

# **PILBARA CAMEL STRIKE 1908 – SAMPLE NEWSPAPER REPORTS (TRANSCRIBED)**

**August - November 1908**

Hedland Advocate (Port Hedland, WA), Saturday 22 August 1908, page 5

## **Camel Carriers' Strike**

[To the Editor]

Sir,—In regard to the Afghan camel carriers strike, allow me to bring a few facts before the notice of the public, storekeepers in particular. We only want to save ourselves from ruin and insolvency in the end. The rate of carting now is so small that it never pays for working expenses, let alone profit.

This should prove to anyone's satisfaction: say I have 40 camels, representing a value of £2,000, requiring five men to work them. Each man is paid £8 a month and £1 or £2 extra if in charge. We have to supply them with rations, which costs at least £4 per month. Now, 40 camels can carry 8 tons, and on an average it takes a month to do the trip to Marble Bar, Moolyella, Cooglegong, the three chief places outback. At £6 per ton (many of the carriers are paid less) the trip will earn £48, while wages and rations come to £62. You must allow another £10 to for sundries, hobbles, straps, chains, straw, cloth for saddles, bells, horse feed, shoeing, etc,

Now, as you are aware, there is very little tin, for back loading—not more than an average of three tons for the 40 camels., This, at £5 per ton only brings the earning to £63, while the cost is £72. Camels also die, get lame, or are lost, so you see we are very harshly done by.

We are not allowed to import drivers from India, and even the natives are forbidden to work for us. Thus we are handicapped in every possible way from earning an honest living. Surely as you people call yourselves white, British and Christians, we are lost in amazement to find the motto belonging to such titles as above. Where is your true British motto of live and let live. Every storekeeper is aware that we are losing at the present price, yet they won't help us from the ruin in sight. We are slaving our insides out for the benefit of the storekeepers only, with not even any benefit to the public.

The public were charged 25/- per week for board while we were getting £15 and £16 per ton, and now the board is 27/6, while we are getting only £5 and £6 per ton. Who gets the benefit? A just minded man can see easily that we have right on our side in asking to have the freights raised.

To prove our bona fides towards the public, whose good wishes and assistance we request, we assure them we won't let them suffer in any way through our strike, but we will open a store (under the title of the "Camel Carriers' Corporation Store,") and will supply them with goods on a far cheaper scale than they are paying at present. In the near future branches of our store will be open at Marble Bar, Moolyella, Cooglegong and Nullagine, in fact within a month from this date.

Yours, etc,

MUNSHI SHEIKH, ABDUL KADER, Manager, Camel Carriers' Corporation.

“Pilbarra Goldfield News” (Marble Bar, WA)

Friday 28 August 1908, page 2

## **Camel Strike.**

A meeting of business men and residents was held on Wednesday to consider the position arising out of the strike of camel owners. Present - Dr Durack, Messrs. G. Miles, T. R. Byass, W. H. Cooper, W. Maher, S. R. Hedditch, H. McDonald, and others, Mr. G. Miles, who was chairman, stated that he believed it to be the feeling of: the meeting that they should not stand

by and allow a handful of Asiatics to dictate unfair terms to the residents of the Pilbarra district. He explained the position of consignees and the public generally as affected by the strike raised by the Port Hedland Camel Corporation. He showed plainly the unfairness of their terms in insisting upon the consignees making a two years' contract, for all loading at their rates, and they to have control of same regarding the manner of carting. The corporation also demanded an increase of 50 per cent in the rates of carting throughout the district, and are interfering with freedom of contract. He asked those present to co-operate in making a firm stand against this movement.

Proposed, by Mr. H. McDonald, "That, this meeting absolutely refuses to recognise the Camel-Carriers' Corporation, and intends insisting upon the present contracts being carried out." Seconded by Mr. Maher and carried unanimously.

Proposed, by Dr Durack, "That a wire be drafted to the Premier, explaining the position re camel strike in full, asking him for Government support and police protection for those willing to carry out present contracts, but are harassed by the strikers, who threaten to use violence." Seconded by Mr. Miles and carried unanimously.

Proposed by Dr Durack, seconded by Mr. Byass, and carried unanimously, "That all those at present holding mortgages over camels owned by parties to the strike be asked to use pressure in this matter, and where instalments are overdue to seize the camels, there-by enforcing these men to carry out contracts."

Proposed by Mr. Miles, ".That the business people in other centres be advised of the above resolutions, and also that the pastoralists be asked to co-operate in this matter by not allowing, the camels of those engaged in the strike to camp on their property." Seconded by Mr. Hedditch and carried unanimously.

The following is a copy of the wire sent to the Premier:—"Representative meeting business people and residents unanimously decided wire you re camel strike this district. Camel-owners and drivers have formed combine demanding 50 per cent increase price cartage between Hedland and Marble Bar and other centres; also demand consignees sign two years' agreement, combine control all future loading. They will not carry under any other conditions, thus interfering freedom of contract. Number Afghans at present under contract willing fulfil engagements, but prevented by strikers, who threaten violence if they load. All camels now held up at Hedland; instruct police protect. Contract price past five years one shilling per ton per mile each way. Full up load and portion back loading always provided. Matter assuming serious aspect. See full report in the "West Australian." Another argument for early completion railway and White Australia."

THIS DAY, 12.30 p.m.

Mr. Miles received an urgent wire at 12.30 pm. to-day, stating that the Afghans are willing to load, so that the strike is practically at an end.

Hedland Advocate, Saturday 29 August 1908, page 5.

## **TELEGRAMS**

### **Camel Strike**

Marble Bar, August 25.

In connection with the camel strike a meeting of business people was held today, comprising Mr. Miles (chairman), Dr Durack, and Messrs Byass, Cooper, Hedditch,, Maher, McDonald, and others.

The Chairman stated that he believed it to be the feeling of the meeting that they could not stand by and allow a handful of Asiatics to dictate terms to the residents of the Pilbarra district. He explained the position of the consignees and the public generally, as affected by the strike raised by the Hedland Camel Corporation. He showed plainly the unfairness of their terms, in demanding consignees to make a two years' contract, all their loading at their

own rates, and that they control the manner and ways of carting same. They also demand an increase of 50 per cent on the rates of carting throughout the district and are interfering with the freedom of contract. He asked those present to co-operate in making a firm stand against the movement.

Mr H McDonald moved that this meeting absolutely refuses to recognise the Camel Carriers' Corporation and intends insisting upon the present contracts being carried out.

Seconded by Mr Maher and carried unanimously.

Dr Durack proposed that a wire be drafted to the Premier explaining the position re the camel strike in full, asking him for Government support and police protection for those willing to carry out their present contracts and at present harrassed [sic] by the strikers who threaten violence.

Seconded by Mr Miles and carried unanimously.

Proposed by Dr Durack that all those at present holding mortgages over the camels on strike be asked to use pressure in this matter and where instalments were overdue seize the camels, thereby enforcing these men to carry out the contracts.

Seconded by Mr Byass and carried unanimously.

Proposed by Mr Miles and seconded by Mr Hedditch that the business people of other centres be advised of the above resolutions also that the pastoralists be asked to co-operate in this matter by not allowing camels engaged in the strike to camp on their property.

Seconded by Mr. Hedditch and carried unanimously.

August 27.

The following is a copy of the wire sent to the Premier: "A representative meeting of business people and residents unanimously decided to wire you re camel strike in this district. The camel owners and drivers have formed a combine, demanding 50 per cent increase in the price of cartage between Hedland and the Bar and other centres. They also demand that the consignees sign a two years' agreement, the combine to control all future loading. They will not carry under any other conditions, thus interfering with freedom of the contract. A number of Afghans at present under contract would willing fulfil the engagements but are prevented by the strikers, who threaten violence if they load. All the camels are now held up at Hedland. Instruct police to protect. The contract price for the past five years has been one shilling per ton per mile, each way, a full upload and a portion of back loading always provided. The matter is assuming a serious aspect. See full report in "West Australian."

Another argument for the early completion of the railway and a white Australia.

"The Age", Saturday, 29 August 1908, page 11.

### **INCREASED CAMEL RATES**

The people in the Pilbarra district are up in arms against the combine of Afghans to raise the camel freights between Port Hedland and Marble Bar. A railway has been authorised between the two places, but meanwhile the camel carrying corporation of Afghans demands of consignees to sign two years' contracts for transport with them at increased rates. The Marble Bar people held an indignation meeting and it was resolved that all residents who have mortgages over camels shall use pressure, and also prohibit camels belonging to the Afghan combine camping on their properties.

"Western Mail" (Perth, WA)

Saturday, 5 September 1908, page 33

### **The Camel Strike.**

The absolute necessity for railway extension in the North-West was indicated by the trouble with the camel-owners, which rose so threateningly and disappeared so rapidly. The Asiatic

owners and drivers united to force up freights between Port Hedland, Marble Bar and other centres. The business people at Marble Bar complained that the prices have been sent up fifty per cent, and that in addition the Afghans demanded a two years' monopoly of the traffic. The seriousness of such an outlook was apparent. These Asiatics appeared to be determined that no advantage was to be earned by the traders from the construction of a railway. To raise prices to the maximum is common enough with a transport service, and to secure a combine of all those engaged in one line of business is also characteristic of the present times. There is no wonder that camel transport should show such a development. Yet it was peculiarly annoying to find in Australia, which is usually supposed to have the most determined attachment to a "white" policy, the deliberate threat of such a policy. Under all the circumstances it seemed that the traders and inhabitants of Marble Bar might suffer severely, financially, and even perhaps by a shortage of supplies. But within a few days the trouble was over. The Afghans abandoned their demands, and went back to the ordinary routine of business. Though thus pleasantly concluded, the incident shows the extreme need of the Marble Bar railway as a means of opening up that important centre and enabling the still further back to be brought into closer touch with the outside world. Nowhere is the problem of transit more difficult of solution than in the North. Amazing distances, the handicaps imposed by heat, the novelty of the conditions as compared with the rest of the State—these make up a conglomeration of difficulties not easily overcome. A railway such as is proposed can open up only one tract of country, it is true, but when a beginning is made extension may be expected.

“Pilbarra Goldfield News” (Marble Bar),  
Friday 11 September 1908, page 2

### **The Camel-Drivers' Strike.**

The trouble which arose some weeks ago with the Afghans in connection with the carrying trade between Port Hedland and Marble Bar, and which was believed to have been satisfactorily settled, assumed a serious aspect at the beginning of this week. The strike having been declared off, teams under contract to local storekeepers, loaded between 40 and 50 tons of goods, and after being stopped at the Causeway by some other Afghans, eventually reached the 32-mile Well to safety. At that point a number of Afghans came up and dispersed the whole of the camels, about 250 in number, and drove them into the bush. This action was followed up by threats of violence if any attempt should be made to take any inland. The goods earned to the spot named were allowed to remain there.

The attitude of the Afghans has been defiant throughout, though on one occasion they made it appear as if they had submitted, and it is alleged they have been purchasing rifles and ammunition, the object of which has now been openly shown, as about 40 of their number, mounted and fully armed are on the road, and declare their intention of enforcing their demands. Intense Indignation has been manifested in Marble Bar and it is the unanimous opinion that the trouble should never have been allowed to reach its present stage.

On Wednesday the local business men met to discuss the situation, and subsequently urgent wires were sent to various authorities in connection with the matter, and several resolutions were also drafted. A public meeting was called for the same evening, and a large number of residents (including the business men) assembled at the miners' Institute to vent the subject and to deal with the resolutions mentioned, above. Mr. Geo. Miles was voted to the chair, and after giving a history of the case (the early part, of which has already appeared in these columns) read the-various telegrams that had been despatched, and the replies received up till 6p.m. that evening, which were as follows:-

To Mr. Geo. Miles.—

Port Hedland, September 7.

“We, Dost Mahomet, Zaman Shah, Moosa Khan, Secundah Shah, Shah Khail appointed by and representing Camel Owners Corporation, respectfully request a conference with the storekeepers view discussing fair and equitable rates of carriage, etc., on goods by camels from Hedland to fields, and shall be pleased meet you at an early date and place most suitable to yourselves. — Secunda Shah.”

Reply to – Secundah Shah:- “Storekeepers have no dealings with men mentioned your wire, and refuse recognise your so-called corporation. Am prepared meet and discuss matter with yourself here. If any further interference with camels now on road you personally as leader of strikers will have to suffer for same. Advise you come Marble, Bar at once.—Miles.”

Port Hedland, Sept. 7, To G. Miles.

“Hear contract teams loaded have been dispersed Thirty-two Mile; also hear Nek's camels being driven to Murchison; may be some of contract teams. Advise if any instructions. Would advise you act both ends. Police out from here.—Woodroffe.”

Port Hedland,, Sept. 8. To G. Miles.

"Am assured if conference be assented to with committee of camel owners at Marble Bar. all teams now blocked can proceed. Reply urgent. Request appears final.—Browne, R.M."

Reply.—To R.M., Port Hedland.

“You appear misunderstand position. So-called corporation are flouting laws country by interfering by force with contract men who are satisfied with their terms. Business people here absolutely refuse recognise right camel owners Dost, Zaman Shah, Musa Khan, Shah Khail, who have no loading or contract to dictate terms to them. If they cannot obtain loading themselves they have no right interfere their more successful competitors. We cannot meet these outside men in conference. Show Parker. – Miles.”

Marble Bar, Sept 8 — To the Premier.

"Camel strike re-opened. About fifty tons loaded last week, which strikers blocked at Causeway on Thursday, was taken to Thirty-Two Mile with police assistance, where it has again been blocked. Hedland advises camel proprietors carrying this loading willing fulfil contracts, but being harassed and coerced by strikers, who have dispersed some 250 camels and driven them into bush, greatly endangering same. Two thousand pounds' worth loading, including some belonging Government, also in imminent danger. Please instruct police escort loading to destinations. Consider ringleaders, who are flouting laws of country, should be under arrest before this. Urge you swear in special constables; no use sending two or three men; camels require to be watched night and day. - Geo. Miles."

Reply—"Wire received. Commissioner Police instructed to take whatever steps he deems necessary. — Newton Moore."

Perth, Sept. 8.—To R.M., Marble Bar.

"Wire received. Commissioner Police already instructed local police take necessary action, and if advisable swear in special constables.—Newton Moore."

Roebourne, Sept. 8.—To R.M., Marble Bar.



"Re camel strike. Four loaded teams detained, thirty-two miles Hedland; nineteen drivers joined strikers. About forty Afghans vicinity intend resist interference; if merchants would agree to conference at Marble Bar with, committee strikers loaded-teams would be allowed leave. Will you kindly cause merchants be advised at once re above let me know result their decision view prevent further delay and serious, trouble.—Osborn, sub inspector."

Marble Bar, Sept. 9.—To-the Premier.

"Following urgent wire received from Resident Magistrate, Hedland, yesterday. (See above.) This admission and covert threat by ringleaders to magistrate appears to us sufficient to have them arrested. Our reply to Resident Magistrate as follows:- (See above.) Apparently Resident Magistrate and police Hedland do not grasp the seriousness of situation. We strongly urge you insist on police instituting proceedings against ringleaders without delay. Parker advises us retained by strikers; no other solicitor Hedland; suggest Moss, Marble Bar, be retained proceed Port Hedland prosecute behalf Crown. Only way uphold law and order. - Miles."

Port Hedland, Sept. 9.—To Miles, merchant's representative.

"Constable returned from scene strikers last, night, reports Nak Mahomet's and Secundah Shah's camels been driven away. Search made, no trace. Sher Singh at Thirty-eight-Mile; camels driven away. All Lal Mahomet's camels gone. Strikers intend stopping all. Teams - horses, bullocks, or camels. About forty Afghans on road well armed and mounted. Things in serious condition. If attempt made seize camels they will be driven away or destroyed. Strongly recommend grant committee conference at Bar, when strike will be off temporarily, giving you opportunity getting camels to Bar when action could be taken, even if definite settlement not agreed on. Am sending four constables protect loading on road and prevent violence. Please give matter favorable consideration. Am sure agreement can be arrived at. Believe Snell's team blocked. Reply urgent. - Fry."

Marble Bar, Sept 9. - To the Premier.

"Port Hedland police advise forty Afghans well-armed holding up Marble Bar road thirty miles from Hedland and dispersing most of the camels. About fifty tons foodstuffs, etc., on road. Strongly urge you to come to telegraph instrument at Perth office and confer with me. Condition most serious. - Durack, Warden."

Marble Bar, Sept- 9.- To Commissioner Police.

"Hedland police advise forty well-armed Afghans thirty miles from Hedland interfering with horse and bullock teams and destroying camels. Advise you send three police from here immediately. Situation becoming alarming. Osborn on board steamer. - Durack, R.M."

Marble Bar, Sept. 9; - To R.M., Port Hedland.

"Re camel strike disturbance, please inform if you swearing in any special constables, and what action you taking if any - Durack, Warden."

Reply - "Two constables and two special ditto sent out this morning. Have wired Premier particulars.—Browne R.M.

Perth, Sept 9.- To Miles

"If there is evidence available sufficient to convict ringleaders either of assault, malicious injury to property, or under section 528, section 68, or otherwise, they should be proceeded against. If there is not such evidence useless at this stage to do so. In any case the road should

be kept open by providing escort for teams, and in case of interference offenders should be arrested and prosecuted. Commissioner of Police has instructed local police officer accordingly. - Newton Moore."

The following wires were despatched and received yesterday:-  
Marble Bar, Sept. 10, To Premier.

"Large representative meeting held last night With reference camel strike, at which following resolutions unanimously passed: (see three resolutions hereunder). - Geo. Miles, chairman."

Marble Bar, Sept. 10. - To. Premier.

"Thanks for your telegram last night. The position still very serious indeed. Several white and law-abiding Afghan teamsters' lives in danger, besides ten thousand pounds' worth camels and two thousand pounds' worth foodstuffs. We trust Inspector Osborn will be instructed take no uncertain steps to quell what is practically an armed attempt to starve into submission inland residents by a handful Asiatics. You can rely on fifty special constables from this end if required. - Miles."

Perth, Sept 10.- To Miles.

"Telegrams received. Premier absent. Police Department have arranged with Inspector Osborn proceed Port Hedland armed with sufficient powers to deal with the situation. You may rely that no effort will be wanting to protect law-abiding leaders.- Price, Minister for Works."

Mr. Miles, pointed out that the camel-owners who were causing all the trouble had no contracts with the business people, and were asking for an increase of 50 per cent, on the rates which had been in force for, the past five years. A camel owner had recently returned from Carnarvon to make a contract with the business people at the present rates. White men also, who owned camel teams, were only too pleased to take loading at the same price. The Afghans who caused the trouble-had made no overtures whatever before taking action. He asked the meeting to endorse the firm stand taken by the storekeepers, and help to prevent a handful of Asiatics trying to intimidate the whole of the residents of the Pilbarra Goldfield.

The chairman then called on Mr. A. W. McDonald to move the first resolution, and observed that had there been a man in charge at Hedland with any pluck in him he would have had half of the strikers in gaol before this. The replies from the officers at the Port also seemed to show that they wished to force the business people here to have a conference with these law-breakers.

Mr. McDonald then moved:- "That, this meeting: views with indignation the stand that has been taken by certain alien coloured carriers, in waylaying and scattering camels and other beasts of burden, and arming themselves in defiance of the law."

In moving the resolution he said that it might be thought by some people that this matter was simply a quarrel between the storekeepers and the carriers. The storekeepers, however, were merely the paid agents of the public, and if the carriers increased the price of loading by 50 per cent, the price of goods must also go up. It was therefore also a quarrel between the residents and the carriers as well as with the storekeepers. The contract men were satisfied with, the rates paid for loading, and as proving this Lal Mahomet, who recently arrived at Port Hedland after traversing the other fields, stated that he could not get as good a price as that paid-here. In referring to the trouble in its acute stage, he (the speaker) said that the

trouble was brewing about two weeks ago, when, several men were stuck up at Port Hedland, with 150 camels. These men, who were working under contract, were quite satisfied and willing to accept loading, and intended to load as usual, but they were threatened by a number of other camel-owners;. They therefore did not care to take the risk," He (the speaker) went to Port Hedland the day after received intimation of this and interviewed Lal Mahomet, and by arrangement with Mr Byass, with whom this carrier is under contract, it was decided to load. They then loaded 40 or 50 tons of stuff, and the teams reached the 32-mile well. Being assured by the Afghans that the trouble was over he. returned to Marble Bar, and then found that the teams had been stopped. As a result about £2000 worth of goods had been allowed to remain exposed on the ground-since that time and about £10,000 worth of camels had been scattered. It was believed also that Bower's team had been stuck up. The position at the present time was a very peculiar one, and with not many weeks' supplies on hand it may be found that the pinch would affect them in another place, as well as in their pockets. In conclusion he maintained that the object of the strikers was to force the contract men to divide all available loading with them.

Mr. S. R. Hedditch seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. W. H. Cooper moved:- "That in the opinion of this meeting prompt action and prosecution of the ringleaders should have followed their first unwarrantable interference. Further, we condemn the weak and indecisive action of the police at Port Hedland."

The mover said that had the trouble occurred on this side of the Shaw River the ringleaders would by this time have been working on the roads. The police at Hedland had shown themselves weak in dealing with the matter, and the business men here were, in reality, asked to submit to the wish of the strikers. The suggestion of the R.M. amounted to this: "We have law breakers here, will you join them?" The speaker then read the message received from the Sub-Inspector at Roebourne, upon which he remarked, "You can judge of that yourselves," and added, "In what other part of Australia would such a state of things be tolerated? At the present time we have forty men, well armed, defying white men in a white man's country." The Speaker pointed out even if the immediate trouble ended to-morrow it must end seriously. If they were to get white men as drivers was it sure that they would find the camels? He had heard that day from very good authority that many of the camels that had been dispersed were being driven to the Murchison.

Mr. J. D. Moss, in seconding, said, the resolution would show that we are a law-abiding people, and that we expect that when aliens come into the country they win not be allowed to set all our laws at nought. He considered these people had already been given more consideration than they were entitled to, and in return they intended to try to starve the people in the back country into submission to their demands. The police should have taken action upon the first breach of the law. The people here had their rights and it was the duty of the police to protect them. The Afghans should have been punished, but the spineless inaction of the police had had the effect of encouraging them. It was clear that these people had simply been playing a waiting game. He considered the police were absolutely wanting in their duty in allowing the Afghans to go out to the 32-mile well to cause the trouble.

The resolution was then put and carried unanimously.

Mr. J. K. Weir moved:- "That in our opinion the southern authorities have not grasped the seriousness of the situation and taken adequate measures to quell the outbreak."



In speaking to the motion Mr. Weir said that the trouble was a very serious one. The Government had been informed, but it had treated the matter too lightly. Also, the police, when they were informed that 40 armed men were on the road, should have taken the matter as an outbreak. The most serious matter of all was the threatened interference with the white men engaged who owned teams, and he believed if Bower was held up it would bring about the end of colored labor in the ' carrying business. The number of police detailed so far was not nearly sufficient to quell the disturbance. It was known that for three weeks the Afghans had been purchasing arms in Port Hedland but the Government had not taken steps to provide protection. He hoped that this would be provided, no matter what it may cost.”

Mr. H. McDonald seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Mr. W. H. Maher moved that a committee consisting of Messrs. Cooper, Byass, A. W. McDonald, H. McDonald, and Miles be appointed to transmit the foregoing resolutions to the Government. The motion was seconded by Mr. S. R. Hedditch and carried.

The meeting then closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman.

“Maitland Daily Mercury, Saturday, 12 September, 1908, page 5.

### **CAMEL; DRIVERS' STRIKE**

#### **ARMED AFGHANS**

The camel drivers' strike in Western Australia has assumed serious proportions on Port Hedland to Marble Bar route, as 40 armed Afghans have taken possession of the road, and will not allow teams of any sort to bring foodstuffs and other loading inland.

At the present time 50 tons of goods valued at £2000 are lying 40 miles from Port Hedland. Two hundred and fifty Afghans have been dispersed. Armed Afghans threaten to shoot if they are thwarted.

At a public meeting at Marble Bar on Wednesday night, several resolutions were carried and telegraphed to the Premier. The warden and business people were in telegraphic communication with the Premier and the Commissioner of Police, many hundreds words being exchanged in asking for and receiving instructions and offering suggestions.

All the available police have gone to the scene. The position seems to be serious, as unless teams arrive soon supplies of food will be very short.

“Evening News” (Sydney) Saturday, 12 September, 1908, page 8.

#### **NOTES**

#### **THE CAMEL DRIVERS' STRIKE**

The Afghan camel-drivers on strike on the Port Hedland to Marble Bar route (W.A.) have taken the logical step of trying to block the transit of all foodstuffs, and the better to enforce this attempt, have resorted to arms, and threaten to shoot if thwarted. Those who believe in the strike method and the sacrosanctity which should hedge strikers when “butting” against law and order, should give the Afghans their sympathy for the dusky foreigner is trying to do on a small scale what the social anarchists of Goulburn Street tried to do on a very great scale during the tramway strike and intend to try and accomplish whenever the next great strike comes along. Of course, these 40 camel drivers will get no sympathy, but that will not be because of their methods, but because of their color. Although they are Semites, they are several shades too dark for affiliation with Goulburn Street. The law and the public will class them with bushrangers or any other folks that choose to jump the boundary of the law. But suppose they had been 40 white men on strike? Would not their blockade of the local community be applauded, and would not even their resort to arms be minimised as an

amiable indiscretion which could be hushed up, and buried under the convenient cloak of a "general amnesty?"

"Daily Telegraph" (Sydney, NSW), Monday 14 September 1908, page 7

### **CAMEL-DRIVERS' STRIKE.**

PERTH (W.A.), Saturday. — Marble Bar reports that 40 Afghan camel-drivers hold the road to Port Hedland and threaten to shoot anyone who dares carry on loading against their strike conditions.

Port Hedland, while wishing the Afghans had departed to the desert, describes the Marble Bar agitation as that of interested persons indulging in vituperative abuse. The police are unable to discover any lawlessness, but five teams are held up 42 miles out because the owners are unable "to find their camels, and their wages men [?] have joined the strikers.

Mark Mahomet, who owns 66 camels, would join the strikers, but there is a mortgage of 15,000 pounds over his camels, and the mortgagees would seize the camels if he did not continue carting. The camels are now either lost or driven away, but no one threatens him.

Seekandah Shah, known as "Coolgardie," the owner of 45 camels, makes a similar statement, and says the strikers never threatened to shoot.

"Mackay Chronicle" (Kempsey, NSW), Thursday 17 September 1908, page 5

### **Camel Drivers' Strike.**

THE camel-owners' strike has assumed serious proportions on Port Hedland to Marble Bar route, Western, Australia, as 40 armed Afghans have taken possession of the road, and will not allow teams of any sort to bring foodstuffs and other loading inland.

At the present time 50 tons of goods, valued at £2000, are lying 40 miles from Port Hedland. 250 Afghans have been dispersed. Armed Afghans threaten to shoot if they are thwarted. At a public meeting at Marble Bar on Wednesday night [16 sept 1908] several resolutions were carried and telegraphed to the Premier. The warden and business people were in telegraphic communication with the Premier and Commissioner of Police, many hundred words being exchanged in asking for and receiving instructions and offering suggestions. All the available police have gone to the scene. Unless teams arrive soon supplies of food will be very short.

"Western Mail" (Perth), Saturday, 19 September 1908, page 37.

### **CAMEL-OWNERS STRIKE**

#### **AFGHANS HOLD THE ROAD.**

#### **CASE FOR THE STRIKERS**

Marble Bar, September 10.

The camel-owners' strike has assumed serious proportions, as 40 armed Afghans have taken possession of the road and will not allow teams of any sort to bring foodstuffs and other loading inland. At the present time 50 tons of goods valued at £2,000 are lying 30 miles from Port Hedland, while 250 camels have been dispersed. The armed Afghans threaten to shoot if they are thwarted.

At a public meeting held here last night several resolutions were carried and telegraphed to the Premier. The warden and business people were in telegraphic communication with the Premier and the Commissioner of Police, many hundred words being exchanged in asking for and receiving instructions and offering suggestions.

All the available police have gone to the scene of the disturbance. The position certainly appears to be serious as unless teams soon arrive the supplies of foodstuffs will be very short. Port Hedland, September 10.

In connection with the camel strike, the Port Hedland police have done and are going all that is necessary in the circumstances. The people of Port Hedland, while heartily wishing that every Afghan here were deported, cannot understand the vituperative abuse of the Afghans emanating from interested parties at Marble Bar. The police have just returned from the camp at the 42-mile, where five teams were held up. And they were unable to discover any lawlessness, the teams not being molested. The men were merely unable to find their camels, which had probably been unhobbled by the strikers and allowed to travel away. Wages men have all refused work and joined the strikers, hence the teams are unable to proceed. From the interviews obtained, it would appear that most of the teams were being worked at a loss. Naik Mahomet, recognised here as one of the most industrious camel-owners in the trade, who has been engaged here for over five years, said: "My camels were either lost or driven away, and the loading is now stacked at the 42-mile. Nobody ever threatened to interfere with me. I own 68 camels, but have 14 tons of loading blocked on the road. The trip with that 14 tons cost be £50 in wages for eight men and £24 for tucker, leaving me a balance of £3 for myself. I am under contract to Messrs. McDonald Bros. and Maher, and Messrs. McDonald Bros. held a mortgage of £15,000 over my camels, on which I pay 12 per cent interest., and if I refuse to cart they will seize my camels. If I were not bound to these men I would join the strikers. If I work 15 years like this I'll not have a penny."

"Coolgardie" (Secundah Shah) said: "I don't know whether the camels were lost or taken away. The strikers never said that they would shoot, but told us not to load. We were frightened that if we loaded we would lose out camels. I get the same as Naik Mahomet, £5.10s a ton. I have eight tons at the 42-mile, and will make nothing on it. My agreement lasts for another six months. If I break the agreement they will sue me for breach of contract. When that contract is up I shall not again work for that amount per ton. I have been 18 months on this contract and have made no profit, but have lost six good camels, valued at £50 each. It cost me £40 for wages for the trip with eight tons, besides rations. I own 45 camels. My men all ceased work. I signed the contract in Coolgardie, and was ignorant of the conditions here. I would not have signed the contract had I known the difficulties here." Two regular police and two special police left yesterday afternoon to protect the goods on the road if necessary. The Afghans are camped all over the country near two roads between Poondina and Shaw River.

The Afghans asked for a conference with the merchants at Marble Bar, but this was refused. There appears to be no foundation for the Marble Bar people fearing molestation or intimidation, and no necessity for an expensive police patrol being instituted, as nothing needs protection. The police have also left Marble Bar to protect traffic in the Port Hedland district, and why cannot be understood here.

Kalgoorlie Miner, Tuesday, 19 November 1908, page 34.

### **CAMEL CARRIERS' STRIKE**

Perth, Nov. 4.

H. Musa Khan, of Port Hedland, has forwarded for publication, a copy of a letter which he had sent to the Prime Minister (Mr. Deakin), dealing with Mr Mahon's questions and statements concerning the Afghan camel-drivers' strike at Port Hedland, and the Prime Minister's reported replies thereto. The writer emphatically denies Mr Mahon's statement that a handful of Asiatics were, practically, trying to starve the white people into submission, and controverts Mr Deakin's statement that the facts showed the danger of admitting to Australia men utterly unfitted to be allowed in. He asserts the plain facts were that the camel men were not satisfied with the rates of carriage paid to them and declined to do any more carrying for

Marble Bar business people at those rates. The letter recites grave disabilities imposed upon camel carriers by Commonwealth, State, and municipal legislation, although most of the men are British Subjects. The writer also declares that there is absolutely no ground for the statement that so-called Afghans were arming or armed to enforce their claims as had been represented, and attributes misrepresentations made to racial ill-feeling.