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ロンドンのマッチ工場ストライキに見る 19世紀末英国女性の労働組合運動

British Women Trade Unionists on Strike at Bryant & May, 1888

本コレクションは、不熟練労働者による労働組合の組織化が拡大した新ユニオニズム運動の黎明期にあたる1888年に、英国ロンドン Bryant & May 社のマッチ工場で働く少女たちが起こしたストライキ及び同社に関する資料を収集したものです。Bryant & May 社が合名会社に至った1851年の記録に始まり、フランシス・メイの個人記録やストライキが行われたロンドンの Bow にある工場の買収に至るまでの過程や、1884年に同社が株式会社となった全盛期の頃の記録として、工場で働く労働者の写真や経営者に関するより詳細な個人情報等が含まれています。本コレクションの主内容であるマッチ工場で働く少女たちによる1888年のストライキに関する記録は、当時出版された新聞や雑誌の各切り抜き記事が経営者の書簡と連動して収録されています。また、同工場内における労働災害として問題化していた燐頭に関する議論の記録や、20世紀に入り同ストライキが歴史的にどのように英国社会に受容されていったかの変遷を示す資料、さらに後年になって同ストライキを再調査した記録なども併せて収録されています。本コレクションは、19世紀末の若年者や女性など不熟練労働者を対象に横行していた苦汗制度の実態を把握する上で、また女性労働者による同ストライキがその後続く新ユニオニズム運動のきっかけとなったかを判断する上で最適の資料です。

"Using Bryant & May's own material, combined with contemporary accounts in personal journals and diaries as well as newspapers, it was possible to reconstruct the events of the strike in detail, and show its seminal importance to a new wave of trades unionism"
Louise Raw, Historian and author of 'Striking a Light'.

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【収録コンテンツ】

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Early Years

Bryant & May grew from modest roots. The founders, William Bryant and Francis May, worked variously as soap and tea manufacturers and grocers to eventually become the largest British match manufacturers and an important player in both home and export markets, trading in many countries. The documents in this section reflect the progress of their early years, from lone operators to partners in an increasingly important and profitable business. The existence of Charles Dickens' article in the journal Household Words (1852) among these papers proves the firm had an awareness of phosphorous necrosis, the grisly industrial disease linked to matches and white phosphorous. This would come back to haunt the firm in later years. There are very early match receipts which specifically propose using alternatives to white phosphorous. Dangers of death by fire are also referenced in the advertising material as white phosphorous was known to spontaneously burst into flames. Bryant & May used this as a selling point for their non-white phosphorous matches, whilst at the same time selling the white phosphorous 'Lucifer' matches alongside their 'safety' versions.

Heyday

In 1884 Bryant and May became a public company which was to expand greatly during the remainder of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries. The new company comprised Bryant & May's business and that of two other match manufacturers, Pace & Sons and J.H. Hunt & Co. The business grew quickly, taking over Bell & Black, with their four British factories in 1885. Increased production encouraged a drive for export markets in Australia, India and the Far East. The following documents comprise staff and director photographs, press cuttings regarding the Match Tax Protest of 1871, diary entries from Francis May, 1865, business papers relating to the company's fortunes during the latter half of the nineteenth century as well as other community initiatives undertaken by the firm.

The Strike

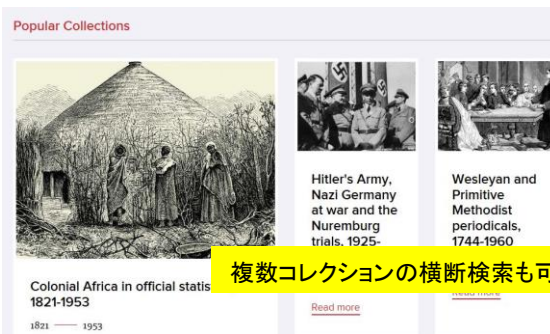
Bryant & May continued to prosper into 1887: the Bryant sons had renounced the Quaker religion, perceived as a serious barrier to social advancement. Their power and influence had managed to reach the very heart of the Liberal establishment. A statue to William Gladstone, which still stands on the Bow Road today, was built by the firm using compulsory contributions from their workers' wages. However, by 1888, wages had been forced down to levels lower than they had been ten years previous. This was to become clear to the wider world following the investigative journalism of Annie Besant. Her notorious article, 'White Slavery in London' in The Link (included in this section) epitomised the angst being generated against the firm, and encouraged a boycott of all B&M products. The strike of 1888 was not the first by Bryant & May's matchwomen, but it was the first to end in victory, and the formation of the largest union of women and girls in the country. Documents to be found herein include balance sheet ledgers showing the impact of the strike on company performance; press cuttings and correspondence relating to the sweating system and Bryant & May in particular; various pages from Besant's The Link; B&M shareholder meeting minutes, 'The Recent Strike' and various other company papers relating to the strike.

Aftermath

Despite the company relenting to worker demands in 1888, its label as 'the Phossy Jaw firm' continued to prevail. Ten years after the strike the company were again in the news for under-reporting cases of phosphorous necrosis. Britain were one of the last countries to sign up to the Berne Convention recommendations and the use of white phosphorous was not banned until 1908. Most of the documentation here looks at the firm's relationship with the use of white phosphorous including press cuttings, official legislation and arbitration as well as papers relating to the White Phosphorous Matches Prohibition Bill, 1908. **...and more.**



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