

Reports.

Whaling.

Sealing.

1920.

No. 558.

C.S.

S. of S. No: 61.

SUBJECT.

192⁰

31st May

Previous Paper.

Observations on reports by Mr. J. E. Hamilton on Sealing
and Whaling (M.P.s 19 and 102/20.)

MINUTES.

H. E.

Submitted.

H. E.
for C.S.
2/8/20.

Subsequent Paper.

FALKLAND ISLANDS.

Downing Street,

No. 61.

31st May, 1920.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Colonel St. Johnsten's despatch No. 21 of the 20th February forwarding reports by Mr. J. E. Hamilton of Seal life in the Falkland Islands and its Dependencies together with notes on the whaling industry in South Georgia.

2. I have read these papers with much interest, but it would have been more convenient had they been sent home in separate despatches according to the subjects with which they deal.

3. I am in communication with the Trustees of the British Museum with a view to obtaining the advice of the authorities of the Natural History department upon the various questions raised in the papers: and I hope that it will be possible for me to address you further in regard to them by an early mail.

4. In the meantime I have to inform you that, as at present advised, and subject to the observations of the British Museum, I am not disposed, at any rate pending further investigations, to agree to the grant of any licenses to take either fur seals or sea lions in the Falkland Islands or any kind of seal in the South Shetlands.

5. With regard to the Falkland Islands I incline to the view that any experimental killing of fur seals or
sea

THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS.

sea lions, as suggested, should be conducted by the Government under Hamilton's personal supervision, although it would no doubt be advantageous to invite Mr. Hansen to act as a paid agent of the Government for this purpose. I am also of the opinion that the products should be sent to this country as a trial consignment to be marketed on Government account, and I am accordingly inviting the co-operation of the Department of Overseas Trade in this connection.

6. In regard to the South Shetlands I concur in Colonel St. Johnstone's opinion that it would be undesirable to allow any extensive killing until more is known of the number and species of the seals to be found in the Dependency. It is understood from an interview with Mr. Bennett at the Colonial Office that the elephant seal is not numerous in the South Shetlands but that sea leopards and Weddell's seals occur in large numbers. I would suggest however that during the next whaling season, the Magistrate should be authorised to obtain specimens for the purpose of an experimental consignment to this country and I am endeavouring to enlist the assistance of the Department of Overseas Trade in this matter also.

7. In view of the importance of the biological problems connected with the whaling and sealing industries and other forms of animal life in the Falkland Islands and its Dependencies, I am inclined to think that it would now be advisable to appoint a Government Naturalist, at any rate as a temporary measure; and I would suggest that Mr. Hamilton who is fully qualified to undertake such work, should be seconded in that capacity for a period of say three years, with such an allowance in addition to his present emoluments as you may think reasonable. The question of continuing the appointment could be reconsidered before the expiration of the three years. If this course is adopted it would

would apparently be necessary to revise the existing arrangements for the discharge of the duties of the Magistrate of the West Falkland and the Magistrate of the South Shetlands, but I leave it to you to formulate proposals. I am aware that in his telegram of the 15th June, 1918, Sir D. Young suggested that a candidate with geological qualifications should be selected for appointment as Magistrate of the West Falkland and the South Shetlands. I understand that Sir D. Young had in mind the possibility of the discovery of oil in the Colony ; but, in case the proposed seconding of Mr. Hamilton should render it necessary for you to ask for another Officer, I may say that I do not regard the proposed amalgamation of functions as desirable and I am considering other means of securing a geological survey in the Colony.

8. The suggestions put forward in this despatch especially in regard to the fur seal rookeries, would apparently render it necessary for Mr. Hamilton to remain in the Falkland Islands after the time at which the whaling expeditions usually leave for the South Shetlands; but it might be possible in one of the following years to arrange for him to proceed to the Dependency in his capacity as Government Naturalist when he could report on seal conditions there as contemplated by Colonel St. Johnston at the end of the 5th paragraph of his despatch. In that case, the presence of another officer of the Government in the Dependency would have the advantage of affording some additional supervision over the whaling operations, and this would appear desirable having regard to the increased number of vessels which will be working at the South Shetlands in future as compared with the number during the War. I have not overlooked the fact that biological investigations form an important part of the work of the expedition suggested by the Inter-Departmental Committee, but I concur in the opinion expressed by
Colonel

Colonel St. Johnston in paragraph 4 of his despatch as to the value to the Governor of having an Officer available who is qualified to advise on the scientific and technical aspects of the whaling and sealing industries.

9. I enclose for your information copies of the letters which have been addressed to the Trustees of the British Museum and the Department of the Overseas Trade.

I have etc.,

(Sgd.) Milner.