

Race Relations

Complaints that Lascars Accost Girls

Sun, 15 October 1945

Lascar seamen living in a lodging house at Pyrmont were accosting local girls, according to statements at today's meeting of the City Council Works Committee.

"An Australian was stabbed recently when he knocked down a Lascar who was 'making a pass' at two local girls", said Alderman Armstrong. Alderman Armstrong said that India House, Pyrmont was only 50 yards from a kindergarten which had about 1000 pupils. "I asked the City Health Officer to investigate the appallingly overcrowded condition of India House", he added.

Has 194 Beds

Dr. W.Mater (Health Officer) reported that an inspection today revealed that 194 beds appeared to have been recently occupied. The place was licensed for only 109 occupants. "Sanitary arrangements are adequate only for 100 persons", he added.

Alderman Armstrong suggested that the Council cancel the proprietor's licence. If it was good enough for Australian waterside workers and British personnel to be housed in huts, he said, it should be good enough for Lascars to be shifted out of Pyrmont.

It was decided that the town clerk should immediately investigate and report back to Council.

Indian Seamen Attacked by Mob

Telegraph, 30 November 1947

A mob of hoodlums attacked Indian seamen at Pyrmont last night. Two young men objected to a girl being in the company of an Indian seaman in a lane near India House, at the corner of Harris and Union Streets. The two men seized the Indian and attempted to rob him.

The Indian broke loose and ran away, shouting for help. About 20 young men gathered outside India House. They hurled abuse at the occupants until Henry Hanki, a colored South African seaman, walked past. Mistaking him for an Indian, several members of the gang attacked him, but when he explained he was not an Indian, they let him go.

A little later an Indian seaman was seen approaching India House.

By this time the mob had armed themselves with bolts and nuts from a tramway repair job. They pelted the Indian, but he escaped and ran into India House. The mob then threw nuts and bolts through the front door. When a member of staff closed the door, the mob broke windows.

When a large force of police arrived in a patrol car the mob broke up and ran through side lanes. An Indian seaman was taken to Pyrmont Police Station for questioning.