour Federation - but thought probably it might suggest prejudice on my part.

Is there anything else you think we ought to say? The judgment has gone to the C.O.

B.H.J.

13.

HCS.

I think your savingsgram admirable, and there is no need for any further action.

ΣPA · 29.10.59.

P.A.  
29.10.59.

29.10.59.