STRIKE NO 5
'It could be you...'

SECONDS before Tony Merrick was put into a police van which then hauled him off to Holloway North on Friday, he turned to one of his fell lows dockers and said quietly to him: 'This is not for me, or even just for the dockers' struggle. This is for the whole working class movement.'

Merrick is one of hundreds of dockers who, with their way of life threatened by the new employers' organisation, are turning to the tried and tested methods of trade unionism to save their rights.

But a court of law pronounced that the dockers' picketing and blocking was illegal. And when Merrick along with Conny Clancy, Derek Watkins, Vic Turner and Berneal Steer declined to comply with the order and refused to leave the employers' court, they were put inside for their actions.

Shortly before Tony Merrick, Conny Clancy and Derek Watkins were taken by Police to Holloway North outside Midland Cold Storage, they gave Socialist Worker these words of protest:

The logic
'We’ve no argument with law in itself. But we do not recognise the National Industrial Relations Court. We hold with the TUC policy of total non-co-operation. The logic of our struggle with the employers found that the employers have forced us into blocking and picketing. And the logic of almost any other industrial struggle would do the same for any group of workers,' said Derek Watkins.

'People must be absolutely clear,' he added. 'The way we see it is that we are ordinary workers on the picket lines. It could be any five workers in any job in any industry anywhere in the country.'

'If it wasn’t us, it would be someone else. If the private detectives Midland Cold Storage put on the dockers had started their spying on a different day of the week, it would have been another random group of men,' Derek Watkins said. 'Every docker in London and throughout the country has been doing his bit. And while they may be pursuing the orders they carry on the struggle. Other workers will just keep on trying to do the same thing.

'People must set aside lies and distortion of the facts. They must realise that what we are doing is in the best interests of employers in both unionism and the economy.'

Solidarity march Monday 24 July 10am NIRC Chancery Lane
Tube: Chancery Lane Called by London Port Shop Stewards’ Committee

__(Continued on back page)___
Dockers are pawns in the profits scramble

Bernie Morris is just saying sixty. Two years ago he took his swannery pay and got out of the London docks. With both gams broken and a bad back, it was an attractive proposition.

Now, two years later, he regrets taking it—for the simple reason that ‘we’re out of work. ‘Two thousand quid is a steady of money until you stop to work out what it is worth,’ he says. ‘Now we see what we can tell you how many weeks it’s taken to get up to the 12 feet’ he adds.

But he has other interests apart from his back and his leg, being bruised and finally ranked by the physical strain of being a docker: One of those other interests is his chest. Bernie writes a letter of letters about his chest. They go out to the chairman of medical panels, to his union, to lawyers—anyone in fact who can help him construct a legal action for compensation for pneumoconiosis, another little-known fringe benefit he picked up as a docker.

Having worked under hundreds of ships for many different employers down the years, this is finding it rather different difficult finding someone to see.

Forget the fairy tales tells the CEO and trade union leaders have told you. Forget the efficiency of the system that sustains industry and the wages they pay. In the facts the bosses want you to—any useful handbook in the country—showing the facts and x-wages and work- ers—shows the facts to those who want to save jobs. 24p up to 8p per case.

DOCKLANDS' BAT

The danger, the dirt, the cold, the wet, they earn every penny

PLUTO PRESS

6 Corners Gardens, London E2 BDN

by Colin Barnes

Illustrations by ag

IT’S a disturbing experience to pick your way through London’s dead docks with someone who can verify the true tale of what is happening there.

In St Katharine’s you will see a new hotel, docks and a sea front land sold off to the Central Electricity Generating Board to build a power station, office blocks or perhaps a European fair, and perhaps even a new National Theatre, all on the same site as the drained docks.

In between some of the dead docks, East Battersea via Crystal Palace and Battersby Park in Kentish Town, but not the same same place as the drained docks.

So they do not get registered dockers’ wages, are no covered by a whole number of other trade union agreements ranging from work practices, holidays and and pensions. This is all to stay in East India Dock until the property billionaires arrive for their piece of the action. Then TV’s will move in.

The new trading technology means that geographical positioning of container docks is relatively unimportant. What matters to the port employers, the giant shipping and stevedoring companies, is that they can use as a weapon to break trade union wages and conditions and to re-establish a dockless industry to the advantage of their balance sheets and shareholders.

But where there is only fear and insecurity within the dock leg there is now a deep anger born of the knock on knock-on effect of this long term scheme to be fused to the property sector.

For the docker he knows he has been the victim of a steady stream of ill wages and conditions that are not re-established a dockless industry to the advantage of their balance sheets and shareholders.

Break

In London’s at least, the whole issue of storage and container transport and dockless technology under which the scheme has been brought to a head by the property sector. The started of the Southern Stevedores will come in June. The change in the trade union register is the first of the unattached register. This is part of their campaign to get industrial action which is the register against dockers reduntant. Instead, when they are to declare and be attached, with a minimum wage paid. Even skilled dockers are not on the list.

Southern Stevedores, third largest group, the shortest lived, claims that a dispute has been driven elsewhere. Stevedores is a company which joint own it has simply shifted their trade.

Gin Lin’s the Executive who has been containerised and transferred to Southern Stevedores is the London, and will be doing the trade union work for Stevedores. The Commonwealth has transferred its contracts within the London docks. The gains which have picked them up will not of course be increasing their labour force.

The transfer of work from port to port has long been a favourite tactic of the employers. Recently with the massive development of containerisation, this has made them a weapon in the hands of the shipping and stevedoring companies. Now the companies are concentrating their energies on ports outside the dockside scheme at Dover, Felixstowe and Sheerness for example.

They have also gone inland, building container loading stations coastal to the innocent names of subsidiary companies.

Property

They have tried all their tactics from an outfit called Hays Wharf.

Just a year ago Hays Wharf was the biggest single employer of dock labour in London with some 2000 men. From 1971, Hays Wharf was set up by the London Dockers’ prepare for the dockers for the rich.

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Special report

by Laurie Lynn

Dockers are pawns in the profits scramble

Million

Not all of Britain’s dockers were unattached, 2000 (nearly a third of the total) are still at work there.

Ron Tusa, another Hays Wharf director, spent two years selling the new plan, productivity deal to the dockers. Dockers would have job security for the next five years if they accept the new plan. Not that he had much success.

But the employers’ scheme to transfer London and the property wind-up with spectacular profits.

The City million scheme is made up of benefits for the dockers, high paid dockside jobs, added to the property developers. If the dockers accept the new plan, they will get a profit of £1 million—107 per cent.

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IN THE HEADY DAYS of 1966, Jack Jones persuaded the Labour Party executive to include a pledge to nationalise the docks in its election manifesto. No such illusion... this is complete nationalisation without any loophole whatever,' Ian Mikardo, chairman of Labour's port study group, announced enthusiastically in March of that year.

But the Labour government had set up the Devlin Committee of Inquiry into the dockers' pay claim shortly after the 1964 election victory. The Devlin inquiry was to be a model for other kingdoms to recognise the docks from top to bottom. Backed by the licensing system introduced in the 1966 Docks and Harbours Act, the emergence of giant new monopolies would be encouraged and financed by the government with a whole fleet of investment grants.

So armed with the powers to give effect to the National Dock Labour Board scheme, the unions staged a dock strike in the post-war period to hold dockers in their jobs. They were seeking for more regular and human employment.

A new technology, new methods of organisation in the world cargo trade, turning it from a labour intensive to a capital intensive industry, would complete the cycle scenario for the assault on the dockers.

SLASHED

The Devlin dynamite, like all productivity deals, came dressed in the dove-grey of a civilised society. Not only was there nothing said of consequential unemployment, the employers even gave so-called guarantees against it.

Five years after the introduction of phase one of the scheme, 43,300 dockers have been sacked by one claim of 7,000 of them denied by the employers as surplus to requirements and earning a place in the history books as a classic case of the assault on the dockers.

Devlin's declared aim was to introduce factory systems and factory jobs and dockland. Productivity deals would pave the way to flexibility and mobility of labour, the reduction of manning levels and that most desirable of all goals for big business—higher profits through wage and employment cuts.

To get to grips with the dockers, an offer to eliminate some of the most significant characteristics. No. There was no mention of the tremendous physical price levied on the dockers, especially at the heaviest of the minors. The myth is kept up by the new so-called confection, to help in blunting the reality of other workers with dockers in struggle.

Because of their significant industrial strength, the dockers are in a position to form the Tory government's main target for compromise. This too is a calculated strategy. For the moment the dockers are something of a special case, having co-operated in the rundown of their industry.

It is a story of great individual heroics. A walk out of dockland into the face of any group of industrial workers' lives would suggest that it is an urgent task to better down the comparison and build a movement capable of running society for the benefit of all working people.

But the employers were not relying on Devlin alone. In London and elsewhere they were moving to smooth the Dock Labour Scheme and its crucial protective regulations against unemployment.

Containers were the key weapon and were used to the full to set up or make use of new businesses outside the ports to do what was rightfully dockers' work.

In this situation the Transport and General Workers' Union had nothing to say officially.

Devlin's 'Milks' and honey leaves a bitter taste

major injustices of their working lives would have to be made. Employment security, pensions, sick pay and half-decent amenities would be phased in. Devaluation was the key.

Top level co-operation from the trade union movement was achieved. By Labour's dishonest pledge to nationalise the industry backed by the union leaders' own inability to tackle the whole question of technological progress faced by the union's members.

Soon Labour was claiming that before the ports could be nationalised, they should first be reconscripted, a fine piece of card playing.

In September 1967 phase one of Devlin's 'milks and honey' scheme was brought in. For the first time in three generations of organised dock labour, there was a real measure of job security, sick pay, pensions and other welfare amenities.

BITTER

As yet no ceiling was put on earnings, nor were the fixed manning agreements of the Dock Labour Board Scheme. That would come later.

Once again the 'milks and honey' arguments were paraded and televised through. Then the shrewd workings of the Redundancy Payments Act plus the dockers' ability to stage a walkout left the industry took their toll.

But in the present structure and policies of the TCGWU it would not be long before the attempt was made to head off the jobs fight by throwing other issues into the scrummage. That came after the fines in the National Industrial Relations Court, when dockland's fight for survival became a question of unfair industrial practice and compliance with some other law.

Now as Jack Jones talks with Employment Minister MacMillan about higher severance payments made up by a nominal levy on containers, there might be compromise—for a time.

The dockers could deal this government a blow as significant as the miners. But short of a clear platform on jobs and occupation, the basic issue will be there whose progress, at whose expense?
THE LAW of the jungle was how High Court judge Mr Justice Jack described the dockers' fight to win the right to work at Midland Cold Storage. By launching a crude witch-hunt against the dockers he conveniently turned a blind eye to the real jungle - the jungle of the profiteers who use the most unscrupulous methods to smash the jobs of registered dock workers in order to boost their own wealth.

A close look at the whistling and dealing of the past year behind Midland Cold Storage should convince most people - at least to the High Court judges - of who the guilty men are in this spy operation.

Just upstream of the spectacularly valuable Rows Wharf on London's Victoria Embankment dockside stood the Stamford and Dudley Street Docks.

Dudley Street was closed down in March, 1937, after a long struggle to return it to the unregistered dockers who had worked it for this year with the loss of another 34 jobs.

Goldmine

Both wharves are owned by the giant Union International empire which, apart from owning its own long wharves along the river, has subsidiary interests in shipping, food processing and retailing, insurance and property.

Rivalries for the wharves was not a, Union International claim, disappearance of the trade, for the dockers' jobs in the first place. Rather the claim is to the dockers' jobs, the company's foot in the door, the dockers' lands, the dockers' whale.

Renown Arthur Vestey and Lord Jameson are known as the business wizards of the goldmine. The streets of this part of London are literally paved with gold for those who spend by accident or necessity a little time to stop and look around.

Union International, to unlock, the temptation of its acres of claret-dyed dockland, first had to get shot of its dockers, a process which was already well under way.

But Union International still had dockers, a potential threat for the company, to operate as profitably as possible - this was how to close out the trade of dock trade unionism. The work would be trans- formed, the dockers would not exist, the dockers would, to all intents and purposes, be successfully, Union International had

Collapse of divide-and-rule ploy

JUST as the port employers' strategy of playing one group of workers off against another had been broken last week, a bill to outlaw 'dockers' work' was introduced in the House of Commons on Friday last week, counter-picketing transferred once again to a bargaining table.

The capitalist press had been trying, more or less in concert, to keep the dockers from finding out just what was meant by the employers in this new ploy. A big survey of the dockers, planned in mid-summer, was not carried out, a meeting convening dockers to hear Mr. Social Services Secretary, was not heard and the memo's sent to the dockers were never received by the dockers.

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