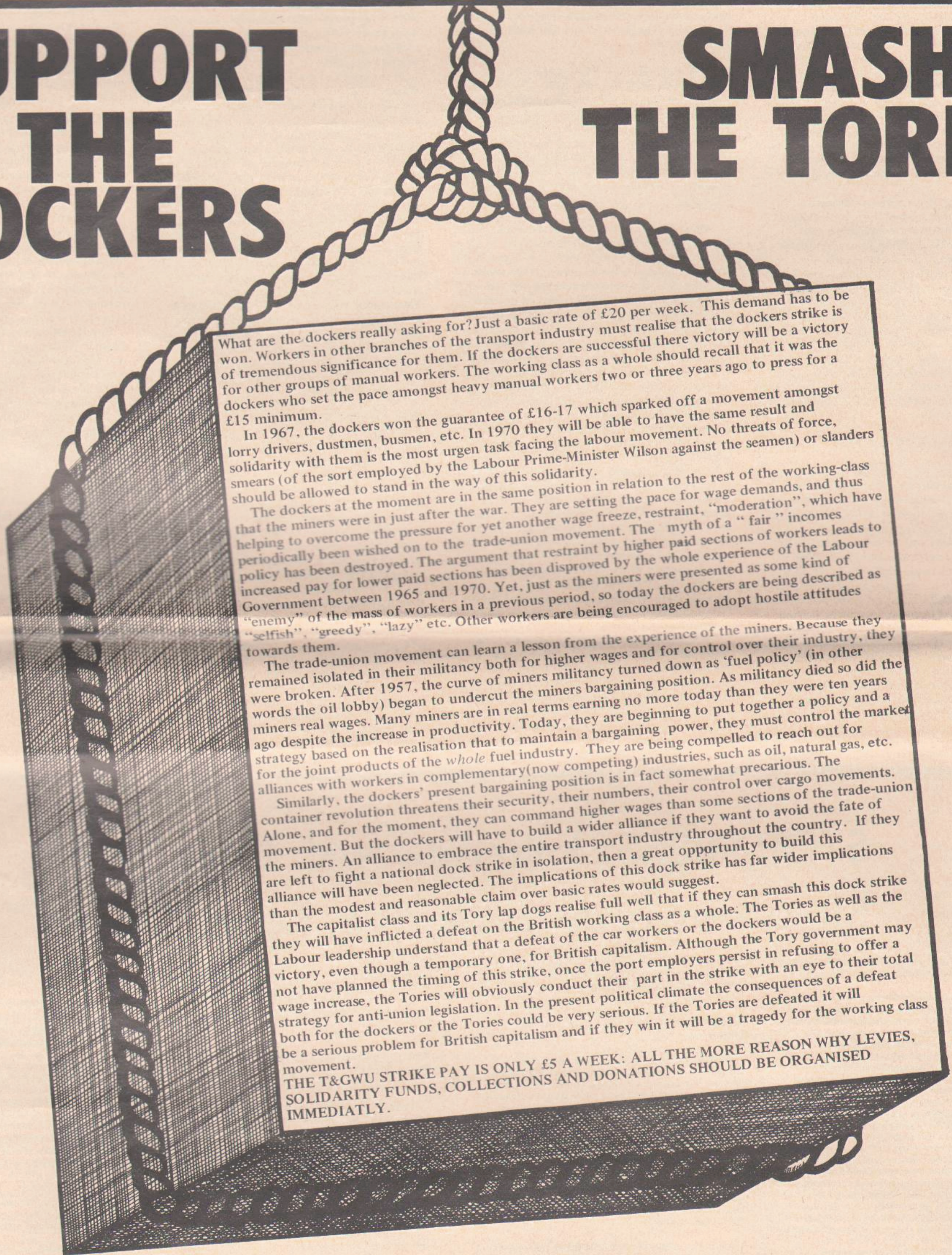


The Red Mole

SUPPORT THE DOCKERS

SMASH THE TORIES



What are the dockers really asking for? Just a basic rate of £20 per week. This demand has to be won. Workers in other branches of the transport industry must realise that the dockers strike is of tremendous significance for them. If the dockers are successful there victory will be a victory for other groups of manual workers. The working class as a whole should recall that it was the dockers who set the pace amongst heavy manual workers two or three years ago to press for a £15 minimum.

In 1967, the dockers won the guarantee of £16-17 which sparked off a movement amongst lorry drivers, dustmen, busmen, etc. In 1970 they will be able to have the same result and solidarity with them is the most urgent task facing the labour movement. No threats of force, smears (of the sort employed by the Labour Prime-Minister Wilson against the seamen) or slanders should be allowed to stand in the way of this solidarity.

The dockers at the moment are in the same position in relation to the rest of the working-class that the miners were in just after the war. They are setting the pace for wage demands, and thus helping to overcome the pressure for yet another wage freeze, restraint, "moderation", which have periodically been wished on to the trade-union movement. The myth of a "fair" incomes policy has been destroyed. The argument that restraint by higher paid sections of workers leads to increased pay for lower paid sections has been disproved by the whole experience of the Labour Government between 1965 and 1970. Yet, just as the miners were presented as some kind of "enemy" of the mass of workers in a previous period, so today the dockers are being described as "selfish", "greedy", "lazy" etc. Other workers are being encouraged to adopt hostile attitudes towards them.

The trade-union movement can learn a lesson from the experience of the miners. Because they remained isolated in their militancy both for higher wages and for control over their industry, they were broken. After 1957, the curve of miners militancy turned down as 'fuel policy' (in other words the oil lobby) began to undercut the miners bargaining position. As militancy died so did the miners real wages. Many miners are in real terms earning no more today than they were ten years ago despite the increase in productivity. Today, they are beginning to put together a policy and a strategy based on the realisation that to maintain a bargaining power, they must control the market for the joint products of the whole fuel industry. They are being compelled to reach out for alliances with workers in complementary (now competing) industries, such as oil, natural gas, etc.

Similarly, the dockers' present bargaining position is in fact somewhat precarious. The container revolution threatens their security, their numbers, their control over cargo movements. Alone, and for the moment, they can command higher wages than some sections of the trade-union movement. But the dockers will have to build a wider alliance if they want to avoid the fate of the miners. An alliance to embrace the entire transport industry throughout the country. If they are left to fight a national dock strike in isolation, then a great opportunity to build this alliance will have been neglected. The implications of this dock strike has far wider implications than the modest and reasonable claim over basic rates would suggest.

The capitalist class and its Tory lap dogs realise full well that if they can smash this dock strike they will have inflicted a defeat on the British working class as a whole. The Tories as well as the Labour leadership understand that a defeat of the car workers or the dockers would be a victory, even though a temporary one, for British capitalism. Although the Tory government may not have planned the timing of this strike, once the port employers persist in refusing to offer a wage increase, the Tories will obviously conduct their part in the strike with an eye to their total strategy for anti-union legislation. In the present political climate the consequences of a defeat both for the dockers or the Tories could be very serious. If the Tories are defeated it will be a serious problem for British capitalism and if they win it will be a tragedy for the working class movement.

THE T&GWU STRIKE PAY IS ONLY £5 A WEEK: ALL THE MORE REASON WHY LEVIES, SOLIDARITY FUNDS, COLLECTIONS AND DONATIONS SHOULD BE ORGANISED IMMEDIATELY.

If the dockers defeat the employers and the Tories, they win for all of
Extend and intensify the strike until the dockers win.....

The need for solidarity

After only a few weeks in office the Tories are confronted by a national dock strike—the first since 1926. Ironically enough, the strike decision came a day or two after the announcement of the worst trade figures since February of last year. The Tories' reaction to all this was typical: they have let it be known that they are considering declaring a state of emergency and the use of troops to break the strike. While it seems very unlikely that the Tories decided in advance to make this a decisive struggle (they would at this stage prefer a weaker section of the working class to smash) it would be foolish to think that they will be hesitant or indecisive in this battle.

The militancy of the dockers defeated a last-minute attempt by Jack Jones to sabotage the strike decision—but the confusion his behaviour caused is shown by the close vote at the recall conference. The enthusiastic reception given by dockers to reaffirmation of the strike decision contrasts sharply with Jack Jones' talk of a "very serious situation" (It seems that he has an instinctive dislike of dockers' rank and file struggle; witness his actions in the 1967 Merseyside dockers strike).

Thus we see on the side of the employers and the Government determination and a will to win but on the dockers' side a vacillating leadership pushed into action only by the combativity of the rank and file.

TOUGH, BUT ILL-PREPARED STRUGGLE

The strike will be a tough struggle but it has been ill-prepared. What is more, the trade union hierarchy, from Jack Jones downwards, shows no decisiveness nor will to fight. THEIR instinctive reaction is to try to compromise.

The Government and the employers have at their disposal the press, the radio and television and the whole apparatus of the state (we must expect the pulpit any moment to swing into action). They will use them effectively and decisively. They will seek to justify their strike-breaking actions by trying to convince the mass of the people that "the over-paid, lazy dockers are holding the country to ransom". They will systematically lie and distort; they will play upon the worst fears and prejudices of the middle class, backward workers and others. They will use the "trump cards" of witch-hunting

(how long will it be before they, just like Wilson in 1966, discover a plot) and Powellism (his role being to mobilise radical right wing forces to put "pressure on the Government;" in reality he will fly their kites).

WHAT A DEFEAT FOR THE DOCKERS WOULD MEAN

The dockers have a great fighting tradition and tremendous solidarity. They are confident in the knowledge that they alone know how to run the docks and that the threat of the use of troops is bluff, designed to intimidate them and push their trade union leaders into a panicky compromise. They will struggle with great determination and give the rest of us lessons in militancy

Whilst we have every confidence in the fighting spirit of the dockers it would be irresponsible not to face the facts: a defeat in this struggle would be a terrible blow to the whole working class, it would encourage every section of the employers to hold firm against demands and it would demoralise the militants in other industries. It would be followed very quickly by the Tories pushing through their anti-trade union measures. A victory, especially a decisive one, would have enormous political significance. It would encourage combativity and demonstrate the complete incapacity of the Tories to solve the problem of British capitalism. This is why the outcome of this struggle is of vital concern to all on the left and, indeed, to the whole labour and socialist movement.

The left must mobilise to counter the filthy anti-working class propaganda of the press and mass media; it must engage in every kind of solidarity action possible: collection of monies for strike funds, mass meetings for the dockers to state their case and agitation for solidarity strike actions in other industries. A mass demonstration in support of the dockers could be a very effective focus for this activity. But the revolutionary left has a much more vital task: it needs to help in the working out of a strategy for victory.

The main danger of defeat or of a demoralising compromise comes from the faltering, incompetent, indecisive and unimaginative "leadership" given by the top trade union bureaucrats. What confidence can one have in a "general" who tries to call off the battle on the

eve of "D-Day"? That is not the way wars are won. On the contrary—the general who wins wars is the general who goes into a battle with determination to win based upon a strategy of mobilising his entire strength in one quick decisive offensive.

If the might of the Transport and General Workers Union was mobilised for a quick decisive struggle the battle would be short and completely victorious. There will be neither justice nor logic if the dockers are left to struggle alone on their £5 a week strike pay whilst the tens of thousands of TGWU members driving lorries continue working. A dock strike will tie up most imports and exports but an increasing proportion of trade is being done by airfreight—can trade union members (especially members of the TGWU) be expected to scab on their docker brothers by continuing to handle this freight? The dockers and all TGWU members should reject talk of a long strike by the dockers alone and counterpose a total transport strike. They should demand of their officials a clear unambiguous call for all transport to stop until the dockers have won. It will be criminal if the dockers are left to fight alone—unofficial action by airfreight workers and lorry drivers will be entirely justifiable and commendable if this call is not made.

THE NEED FOR SOLIDARITY

Every trade union member, every socialist, every member of the Communist Party (they have an special responsibility to prevent their leaders from supporting any compromise because of the latter's relations with the TGWU leadership), every member of the Labour Party, whilst themselves carrying out maximum solidarity action, should demand of their organisations: full support for the dockers, no retreat or scabbing, full mobilisation until victory. If the Government and the employers threaten to mobilise their full resources there is only one answer: the labour movement must and will mobilise its full resources.

Let no one fob off militants with collections and resolution of support (as valuable as they are) if these are substitutes for full mobilisation of the labour movement's resources.

To achieve this mobilisation solidarity committees should set up to organise this action and, more important, organise a political fight to ensure this mobilisation.

WHERE DO THE LABOUR MP'S STAND?

Every trade union leader, Labour Party official and MP must be asked where they stand—for national interest (i.e. for the employers, for the smashing of the Tories) or for the complete victory of the dockers

(in which case their deeds will have to be in their words) But militancy is not enough. This struggle must be used to inflict a defeat upon the employers and the Tories must be used to smash the Tories' anti-trade union plans before they have a chance of going. All this means having a political programme. The essence of this programme is that it has been demonstrated in the past that the employers are completely incapable of running the docks. They can control the docks so only on the basis of increasing the exploitation of dockers (when real wages are further and further behind productivity) and security is sacrificed to "increasing efficiency".

Docks nationalisation is obviously not the order of the day; but not nationalisation of one type of employer is replaced by another. Crippling rates of compensation are essential. The key slogan must be for 100% nationalisation under workers control. During the course of the struggle the dockers for control will be put into practice by the creation of rank and file strike committees. These committees should be deepened and strengthened so that they have complete control over every aspect of the running of the docks and they alone have the right to call a strike. They should link up and have a liaison with the committees of solidarity in other industries.

FOR FULL VICTORY ON THE DOCKERS
SMASH THE TORY ANTI-TRADE UNION PLANS!
FOR A COMPLETE TRANSPORT STRIKE
UNTIL VICTORY!
FOR DOCKERS NATIONALISATION
WORKERS CONTROL!

Pat Jones

STOP PRESS: Interview with Ernie Rice, Shop stewards committee, Royal Docks

Can you tell us why it was necessary for dockers to put forward the demand for the £20 basic?

We have been putting forward a claim for an increase in the basic wage for two and a half years. This is consistent with the Devlin recommendations: in 1967 Devlin said that the minimum guarantee should be commuted to the basic wage, i.e. the £16 and £17 (in London) minimum guarantee should in fact become the basic wage. The employers accepted Devlin with alacrity, but they have chosen to ignore this particular part of his recommendations. Three or four months ago, the trade union negotiators decided that they must revise this claim and ask for a £20 a week basic. There had been great changes in the docks, containerisation was causing unemployment, the cost of living had risen since 1967. The employers, however, maintained their adamant attitude. They couldn't see, they told us, how they could meet this demand. They gave various excuses: the dockers had high earnings, the highest after the printers; the demand would put 50% on the wage bill; and what was probably the main point for them, they thought that an increase in the basic rate would interfere with Devlin Phase Two negotiations.

We have had 4 delegates conferences on this issue. Last week on July 9th, the delegates thought that they must reach a decision as they'd allowed the negotiations to go on long enough. They had to meet the employer's obstinacy with a challenge. Therefore the docks delegates conference decided on total action. After the weekend's meetings at the Ministry, the employers came up with a puerile offer; there is no other word for it. The offer was put to the delegates' conference yesterday (Wednesday the 15th). The delegates gave it all consideration, listened attentively to Jack Jones and others, but after much heart-

to what we were claiming. They decided to remain on a total national dock strike until their justifiable claim was met. Jack Jones has said it is a "modest claim"; it is.

Can you tell us more about what the claim would mean?

In answer to the employers' constant lie, it should be made clear that we are not asking for any increase in piece-work earnings. The employer has put this lie about. We say our claim would put about 10% on dockers' wages. It affects the hourly rate, the overtime payment, and holiday pay; not piece rates. The employers' offer doesn't match up to this at all. The minimum guarantee gives us nothing; everything (including piece rates) is calculated on the £11.1.8 basic wage. The only time he would receive the £20 would be when he was unemployed for a full week; i.e. they are offering to increase the daily guarantee by 12/-. We are definitely not asking for anything at all on piece work. They claim that dockers might ask for it later; this is not so.

How is the claim for the £20 basic related to Phase 2 of Devlin?

We don't relate the claim to Phase 2. Except in the sense that there is always a release clause in a productivity deal; this might be used by the employers; if it was used, dockers would revert to the £11.1.8 basic, unless we had renegotiated it. Also the employer, when calculating wages under the productivity deal, uses £11.1.8 as the basis of calculation; in other words if we won our claim, it would interfere with the implementation of Devlin in the sense that

and are proposing that small ports should negotiate individually; they are attempting to split the national effort; unlike the employers, we say, and we stated clearly at the conference yesterday, that the better-off dockers have an obligation to the others, and there must be a national united front for an across-the-board increase in the basic.

What is your attitude towards Devlin Phase 2?

Having read all possible literature, collected all the information I can, about the changes that in the docks, containerisation and so on, I think we've got to accept that change is inevitable. But it doesn't mean that we should accept less than what the changes are worth to the employers. All the delegates are far from satisfied with what has been obtained in London Phase 2. But we have a position again where the employers are saying that cost-wise they can go no further. We recommended the Phase 2 document to our members on the basis of the clause which gives us the right to review the situation if there are changes in methods and increased productivity.

What will happen if the troops are sent to the docks?

Nothing, in so far as the dockers are concerned. We accept that the troops must carry out orders, there will be no attempt to stop them physically. But if the troops are sent in the trade-union leadership is prepared to take action in discussing with other trade unions and other groups in the T&G. We would pull

Federation; Tim O'Leary is chairman of the section of the ITF. *

What do you think about Jack Jones's appeal in appealing to the dockers to return to work before the delegates' conference had been held to decide on the employers' offer?

Jack Jones was in order in appealing for a return to work. But in my opinion the appeal was ill-timed. He should have waited for the delegates' conference. But the appeal was in order.

Do you think it was contradictory that the T&G official leadership both threatened a strike if Devlin Phase 2 was not implemented on time, and made the strike for the £20 official?

It does seem a little contradictory, I agree you don't enter into an agreement like Phase 2 until you have the unexploded bomb of the £11.1.8 basic.

We must safeguard our membership in case the termination clauses in the productivity agreement are implemented.

* A rank and file docker in the Royals told us that if troops were sent in dockers would overturn lorries taking goods out of the docks. Another worker said that when the troops were last sent to maintain men fixed the cranes so they exploded when troops tried to use them.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE DOCKS

Not unexpectedly the Fleet Street press has been lying about this strike.

In this article, Terry Barrett, a former militant dockers' leader, sets the record straight

OF THE BOSSES PRESS

Whenever there is a dock strike or an industrial dispute of any sort the national press of this country makes every effort to misrepresent and confuse the issues. Their purpose is to divide the working class and prevent solidarity by other sections of it. For instance the *Evening Standard* commissioned a Gallup poll in the dock strike proposed for July

They published the results of the poll on July 10th and surprise, surprise: 68% of the working class were in favour of the use of legal military labour in the docks in the event of a strike. This is a lie engineered by the press in order to get other sections of the working class opposed to the dockers even in the event of a strike taking place. We all know the results of the polls which preceded the general elections.

The press have been claiming ever since the Devlin enquiry of 1964 that dock workers are getting wages of up to £50 a week. But the *Mirror*, whose share-holders include the interests, has admitted on more than one occasion in the last year that only one out of 4 receives £25 a week or more for a 24 hour week; and dockers are employed in the most arduous and dangerous conditions of any. If dockers were in reality enjoying wages as claimed by the Press and the employers, why should they be unanimously agreed to strike for a £20 a week

The *Red Mole* is a small left wing socialist paper which is continually harried by the establishment; it does not have the resources of a journalistic toilet roll euphemistically called the *Daily Mirror*. But we are determined to set the facts in the dock dispute be known.

DOCKERS WAGES: THE TRUTH

A dock worker receives £11.1.8d basic pay for a 24 hour week. In addition to this he receives an hour modernisation pay, which makes the total £13.1.8d. If, however, he is employed for a full week he receives an unemployment benefit of £17 a week less deductions in London and £16 a week less deductions in other parts of the country. It is true that most dockers are engaged in piece work, and can in fact on an average earn £30. All piece work earnings are based as a percentage of the basic £11.1.8d. This is the basis of the present dispute. While the employers are prepared to agree that they should receive £20 a week as a minimum, they will not concede any increase in piece work wages.

The employers have reasons for this. Any worker who is employed on a piece work system knows what an evil system piece work is. In the docks 6 men working in the hold of a ship, in the most arduous conditions, shift manually 60 tons of cement an hour. A ton a minute. It has to be believed. The men unfortunate enough engaged in this operation are covered from head to foot in cement dust for a whole day. They are not wearing protective clothing, such as masks; they are wearing only a pair of tatty ill-fitting overalls, which they have to argue or stop work in order to obtain. They are like most people like to eat, drink and smoke as much sex as possible. Any docker will tell you after a day on cement that he does not want to eat, drink and it is also doubtful if he'd be able to satisfy a nun's desires. He is overcome by physical and mental ennui.

PROPOSED FISH

The most common operation in the docks is the unloading of fish meal, which is decomposed and is of course not so physically hard as the men engaged in this receive only. There are no machines for extracting fish meal from the work area, either on cement or on the water. After a day of fish meal the socially minded worker feels he should be able to get on public transport. The stink which permeates the air is a delight to all cats in creation. The man who can be smelt even by non-smokers at a distance of at least 500 yards. You can smell him before you can see him. In many other operations equally nasty, and in some cases more so. In 1967 dock workers refused to work on the docks due to the fact that they cited reports according to which if a man ate asbestos fibre the fungus would attack parts of his body and result in incurable cancer during this 8 month ban the bosses of the so-called 'national' press reported that dockers were 'BLOODY-MINDED, UNREASONABLE AND ARROGANT.' But strangely enough those concerned about the national interest were not prepared to scab on the dockers

WHAT THE DOCKERS WANT

The dockers are only asking that they receive a

half million pounds. One one wharf (Tooley Street), Hayes Wharf, the largest wharf in the country, increased its profits by £300,000; this was announced the very same week in which they sacked 300 dockers.

WHAT DID DEVLIN DO

The Devlin enquiry, which was set up in August 1964 and took 3 years from conception to operation, promised the dockers a basic wage of around £20 a week. Lord Devlin himself is on record, in September 1967, as stating that £20 would be a just figure. That was three years ago. Yet at that time the port employers proposed £15 a week as unemployment pay and no increase in the basic minimum. The dock workers, by engaging in a 7 week strike at the beginning of Devlin Phase One, were able to increase their fall back to £17. But the basic wage remained the same at £11.1.8d.

Dockers were disgusted with the T&GWU's official attitude to Devlin. Many trade union branches were totally opposed to the Devlin scheme. They voted against it and in favour of the Labour Party's Port Study Group, which called for nationalisation of the docks. The T&G's official attitude was that it was easier to surrender work practices and conditions of employment, which had taken 40 years to win, than to oppose the employers. It is difficult for the non-docker worker to understand the chaotic situation which exists in dockland.

HISTORY

Before 1947 men were employed on a completely casual basis. They were treated with less regard than rats. It was not unusual for a man to be killed on the labour call while struggling to obtain the privilege of working 12 hours in inhuman conditions. In the 1939-45 war it became necessary, due to the fact that the British capitalist class had to defeat the German capitalist class in their scramble for markets

to have a more stable, efficient and controlled dock labour force.

An enquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Forster was set up for this purpose. The right-wing social-democrat Ernie Bevin proposed that this enquiry should be a joint employer trade-union set up. From this enquiry came the National Dock Labour Board, which, in theory, was to be responsible for the recruitment, employment conditions and training of dock labour. This Board was to consist of 50% trade-union representation.

Most dock workers saw this as progress and were highly delighted that they had some control over their labour through the trade-union representation on that board. Shortly after the Board came into being the port employers were allowed to employ their own permanent labour, which went against the spirit of the findings of the Forster enquiry. This employment of permanent labour led to serious inequalities and divisions among dock workers. In any given dock a number of men would enjoy the privilege of regular employment whilst thousands of their comrades on the pool (under National Dock Labour Board Control) were on the stones on £4 a week. It even came to pass that in disputes the "perms" scabbed against the pool men. Although the war forced the employers to make a few concessions, once they had successfully recovered from the war economy, they were determined to smash the joint control of the Dock Labour Board. The "perms", whilst getting no better conditions or wages became prone to employer loyalty. This system prevailed until the setting up of the Devlin enquiry.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

NATIONALISATION+ WORKERS CONTROL

Before Devlin the trade-unions repeatedly stated that the cause of the major unrest in the docks was too many employers. This is one of the few things on which rank and file militants agreed with the trade-unions. When the Devlin Report suggested a reduction of employers in London to 15, the Liaison Committee and most trade-union branches retorted that the real answer would be a complete abolition of port employers, without compensation and their replacement with a system of workers control. Ian Mikardo, M.P., Chairman of the Labour Party Port Study Group, at this time was instrumental in getting the Parliamentary Labour Party to adopt the principle of dock nationalisation. Within one week of the principle of nationalisation being accepted the Labour Government amended the National Dock Workers' Regulation of Employment Scheme (1947) in favour of the Devlin scheme, which extended the rights of private employers. Dock workers were then of the opinion that these people, who were engaging in two contradictory actions in the same week, should make use of the National

etely dissatisfied with the T&GWU were unable to join the Blue Union and are in fact non-union. It is disgusting that an official trade-union's desire to be part of the bureaucracy has resulted in approximately 1000 men in Liverpool docks not being organised. Despite the non-trade union actions of the leadership, the non-union labour in Liverpool have an excellent strike record, as do their fellow trade unionists in Liverpool.

EMPLOYERS STRATEGY

The port employers have played a very carefully thought out strategic game. Although it took them three years to fully solve the problems arising from Devlin Phase One, they have actually used this situation to their economic advantage. The national docks registered labour force in 1967 was 63,000. At present it is 47,000; a reduction of 16,000. They have achieved a greater tonnage turnround with a reduction of £360,000 in their annual wage bill. These figures are based on a realistic average dockers wage of approximately £20 a week. Therefore even if there were no further reductions of Labour, Devlin would have been a very profitable plan from the point of view of the port employers.

WHAT THE DOCKERS HAVE SUFFERED

Since Devlin Phase One, dockers have suffered more than they did before. When London port employers took their operations away from the riverside to inland container bases, they either deported the displaced workers to Tilbury or returned them to the National Dock Labour Board to be permanently unemployed which even according to Lord Devlin "would be tantamount to dismissal from the industry." When the displaced men were sent to Tilbury there were cases of men of 55 to 65 years of age, who had been employed in a wharf maybe for the last thirty years and had never been used to the more arduous ship-work, being haphazardly forced to work alongside younger men without any regard to their physical condition. In addition to this they had their 10 hour working day extended by 3 hours travel. The London men who were sent to Tilbury were effectively reduced to the status of non-trade-union labour, due to the fact that although the 2,000 Tilbury hold trade-union cards they have scabbed on every strike except the 1926 strike and that includes 1889. Many London men in this position thought they had been transferred to an eczema hospital.

Phase Two of Devlin makes provision for a total abolition of the National Dock Labour Board. It further gives employers complete control over manning scales. There will be complete mobility and flexibility of labour. Phase Two has contained within it a clause known as the "replacement clause". Dockers at present will not scab on another man or another gang in dispute. This clause states that any man of any gang in dispute shall be immediately suspended and replaced by another man from another gang. It is hard for any trade-unionist reading this, unless he has been subjected to productivity deals, to believe that the T&GWU could agree to such a retrogressive step. Phase Two will bring into operation shift work and 24-hour, 7 day round-the-clock working. This will happen because the agreement allows any firm to make its own agreements. In fact the Port of London Authority is already operating at 40-berth Tilbury, a 3-shift, 24 hours, 7 day working week. There are men who work the whole 24 hours with only a 3 hour break. At most automated berths 20 or 30 men in 6 hours do the work which was previously done by about 250 men in 5 days on conventional operation. How then can the Port Employers say they are in a serious economic position. The facts disprove this.

DOCKERS AND PIECE WORK

For many years when dockers have tried to abolish the piece work system in order to achieve regularity of earnings the port employers have resisted at all costs. Now the port employers want to rationalise the docks and have a very small docile, non-militant labour force. They are prepared to offer an agreement not based on piece work. The reason for this is that on container operations a gang can shift up to 6,000 tons in 8 hours. At 5/- a ton this gang would be able to enjoy fabulous earnings. That is why the port employers and their press hacks are claiming that in abolishing piece work they are only interested in the social welfare of the dockers. Under Phase Two, in addition to a complete change in work practices, the docker will be expected to do shift work. Question any shift worker about the serious effects shift work has

THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT DISPUTE ON THE DOCKS

The current dispute is over an issue on which the trade unions have been negotiating for the last 8 months. Pressure from the rank and file forced the reluctant officials into actually calling an official strike. The *unbiased, impartial, objective*, agents of capital have been screaming in the press and television about negotiations, etc, etc. Is 8 months not sufficient time for negotiation? If not then the negotiators should work continuous shift work until they get a satisfactory deal for their members. The port employers, like other employers, are prepared to use the pressure of the government, the army, the navy, the police, the press and treacherous trade-union officials in order to smash any work action to achieve decent wages and conditions. Against this the dockers have every right to withdraw their labour power at any time they see fit to achieve their rights.

The militant rank and file shop stewards, in putting forward the demand for a £20 basic together with its increases in piece work earnings, know that if they won this they would smash the Phase Two productivity deal. A victory in the strike would make all dockers aware that it is not necessary to give up hard-won work practices and to accept all the evils of shift work in order to get a decent standard of living. The employers have had much more than their pound of flesh. The T&G officials must either cease to take the least line of resistance with the employers on all issues or be made redundant in the same way as they have agreed for their many dockers to be made redundant under Devlin Phase Two.

The present system in the Transport and General Workers' Union, whereby the fulltime paid official is selected for life, and is NOT elected subject to recall by his members, makes for complacency and apathy on the part of these officials.

THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM IS THE REAL CRIMINAL AND THIS MUST ALWAYS BE STRESSED AND REMEMBERED

It is vital that dock workers realise that it is the capitalist system which makes the problems appear insoluble. If ever the docks are nationalised within the present economic system, the conditions of the dock workers would not change one whit. The mines were not nationalised for some altruistic motive. They were nationalised because of the declining rate of profit and because it was thought necessary that the tax-payer became responsible for all capital development and other programmes in the mines. A similar position would arise in the docks if they were to be nationalised in the way the Labour Government proposed when it was in power.

As socialists we are certain that the problems of dockers and indeed of the working class will be solved when the workers begin to see their problems in political rather than in industrial terms. There is no reason why the dockers could not operate and control the docks. They do so, in fact, except that the profits at present go to provide palatial homes and luxury yachts for men like Sir Andrew Crichton, chairman of P&O and of ACT-OCL container consortium (the man who is so concerned about the 'national interest' and 'the economy' that he places his orders for ships in Japan!)

It would be very simple to bring about a sane social system in which dockers and other workers control the means of production in which they are engaged. Any surplus wealth accruing from their labour could be put to good use to build homes, hospitals, schools and other social amenities for the workers as a whole instead of lining the pockets of pimps and ponces like the port employers.

Terry Barrett

FOOTNOTES

1. LIASON COMMITTEE: Before 1967 there were no shop stewards in the docks. The dockers convened mass meetings on the dock gates and elected rank and file representatives who were known as the London port workers liaison committee and among the men as the unofficial strike committee. The liaison committee members were elected at mass meetings which were held at least twice a week, and were subject to recall at any time. The committee has led all the dock strikes since the war.

2. SCOUSE: From Liverpool
3. NAS&DU: National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union. Known as the Blue Union.

it's happened before!

Mole

None too impressed by the peace-seeking efforts of Jack Jones, the national docks' delegate conference has called an official national strike.

Portworkers have got a healthy distrust of 'left' trade union leaders, 'honest brokers' from the TUC, 'neutral' Ministers of Labour and patriotic employers.

The docks movement has a proud history. It has fought the employers, it has faced the challenges of Tory and Labour governments who have not hesitated to use troops to try and break strikes, and when its leaders have openly collaborated with governments and employers, it has created its own democratic rank and file committees to conduct its struggles.

THE DOCKERS IN 1945

No sooner had Germany surrendered on 7 May 1945 than the Tory Caretaker government and its National Dock Labour Corporation were negotiating with the unions on how to replace the 'western agreement'. This agreement had given dockers higher piece work earnings in return for changes in work conditions. From mid-May 1945 until 22 August, Britain's ports were gripped by a series of unofficial strikes and go-slows. Troops were moved into Clydeside on 14 July, into London's Surrey Docks on 25 July and again into the Surrey Docks on 1 August. Every port in Britain was affected by the dispute, the government, employers, trade unions and the TUC meanwhile maintained a solid united front against the men's demand for 25sh per day basic and increases tied to the cost of living.

Nineteen forty five was the prelude to an whole number of major battles on the docks. Strikes took place over the new Dock Labour Scheme and in solidarity with the Canadian Seamen's Union. Without exception the strikes were opposed by the TGWU and the Labour Government, which like its Tory predecessor brought in troops to unload cargo.

WORKERS DEMOCRACY

In most of the major ports the men

elected their own rank-and-file committees. In London these committees invariably included representatives from both the TGWU and the NASD. It was such a committee which led the 'Zinc Oxide Strike' in 1948 when the National Dock Labour Board disciplined 11 dockers for refusing to load zinc oxide for less than 5sh per ton as opposed to the official rate of 3/4d. Responding to the defence of their victimised mates the dockers closed the entire port of London. Speakers from the London Committee went to Liverpool and 60 percent of the Merseyside portworkers came out in support of the London men.

On 2 February 1951 Merseyside dockers began an unofficial strike against an agreement on wages negotiated by their union and accepted the previous day by Merseyside docks' delegates at a conference in Liverpool. The agreement gave dockworkers an increase of 2sh per day, with corresponding increases for pieceworkers. In return the unions had agreed to mechanisation; new manning schemes; measures to abolish restrictive practices and the reduction of absenteeism.

The Merseyside Port Workers' Defence Committee—an unofficial body, had been campaigning for a Dockers' Charter, which included a guaranteed wage of 25sh per day; 14 days paid holiday; and a pension scheme. The TGWU rejected the Charter as 'being unpracticable'.

The strike which began in Birkenhead spread immediately to Liverpool and three days later Manchester came out. By 8 February 77 ships were idle in the three ports, although attempts to spread the strike to London had met with only limited success.

RED-BAITING DEAKIN

Arthur Deakin, the hysterical anti-communist who was then general secretary of the TGWU denounced the strike and alleged it was part of a conspiracy by the World Federation of Trade Unions: '...to strike at countries which do not have the Communist outlook....' The next day dockers, Johnson, Harrison and Crosby from Merseyside and Constable, Timothy, Dickens and Cowley from London were charged at Bow

Street Magistrates Court with 'having conspired to induce dockworkers to take part in strikes in connexion with trade disputes in contravention of the Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order'. This was the infamous Order 1305. The Minister of Labour who had used his special powers under Order 1305 was the 'left' social democrat Nye Bevan, patron saint of Labour's contemporary left-wing.

That day 6700 London men demonstrated their confidence in British justice by joining the strike, Merseyside voted unanimously to stay out until their leaders were released and Order 1305 was rescinded. On 23 February there was over 16000 men on strike in Birkenhead, Liverpool, Glasgow, Greenock, Manchester and London. Solidarity strikes were held on 16 March, 9 April 16 April and 18 April when Sir Hartley Shawcross, Labour's Attorney General agreed to drop the charges on the grounds of the 'jury's illogical findings'. This no doubt disappointed Lord Chief Justice Goddard, the presiding judge, who after denouncing workers enjoyed nothing better than a good hanging.

Dickens and Constable were later expelled from the TGWU for their militant activities and the employers tried to sack Constable because he did not have a union card. This action provoked a mass walk-out and the bosses and their full-time trade union allies were forced to accept Constables reinstatement. Constable's militant activities continued for many years afterwards.

Those dockers at Liverpool, Dundee, Southampton, Glasgow, Hull and London who went on unofficial strike on Tuesday 14

July knew that the employers and their government would be far more impressed with their action than the alleged statesmanship of Jack Jones and Victor Feathers. A glance at the post-war history of the ports shows only too clearly that nothing has been gained or can be gained without the independent action of the ordinary dockworkers.

Bob Pennington

BRIEFING

supplied by the Institute for Workers' Control

THE EMPLOYERS OF PORT LABOUR

There are 54,000 port workers in the country, of which 47,000 will be involved in the strike.

WHO EMPLOYS THEM?

- 14,650 are employed by Port Authorities such as the Port of London Authority, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, and the British Transport Docks Board, the latter being a nationalised concern which owns the port installations in Hull, Southampton, Grimsby, Goole, the S. Wales ports, etc.
- The rest are employed by a mixed group of licensed private port employers, sometimes called stevedores. Amongst these the biggest are shipowning firms, as well as specialist stevedoring companies.

Amongst the ship-owners which are big employers of dock labour, *Furness Withy*, ranks among the biggest. It makes an annual profit of £4,500,000, and its distributed gross dividend is of the order of £1 million. The employers are always telling dockers that they must work harder in order to compete for trade with other ports. In fact, a firm like *Furness Withy* owns subsidiaries which employ dockers in all major ports.

In London, *Furness Withy* owns or has an interest in:

- Metropolitan Terminals, along with Elder Dempster
Palm Line
Sea Lion Investment (subsidiary of British and Commonwealth Shipping)
 - Southern Stevedores, along with London and Southampton Stevedoring Co (A British & Commonwealth subsidiary)
Ocean Steamship Co.,
 - Thames Stevedoring, along with Shaw Savill
Fredk Leyland.
- In Liverpool, *Furness Withy* owns or has an interest in:
- Port of Liverpool Stevedoring Co., along with Sea Lion Investment
 - Ocean Port Services, along with

Palm Line
Booker Bros
d) Cargo Operations (Liverpool) along with Royal Mail (itself a subsidiary of *Furness Withy*)
McGregor & Holland (subsidiary of *Ocean Steamship*)
In Hull, *Furness* and *Withy* owns or has an interest in:

- Cargo Operations (Hull), along with Royal Mail,
McGregor, Gow and Holland.

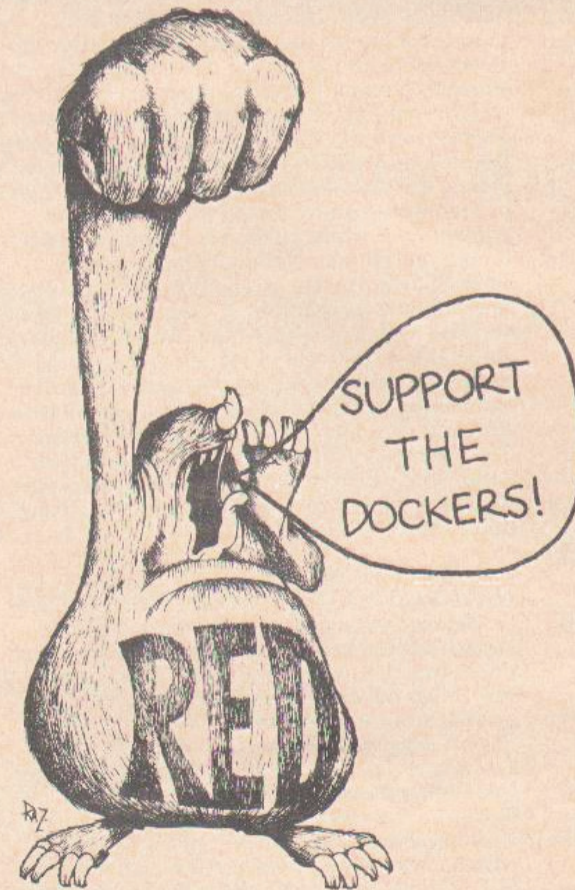
This is a typical example of the inter-locking of a major shipping company with stevedoring (port employer) interests in the major ports. A similar tale could be told about the P&O Steam Navigation Co., British and Commonwealth Shipping, Houlder Lines, etc.

The P&O Company itself owns General Steam Navigation Co., North Sea Ferries, Moss Hutchinson Line and twenty-five other shipping companies. Sir Andrew Chrichton is a director of more than twelve of these companies, as well as the managing director of the parent P&O Company. He sits on the Boards of:

Anderson Green & Co, Anglo-Overseas Transport Co., British United Airways, Cutting & Co., Delta Insurance Co., E. Higgs (Air Agency), General Steam Navigation Co., Hain Nourse Ltd., L.P.W. Ltd., Moss Hutchinson Line, Orient Steam Navigation Co., P&O Transport Services, P&O Pension Fund Investment, P. Berry Ltd., Southern Ferries, Sunderland Building Co.

He is also vice-chairman of **British Transport Docks Board** (nationalised), chairman of **Overseas Containers Ltd.**, director of the **National Freight Corporation** (nationalised), vice-chairman of the **Port of London Authority** (Public Trust) and in addition, he is chairman of the **Economic Development Committee for the General Post Office**!

These companies (excluding the GPO) employ dock labour in every major port and most of the smaller ones, in the country.



BOLLOCKS TO THE UNFREE PRESS

Comment by one elderly docker, enjoying a quiet beer in the *Connaught Arms* in the *Royals* on a Saturday afternoon before the July 14 deadline; asked by our reporter whether he agreed with the *Fleet Street* rags who would say that old dockers like him didn't want all this strife, they'd just like to collect their redundancy payments and have a bit of peace and be left alone by these 'agitators':

"That's a load of bollocks."

Some disagreement about whether they cared about the money. But did they care about

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