



# THE HOOK

## SHOWDOWN!

THE NATIONAL PORTS SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE has laid it straight on the line for the Government.

"We have no intention, either in the long term or in the short term, of removing the blacking. We consider the unregistered labour situation in and around the ports of this country is threatening the very existence of the registered dock work, and there for nothing short of our registered men working in these unregistered depots will persuade the Committee to lift the ban."

And no half measures!

Dockers will not be bullied by the N.I.R.C. or cajoled by Jack Jones into giving up the fight to defend our jobs.

The Lay Delegates have now given 28 days' notice of official National strike action for three demands:

1. The right of dockers to stuff and strip containers — even outside previously recognised dock areas.
2. That fall-back pay be increased to average earnings. (Fall-back is now £20; average is around £40.)
3. A fourth week's annual holiday.

Even without this decision, there would very probably have been an unofficial national strike.

Meanwhile the Union is collaborating with the Court and has paid

the £55,000 fine. Union leaders have attempted to get the blacking of selected container firms called off.

And, most threateningly, the NIRC has now decided to make the Union responsible and answerable for every action taken by a shop steward. This means that the Union must either withdraw credentials from a 'disobedient' steward, or face more Tory smash and grab raids (legalised, of course) on the

Union treasury.

The immediate threat is to **Walter Cunningham**, chairman of the Hull Shop Stewards. He is threatened with fines and/or prison unless he complies with a Court Order which has named him as personally responsible for ending blacking in Hull. Expressing the anger and militancy which every docker feels in face of the NIRC, **Walter Cunningham** has stated flatly that he will defy the Court.

He is the first of many.

The weak-kneed surrender of Jack Jones and the other Union leaders did **not** have the approval of the rank and file. It is men like **Walter Cunningham** and the militants on the National Ports Shop Stewards Committee, not the T&G Executive, who represent the real spirit of the labour movement.

### THE DOLE

All dockers know we face large scale unemployment unless we stand and fight **now**, against the loss of dockers' jobs and the dismantling of the NDLS.

More and more dockers are realising that to defend their jobs they have to take on not only the bosses but also the bosses' state and the laws it makes up as it goes along to help the bosses bridle the workers.

The NIRC wants to turn all the Unions into industrial policemen to control and discipline the workers in the way that the T&G Docks Section used to in the days of Arthur Deakin. And it has run smack up against the unbreakable determination of the dockers to defend their jobs.

And this is the crunch. And it's high time we did defend our jobs.

Seven years ago there were 65,000 dockers. Now there are

42,000. Of these, 1,000 are in the Pool, on a pittance of £20. In London 1,500 will be added to the Pool in June. Since Devlinisation in September 1967 the number of dockers has fallen by 27%. And the trend continues.

With over a million workers unemployed in the country, it is no longer a matter of fighting for the 'privilege' of a docker's job — but for any job at all.

The docks industry has been deliberately run down for years. Jobs have been whittled away, with only sporadic reactions from the men, and neither a fighting lead nor much interest from the Union leaders. Jack Jones is deputy Chairman of the National Ports Council — so he knows the score. He knows that erosion of dockers' jobs will continue. Yet he has led no serious fight back.

### THE T&G AND THE NIRC

Jack Jones and the Union leaders have tried (we believe tried sincerely, though some dockers will believe it was a show put on for the NIRC) to fall in line with the Court and pressurise the Stewards into calling off the blacking.

They have failed miserably.

But it would be a massive error if dockers do not now realise that if this issue is to be fought to a victory, then the only people we can rely upon are ourselves and those leaders, stewards and unofficial committees, that we elect and can control.

A circular from the T&G Executive has told officials of Union policy on the law: 'Workers must have regard for the law of the land.'

Whose law!

Theirs, not ours. A law which should have been killed stone dead at the start is now being respected by the T&G leaders!

## Defend Walter Cunningham

**Walter Cunningham**, chairman of the Hull Shop Stewards Committee, is the first individual militant to be victimised by the NIRC. The Court has ordered **Walter Cunningham**, by name, to lift the blacking in Hull. Expressing the feelings of every docker, he says he will defy the Court.

He is doing what the people who are very highly paid to be our "leaders" should be doing — and aren't.

That means that he faces fines, and possible imprisonment.

The National Ports Shop Stewards Committee must declare that if the Courts lay a finger on **Walter Cunningham's** property, or on **Walter Cunningham** himself, there will be an immediate occupation of the ports, to bring forward the planned national strike into an immediate strike in.

In 1951 when unofficial strike leaders were put on trial in London, a mass walk-out of dockers forced the Court to abandon the trial.

The Trade Union leaders may think that they can afford to bow the knee to the NIRC under "protest". The rank and file can't — it's our livelihoods that are threatened. And we can't afford to allow the real leaders of the dockworkers to be victimised.

**Walter Cunningham** stands now as the representative of every docker in Britain. If they drag him into the dock, every docker in Britain must answer with the slogan of 1951: **WHILE HE'S IN THE DOCK, WE'RE OUT OF THE DOCKS.**

Continued on back page

# Black workers and the Act



A BARRAGE OF TORY LAWS HAS BEEN  
DESIGNED TO OPPRESS BLACK WORKERS  
AND DIVIDE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The Industrial Relations Act is a blow against all workers. But every capitalist viciousness inflicted on ordinary workers hits with double force at that section of the working class which is black. And the Industrial Relations Act is no exception.

White workers who defy the NIRC face fines on their unions, imposed cooling off periods, and possibly prison. For black workers who came to this country after July 1971, defiance of the NIRC — either by striking, working to rule, blacking or whatever — can mean immediate deportation, together with their families, without even the right of appeal.

Under the 1971 Immigration Act, all "Commonwealth Citizens" entering Britain after July 1971 have the status of 'aliens'. (All black people, that is; those who are of British ancestry, ie have white skins, have special treatment.) They need work permits for specific jobs, to be renewable yearly, and must carry identity cards.

What if such an 'alien' joins a trade union and is prominent in labour struggles, or becomes outraged by sweatshop conditions and organises to fight back? He can, at the discretion of his employer, have his work permit discontinued the next time it comes up for renewal.

Where a white militant would have to be dismissed to be got out of the way, with consequent risks of a confrontation with the other workers, a post-1971 immigrant can be deported at the whim of the Home Secretary, on the prompting of the employer.

The Industrial Relations Act means that, faced with militant immigrants who come under the 1971 Act, the law can step onto the factory floor at will — the bosses' will. Someone who is only a face in the crowd of strikers won't necessarily face deportation. But distinctive militancy or any leadership in a struggle by such a worker probably would lead to refusal to renew the work permit, or to deportation.

Like the provisions in the Industrial Relations Act itself, this too would be entirely up to the bosses and the state.

There are industries with a high proportion of immigrant labour — many ironfoundries, cotton mills, public transport, hospitals etc. And such a vicious marriage of two vicious Acts of Parliament is by no means fanciful.

Because renewal of work permits can depend on the goodwill of the employer, his power is tremendously increased. Any immigrant workers finding themselves in sweatshop conditions can be blackmailed into acquiescence on threat of deportation (a real objective possibility and therefore a powerful threat).

He becomes virtually a contract labourer, dependent on the "good will" of his employer.

And of course, the system can not only victimise the militants but can also intimidate others from joining in the everyday struggles of

British workers, thus dividing the working class and increasing the already virulent quantity of racist poison in its system.

## TENSIONS

Thus the combined malevolence of the two Tory Acts can extend way beyond the as yet limited number of immigrants open to deportation and magnify hostilities and inter-race tensions within the working class. It can even divide the black community against itself by separating the community into grades (pre- and post-1971) thus militating against united black action.

The legally necessary identity card affects not alone the post-July 1971 arrivals. It means that in practice the police can stop anyone in the street who *might* be covered by the new Act, and demand identification.

But it is blacks that it singles out. This Act is a licence for every bored policeman on the beat, and for every one of the disproportionately large number of hard-core racials who wear the blue serge uniform, to harrass and intimidate the whole black community.

No British worker would tolerate such treatment for himself for even an hour. To our shame, we tolerate it — when we don't actually join in inflicting it — for our black class brothers and sisters. When they fight back they fight alone, often encountering the hostility of white workers.

## VICTIMS

Blacks in Britain are discriminated against and condemned, by and large, to the worst paying and most unpleasant jobs. To add insult to injury, they get blamed for the social evils of bad housing and unemployment — by people who forget that there were terrible slums and mass unemployment when there were few blacks in this country.

They are bullied, assaulted and

framed up by policemen who translate the real feelings and attitudes of the lawmakers into the more honestly brutal reality of bare-knuckle backstreet racialism.

They are an easily identifiable target for the sexually and psychologically disturbed, who are themselves wounded victims of a system which fills them with sick hatred as with puss.

And all the time there is the insidious bruising of a white culture with values, aesthetics and view of history which depicts blacks as synonymous with "forces of darkness" and ugliness, and as representing a heavy 'burden of backwardness' which the "enlightened" half of humanity has had the selfless and unrewarding task of dragging into the periphery of civilisation.

Racialism was, in fact, first generated to provide the justification and sanctification for the gruesome pillage of Africa, which is now presented as a glorious chapter in the march of civilisation.

No mention is made of the advanced African civilisations that were destroyed in the process.

## LABOUR ACTS

If every worker is a victim of the system, the black worker is the super-victim — in a sense, capitalism's original victim.

Yet it was the Labour Party — 'the party of the worker and the underdog'! — which in 1965 and 1968 took the first giant steps towards the new wave of increasingly shameless racist legislation.

It is now time that rank and file members of the labour movement took steps to rectify what their "representatives" have perpetrated.

And in the present situation, either the militants will take the fight against racialism into the factories — or, increasingly, the bosses and their Government will use their divisive anti-working class racist poison, together

with the Industrial Relations Act, to smash working class unity and rule over a divided working class.

## FIGHT INTIMIDATION

### WITH SOLIDARITY

Trade union branches and shop stewards committees must take it upon themselves to see to it that no employer actually *uses* his power to deprive black workers of a work permit: within the factory all workers must be equal. Any hint at intimidation must be met by immediate collective action.

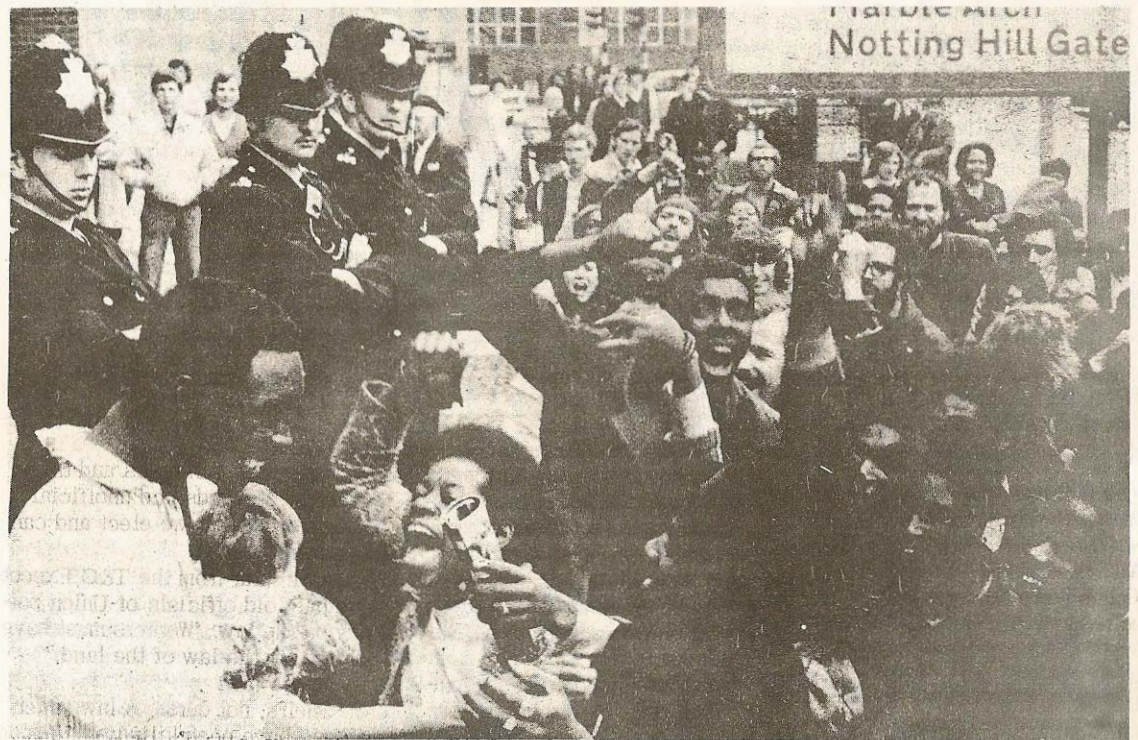
The labour movement must insulate immigrants from the pressures of racist laws by demonstrating in practice that labour solidarity — across national and race lines — can actually count for something.

Many blacks are either wary of the racialism of white workers, or have bitterly experienced it. Recognising why they feel like this, militants must support the right of blacks to organise separately — politically, culturally and socially, if they themselves think it necessary, at the same time as attempting to forge unity in action in the trade unions against racialism, wherever it may be found.

We must aim to build trade union anti-racist committees to defend the black community and also to eradicate racialism in the white labour movement.

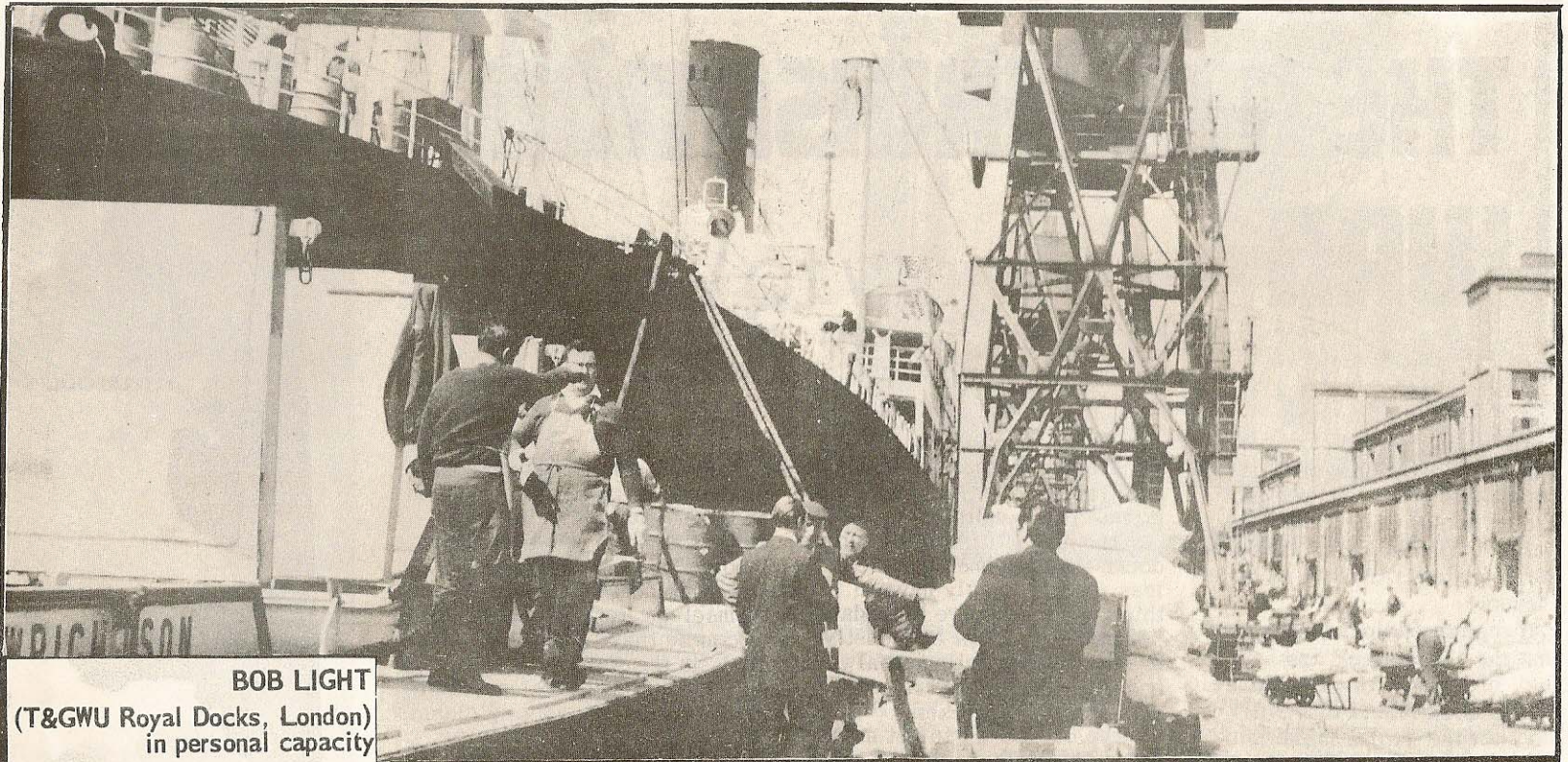
Above all militants must face the implications of widespread racialism in the working class, and even in sections of the labour movement. Proposals for unity and anti-racist campaigns are mere good intentions unless they are ideas, slogans, proposals in the hands of an organisation which sees the fight against racialism as part of a general class struggle and can act as an agency for organising that struggle on all its levels.

Jackie Cleary



Supporters greet the Mangrove Trial defendants outside the Court

# Letter from London



**BOB LIGHT**  
(T&GWU Royal Docks, London)  
in personal capacity

FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS London's dockers have been living on the edge of their nerves. First came the shock news that two firms intended to return 350 men to the Unattached Register. There followed the long period of uncertainty as the men went through the drawn out appeals machinery.

Finally 50 men were condemned to return to the Unattached Register on April 7th. A collision looked inevitable.

But at half past the eleventh hour, the employers withdrew from the brink, and temporarily at least the men's jobs seemed secure.

Now, just three weeks later, like a thunderbolt it has been announced that Southern Stevedores, the third largest employer on the London Docks, is going to close on June 2nd.

This means that not 50, not 350, but 1250 men are now condemned to the Unattached Register.

The Unattached Register will shoot-up to 1800 men, few of whom will ever have much chance of picking up a regular job in the industry again. Any man over 40, any man unfortunate enough not to be 100% fit, any man with a reputation for standing up for himself and his brothers, will have no future at all.

The so-called "temporary Unattached Register" will have become a burial ground for ex-dockworkers.

## SHOCK

Understandably, many London dockworkers are still in a state of shock, mixed with confusion and insecurity. London Docks seem to be 'riding high' on the crest of a slump. But if it is at all possible, I'll try and be detached and coolly draw such lessons as are necessary from the developments of these few months.

Originally 2 companies applied to the London Dock Lab-

our Board to return men to the Unattached Register: Wallis-Smith-Coggins 70 men; and Southern Stevedores 241 men. The numbers were reduced to 50 men by the LDLB, with the union representatives on the Board voting in favour of the reduced application — TO THEIR ETERNAL DAMNATION.

There followed the rigmarole of the men's appeals. In fact the whole ritual of the appeals would have been a farce if it hadn't been so tragic.

The first round of appeals — with 2 employers and 2 union members — were stalemated, 2-2. So they were adjourned to a further appeal for final decision. The appeal body boasted an "independent" chairman. He turned out to be as independent as a puppet. Coming from the legal profession, by the very nature of his background and upbringing his sympathies were with the employers before the men. It's like falling out with the wife, and calling in your mother-in-law as an "independent" referee.

## WELL BRED

There have been 4 appeals in London and each has mysteriously decided in favour of the employers. Once the appeals failed the men seemed doomed to the Unattached. Then, 5 days before the deadline, Smith-Coggins granted the men a month's stay of execution, in the hope that the improved severance offer would save them the aggravation of facing a showdown with the National Shop Stewards.

Southern Stevedores men were due to become Unattached on May 7th, but in view of the complete closure, they will have the cold comfort of going with their workmates on June 2nd. Let no one say that employers aren't well bred...

At the time this delay looked like a victory for the National Shop Stewards. Undoubtedly for the 50 men it was. But since then, some London Shop stew-

ards have developed serious doubts.

The difference between redundancy and severance is looking wafer thin. For the price of a year's wages, the employers can buy a man out of the industry — and he takes his job with him permanently. It is a fact that in 1967 there were 23,000 dockers in London. Today there are 16,000.

The principle should therefore be preserving jobs rather than selling them at the highest price.

But despite these objections, it looked as though severance had restored at least a temporary ceasefire on the London waterfront. Within the first week over 400 applications for severance were received. Most of these have already left the industry.

## MENACING

Then came the Southern Stevedores bombshell. With the containerisation of the Far East trade, it was clear that we would have to face another battle to save jobs. There had been rumours circulating about Southern Stevedores and other companies, but there are always rumours circulating on the docks. Certainly nobody was prepared for a complete and sudden closure.

The news is even more menacing than at first sight. At the moment the NDLB levy is part of the massive Furness-Withy empire. The cargo handled at the moment by Southern will be transferred to another part of the empire. And 1250 jobs will be lost in the process.

## HEATONS

In other words Southern going west raises the same issues as those involved in the Heaton case in Liverpool, but from a different angle: the coldblooded asphyxiation of the docks industry. It raises the question — why should dockers be the victims of steel boxes? Why should dockers be sacrificed to the profit

margins of the port employer?

Looked at in this way, these are issues which affect not just London dockers, not just Liverpool dockers, but all registered men.

Against this background, the future for London is not as black as it looks. In every respect, the London Shop Stewards Committee is stronger than ever. Six months ago, before the red alert, London was 4 separate docks: West India, Royals, Riverside and Tilbury; and even within the separate docks there was friction between the different companies. And in some companies the shop stewards on opposite shifts were in a state of undeclared war.

That is now largely passed: London's docks are far more united. Even Tilbury, which in the past had a (largely deserved) reputation as an outpost of backwardness, has changed. The mass meetings at Tilbury have been the biggest in London; the one day strikes were absolutely solid.

More than that, the National Shop Stewards Committee has established itself in the minds of the men. It has proven its determination under fire.

This is a crucial point. What is happening in London is the shape of things to come.

The problems of London and Hull today, are also the problems of Manchester and Southampton. The employers' intentions are clear. If they are not challenged soon, every port will be threatened.

If the National Shop Stewards can forge a determined national fighting policy, the future for London is far from black.

**THE HOOK**  
rank and file dockers' paper  
available from:

H. Youd  
Editor,  
26, Langton Street,  
Salford 6.

# THE MODERNISATION WAR — and how to WIN it

The world's first containerised cargo, as I remember, was the Trojan horse. Once inside the walls it created havoc amongst the defenders. And it's no different now!

If registered dockers accept that the "stripping" and "stuffing" of containers can be done by non-dock labour they will have let the Trojan horse into their camp.

The containers swallow up more and more 'traditional' dock work all the time. Thus there has already been an enormous reduction in the number of dockers compared with the pre-Devlin period. Now the number is 42,000 registered and 1,000 on the unattached register. This obviously is the main bone of contention in the container issue: Why should not all dockers reap the benefits made possible by containerisation in terms of shorter hours, better pay, and easier, cleaner and safer work?

For a docker who has sweated with hoof meal, burned his eyes with sulphur or ached shifting broken copper or loose timber, containerisation could have been a massive step forward.

But not so long as the bosses control the ports.

## TEN FOLD FACTOR

The increase in efficiency that has been gained through the various forms of container handling is obvious. It has been known by some as the "ten fold factor".

On average containers can be handled in one tenth of the man-hours of non-packaged cargoes, and in some cases the figures are even more dramatic: to every 63 men engaged in the piece by piece unloading of timber, only 4 are needed for packaged timber.

Or again — a Manchester Liners container ship can be turned round in 48 hours with only 10 men (480 man-hours), as against 200 men taking 14-15 days (approx. 25,000 man-hours).

There is no point in denying the efficiency of container traffic. The question is, in whose interests is this efficiency used. (Down my way they've got efficient coppers, efficient foremen, efficient bailiffs and efficient judges. But so what, when all this is directed against me and my mates?)

It is all to be in the interests of the private profiteers. Every bit — since the Labour Govern-

ment hived off the then nationalised Freightliner service to the private profit vultures.

Of course, it isn't only on the docks that new methods mean less jobs. You only have to think of the massive redundancies in every sector of industry to see that capitalism is always trying to push up the rate of exploitation of workers.

The bosses try to get more value out of us as against what they pay us. Now there's a big drive on to keep labour costs down.

A number of factors affect this. Immediate undercutting of competitors is only one factor.

## INVESTMENT

On the docks, new techniques have cost a great deal of money. The fact that the money was in the first place produced by dockers' labour (though some came from Government handouts) doesn't make the port employers any more inclined to use the new methods to ease the dockers' life. No! Money isn't something the ruling class let go of without expecting a return. In fact port investment in 1965 was £24 million — and in 1970 it was £40 million. This enormous sum has involved them in considerable problems — given that they have to show a 'good return', which for them means not safer work, not shorter hours, not longer holidays, but simply one thing — profit.

One problem is that, while the investment has allowed for a tremendous increase in the flow of goods through the ports, world trade has actually declined. As a result port charges, which were supposed to have been cut due to containerisation, have actually been increased.

Also, as plant becomes more sophisticated and investment in new plant gets more and more costly, so the forward planning of that investment becomes crucial to the capitalist class. They therefore attempt to eliminate the variable, unpredictable elements of production costs, replacing them with the more or less constant and foreseeable elements.

Of course this creates a vicious circle, because the more they invest, the more they need to plan. But the more they need to plan, the more they have to limit investment to those aspects of spending that are not affected by fluctuation.

## REDUNDANCIES

The massive bout of redundancies (however disguised) can be seen as an attempt both to increase the rate of exploitation and to free the operations of capitalism from the dictates of labour. But that's where they come unstuck: they can't free themselves from labour, because of course they, the capitalists, don't do the work.

But if the ruling class can't free itself of the working class, it tries to free itself from the dictates of the most militant, the best organised and the most politically advanced sections of the working class.

Their plans on this score are at the heart of the present situation.

First, in order to cut costs, some shipowners began to invest large sums developing facilities in ports like Felixstowe which do not come under the National Dock Labour Board.

They felt that this way they could save money by paying the men less, by having complete control of hiring and firing, and at the same time deal a blow at the N.D.L.B.

Second, we all know that while registered dockers already provide the labour force at a few inland clearance depots, at most others they don't. Here we see an important effect of containerisation's land link.

## LAND LINK

Dockers traditionally handled local traffic and traffic for local delivery. Many ports in fact grew up in direct response to inland industries as they developed. (Manchester with the cotton trade, Cardiff with the coal trade, and so on.)

But with the more flexible land link provided by containers, goods can be shifted around very easily: goods which, say, usually go to Hull, can be transferred to, say, Bristol. And so on.

Or, more crucially, they can be transferred to a non-registered port.

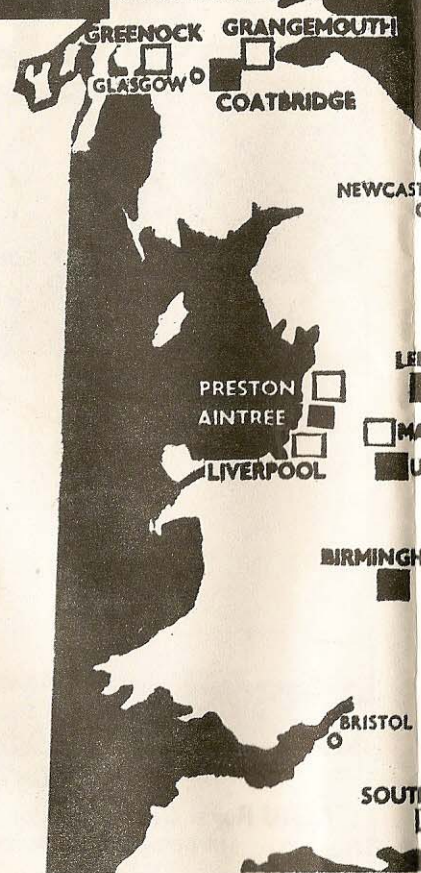
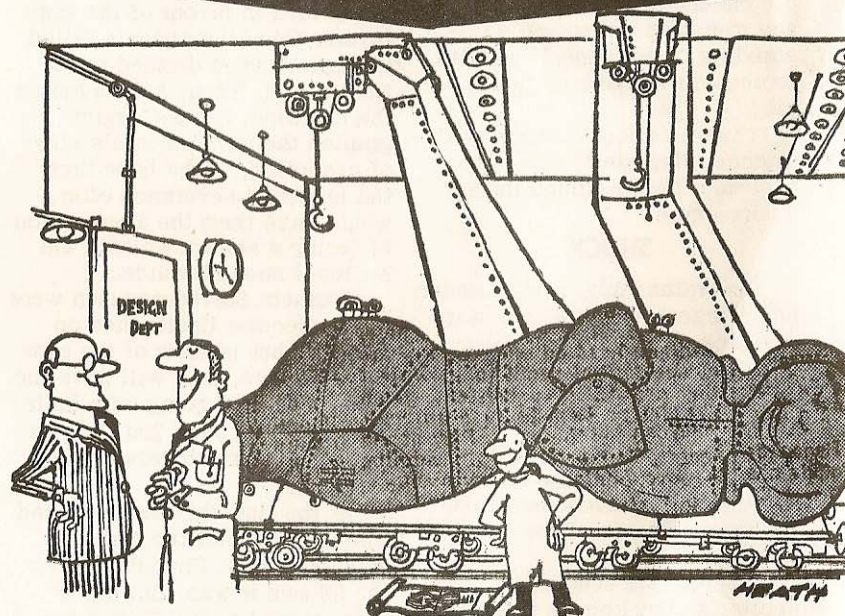
It's not difficult to see how this could be a tremendous weapon of the employers against individual or isolated port action. If cargoes are being blacked at one port, they can be switched to another — preferably to a port not noted for its militancy.

It follows from this that the Bristow definition of port work in purely geographical terms is completely inadequate (and in any case is riddled with loopholes). While it is true that some operators are setting up just beyond the Bristow boundaries, using non-registered labour, of course, it is also a fact that some very big depots are being established deep inland. And these are just as dangerous.

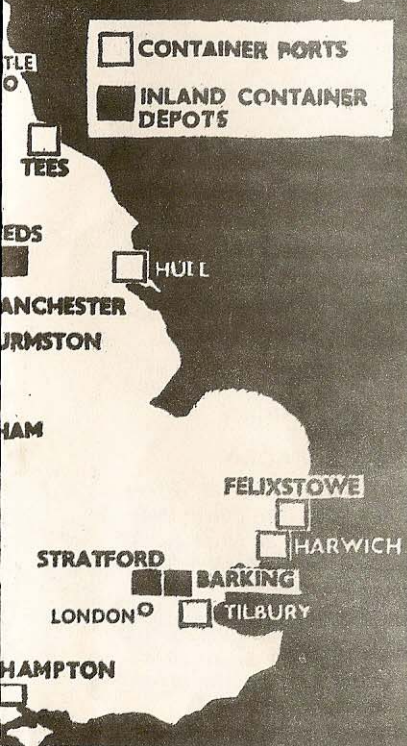
## DEFEND JOBS!

To reap the profits, the port

Big joke for Sunday Times — not so funny for dockers



## Where the containers go



employers must -

1. Regain the control of hiring and firing which they lost in 1947, so that they can be free to sack dockers wholesale. Their first step is to put large numbers of men on the unattached Register.

2. Make sure that the container depots continue to employ non-registered men and remain outside the N.D.L.S. It's no use getting rid of dockers and then facing the same problems all over again at the container depots.

3. Ensure smooth handling through the ports of all containers, and establish their right to ship containers packed by non-registered labour.

Dockers must stand and fight back now. This is the crunch, and the coming fight is going to be fought on all the fronts. There is more at stake for the bosses than dockers can win with token actions.

1. The fight against redundancies centres at present on defence of the NDLS and around the 9-point charter formulated by the National Ports Shop Stewards Committee. (See p.8)

2. Fight to bring ALL container ports and depots, and also those sections of large factories where containers are packed, under the control of the N.D.L.S., at dockers' wages.

The T&GWU and other unions involved must campaign for this, bringing the workers in these depots into the fight. This way we'll foster working class unity, and at the same time work to destroy any advantage the employers gain from moving "stuffing and stripping" away from the ports.

3. Spread the blacking! Dockers can and must stand by their right to refuse to handle work that does hundreds and thousands out of jobs.

Above all, unity of dockers from port to port must be forged.

# THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Containers have been used in many ports ever since the War. But they really got a boost with the Vietnam war. The US army needed to speed up the passage of military cargoes, and this led to a tremendous development of ideas and techniques in the field of handling.

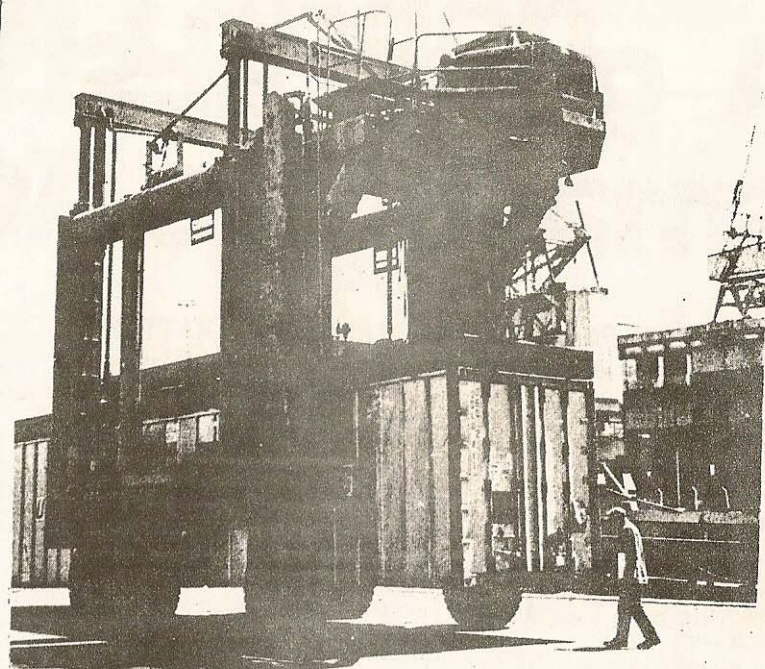
The first British port to use containers on a big scale was Preston. But by 1968 the 172,924 units (weighing 1,437,000 tons) handled at Preston was nearly equalled by the 103,575 units passing through the port of Liverpool.

By 1970 when Liverpool was handling 127,729 units, and Preston was handling only 114,259 units, it was clear that the bigger ports were being equipped for big-scale container traffic.

Overall, container traffic has gone up from 9 million tons in 1968, to 12 million in 1969, to 16 million tons in 1970. Now there are some 2,000,000 containers passing in and out of this country, representing one third of the total amount of general cargo handled.

All the time, the nature of containerisation was changing. Early on, the container traffic was limited to the shorter routes. The sea routes between Britain, Scandinavia, Europe and Northern Ireland - these were the established container routes. You can see the pattern by looking at some figures. In 1968 the Britain-Scandinavia run accounted for 3.5 million tons of containerised cargo, while the Britain-North America run carried only 0.7 million tons.

But that was in 1968. By the end of this year, the Far East,



Australia, Europe and North and South America will all be linked up by the container routes.

Last month the Hapag-Lloyd lines said it would use Tilbury as its UK container base for North American routes. Only last week Mr. John Lunch, Director General of the Port of London Authority, said that Tilbury would soon have facilities to handle West African trade, raising its capacity from 200,000 to 300,000 containers per year.

Reporting Lunch's speech to the Antwerp Port Authority last week, the Financial Times said: "When the Tilbury container port was fully extended... it would have an annual capacity of between 4 and 5 million tons, which the Authority hoped to reach by about 1974-5."

Developments in container

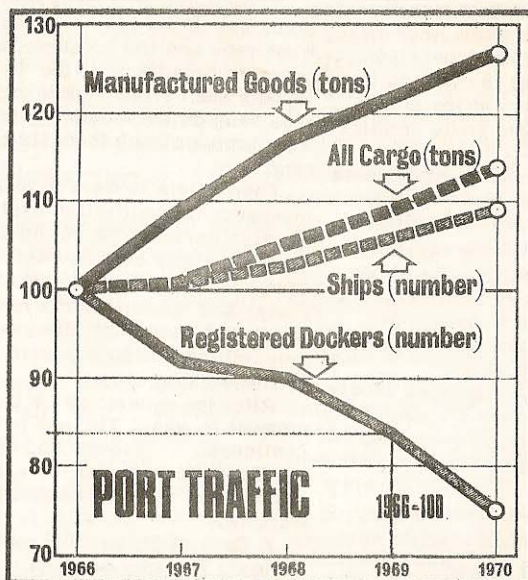
ships themselves will soon make the present 'metal boxes' seem old fashioned.

Ships are being built that will take whole barges, with all their contents, aboard, without any of the cargo being shifted in port.

The LASH (Lighter Aboard Ship) will take 70 barges of 300 tons capacity. SEABEES will take 40 barges of a capacity of 800 tons each. These ships are already in operation at some ports, for instance Lashes are operating from Sheerness.

Modular barges of 700 tons capacity are now under construction. These can be loaded onto the BACAT (barge aboard catamaran) motherships, which are being built in Denmark.

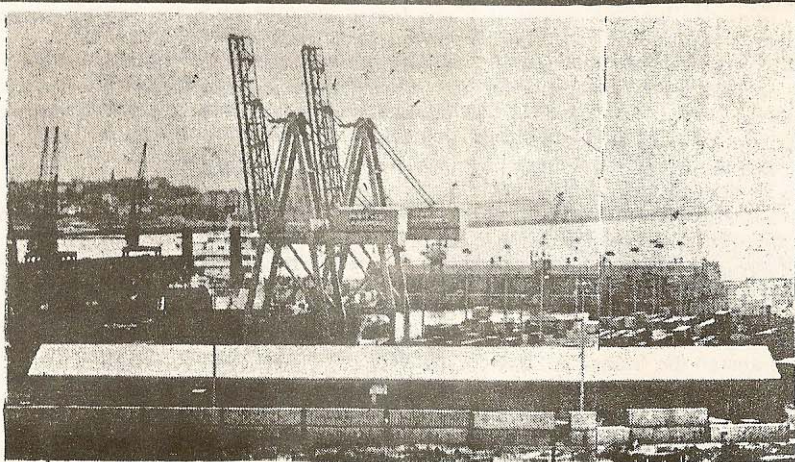
Thus not only road and rail, but also river cargoes are now included in the container scheme



This is all the more important now that the land link depots give the employers the ability to bypass a militant or 'difficult' port, and perhaps eventually to effect a lockout of such a port.

It is up to the T&GWU, the major Union in the ports, to organise such a network for co-ordinated action. But rank and file dockers cannot afford to wait. The fight is on now. We must go into battle as a united force.

Danny James



Seaforth bulk cargo and container terminal.

# A general strike can smash the Act!

THE GREATEST POLITICAL-INDUSTRIAL CLASS BATTLE since 1926 now faces the British working class. We are at the moment of decision which will condition the state of the labour movement for years to come. The trade unions will either smash the Tory Industrial Relations Act, or they will submit to its tutelage.

The £55,000 fine on the T&GWU was the Tories' way to tell the 'left' union leaders to either "put up or shut up". They are not to be allowed to skulk in a corner boycotting the NIRC in the hope that it will go away.

Any employer can now invoke the Act and its sanctions against them. Then the Tory Star Chamber will swing into action with a series of fines which quickly escalate into astronomical — and ruinous — figures. Beyond that there is the possibility of imprisonment.

The unions' attempt to ignore the NIRC has collapsed because of the NIRC's refusal to ignore the Unions. The new law has a purpose, it has real power, and it is prepared to use that power. Boycotting it has only led to an upping of the stakes.

Jones, Scanlon and the TUC had to decide quickly — to fight or knuckle under.

The Tories will have no half-measures. As they see it, the duty of a trade union leader is to control the rank and file, and to discipline the workers, occasionally by handing down a few sops when it's alright with the employers.

Sabotage of the struggles of the rank and file by shambling and inefficiency are no longer enough for the employers. The unions must either become efficient policemen of their members, or face heavy sanctions. And when they are fined, they must either pay up or risk bigger fines.

They must make the Unions into subsidiary agencies of the state — or else come into sharp conflict with the state.

The TUC decision to participate in the NIRC 'under protest' is the beginning of a complete capitulation. Boycotting it alone — without making preparations for either a stand-up battle in industry, or even a determined campaign to bring down the Government — was never a feasible policy.

They must have expected sanctions, and should have prepared to hit back hard. Instead they grow weak at the knees at the first stiff fine.

Even the most militant Union, Scanlon's AUEW, has a policy that must lead them to ultimate scurrying to the NIRC. Saying that "the fabric of the Union must be preserved" is saying that the money of the Union must be preserved. In this situation it means that the fabric of trade unionism will go by the board.

The Unions must indeed be preserved. But as independent, fighting organs of the working class — not as housetrained and terrorised collaborators with this, the most reactionary government in decades. (Not, for that matter, with any capitalist government.)

Only a general strike can now hope to smash the Industrial Relations Act.

A generalised industrial offensive now would mean that instead of submitting meekly to the laws which the ruling class makes up as it

goes along, the working class uses the strength it undoubtedly possesses to rip up these exploiters' laws.

The long term "strategy" of relying on the eventual return of a Labour Government which may (or may not — remember Castle's anti-union Bill?) repeal the Act, is a cop-out for the Union leaders. It is to shy away from a fight where the working class is strong and could win now. It is to hope for an easy victory in a distant battle, to be fought on the Government's terms, on its ground, and when it chooses.

It is a recipe for defeat and compliance with Tory emasculation of the trade union movement for the immediate period ahead.

A Labour Government firmly pledged to repeal the Act is desirable. But we must not allow trade union leaders, many of whom ply us with lies and excuses for shying away from the POSSIBLE, IMMEDIATE fight, to use it as an alibi.

## ALIBI

Retreat will not help them — no matter how good the alibis. Before the Bill became law, token one day mobilisations didn't stop the Tories going ahead. They know half-hearted gestures, designed to cover retreat, when they see them.

Each retreat has encouraged the Tories to press home the attack.

Retreat now will meet with rigorous use of the law. Trapped between rank and file pressure, and pressure from the law, the TUC leaders must either fight back or else hang on the ropes — the Tory bruisers bash them out of the ring.

Their offers to work through an independent conciliation system are also useless: the ruling class needs to either beat down, or ensure adequate control of, the working class. And 'conciliation', now, won't give them that. They will only opt for it after a severe defeat by the working class.

After the miners' strike the Government is weak. The war in Ireland continues. Troops tied up by the Republican forces there could not be used against the British workers.

A General Strike CAN rout the Tories. The very smell of it during the miners' strike, when solidarity erupted and swelled in Birmingham and forced the closure of the Salfley Coke Depot, made them retreat before the demands of the miners.

Could they really resist the massed strength of the entire working class, determined to win?

## SERIOUS

A General Strike is more serious than a sectional strike. It challenges, directly and openly, the bosses' right to make and enforce the laws. It poses the question Who is Master in the House, or at least the degree of ruling class control.

If they retain power after such a defeat on the Industrial Relations Act they will quickly counter attack, as after their rout by the miners. But that will be the round after this

one. The job now is to win this round. If we do, we'll be stronger to face a counter-attack.

## ELECTION?

Retreat now, to wait for a new Labour Government, is in fact a recipe for defeat in the next general election. The Tories, if they force retreat on the industrial front, will follow up with an electoral offensive — on the issue "Who rules: Government or Unions?"

They need a full victory, to intimidate the Unions and smash rank and file militancy. They need to mobilise and galvanise middle class opinion to give them the support they so conspicuously lacked during the miners' strike.

A Union bashing election, following a Union back-down before the NIRC, would mobilise middle class reactionaries and, if the Tories won, further intimidate the Unions, throw back prospects for changing the law, and quite likely lead to stiffer laws — this time backed by the mobilised reactionaries and probably organised bodies of strikebreakers.

Union retreat now will hearten our enemies and progressively disillusion and demoralise the working class. Capitulation will push sections of the middle class now sympathetic to Labour into the arms of the Tories, particularly given the Labour Party's too-recent record in office.

It follows that an offensive now in industry, where we are immensely strong, is the only serious strategy for the working class.

The call for a General Strike must be raised on two levels: that of spreading the idea around, and that of practical preparation.

Bitter memories of 1926 are an obstacle. But today the relationship of class forces is vastly different.

To fear to raise the call for a General strike, saying "we are not ready" is to forego a struggle to make us ready.

## ACTION

What can we actually do? Militants in a single port or factory can't call a General Strike! But we CAN do the following:

1. Argue within the Unions for an offensive against the Act, here and now, in industry where we have strength and resources, and a real chance of victory.

2. Union branches must call for a special TUC Congress to prepare a counter-attack. They must condemn TUC leaders who collaborate, on any pretext, with the NIRC.

3. Union branches and Trades Councils should call on TUC leaders to adopt the strategy of a General Strike to kill the NIRC.

4. We ourselves — the militants, the socialists — must prepare on a local level, now. A General Strike will be won by the network of workers' committees and organisations, most of which exist already as part of the routine self-defence and self-betterment of the working class: stewards' committees, combine committees, etc. We must transfuse into these bodies the urgency of preparing for a head-on clash with the Tories.

5. Militants must build rank and file area Councils of Action, to link up the militants of different industries, ultimately aiming at a national rank and file militant movement. The struggle for such an objective, together with propaganda for a General Strike, is the struggle to create an infrastructure here and now to lead such a strike.

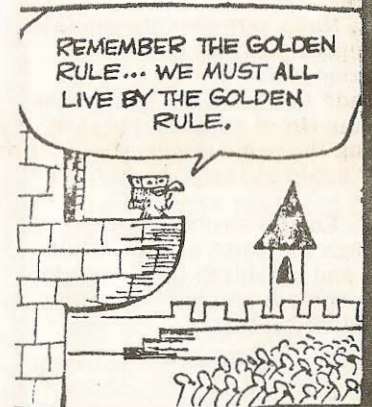
## NO PANACEA

6. The call for a General Strike cannot be a panacea to evade immediate struggle here and now. Nor to evade sectional struggle. We can take direct and immediate action now. Every firm that goes to the NIRC should have the threat hanging over its head of immediate sit-in strike. That much, the militants involved can see to themselves.

Even if there is capitulation at the 'top', there must be no overall capitulation.

Dogged rank and file guerilla action can still make the Industrial Relations Act and the NIRC unworkable.

## THE LAW OF THE LAND



## AS DOCKWORKERS FACE NATIONAL FIGHT—

# O'Leary advises the BOSSSES

ON THURSDAY 27th April TIM O'LEARY, our national docks officer, came to Manchester. He wasn't there to speak to the dockers. He was there to speak to the bosses.

The meeting he spoke at was held in Manchester University, and was sponsored by the Manchester Business School — the training ground for budding bosses — under the auspices of the Industrial Relations Society!

Professor O'Leary's lecture was called INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE DOCKS, PAST AND PRESENT. Among the eager listeners was the manager of Manchester Ship Canal Co., and several of his cronies. But no T&GWU officials were present. Apparently Harold Gee, Branch Sec. of Manchester Docks T&GWU branch, did not even know O'Leary was in town. It rather makes us wonder what other sorts of secret manoeuvring is going on behind our backs.

However, there were two militant dockers present. These were the Editor of THE HOOK, and an ex-National Lay delegate. They had been told about the meeting by two socialist students.

### PEARLS OF WISDOM

One of O'Leary's pearls of wisdom was a little story on the sort of people that important dock officials like him are responsible for.

That is, you and me.

It goes like this: — according to Professor Tim there are groups of workers who are "stupid, awkward and difficult" (yes, he is talking about us) for whom poor Tim is responsible to the employers.

The employers tell him that if he does not bring the men into line they, the employers, will punch him on the nose. What is he to do? He knows he can't punch the dockers (or "the

awkward squad" as he calls us) on the nose, because he fears a harder punch back. This shows the problems faced by Trade Union officials acting as employers' policemen.

O'Leary, and others like him, are afraid of the strength of the rank and file.

When talking about the fight dockers plan to wage against loss of jobs because of containerisation of the Far East traffic, Prof. Tim O'Leary said "This would not only affect dockers in London, but in Liverpool and Manchester." He then made a revealing comment — "I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO"

In other words he has no idea how to stop the loss of jobs due to containerisation. This shows the absolute bankruptcy of the sort of people we have at the top of our Union.

### "PILFERING"

Professor Tim talked about one of the advantages of containerisation. In his own words it "... stops pilfering by mice, the two-legged sort I mean."

It is disgusting that O'Leary, who received a fat fee for his lecture, moralises about pilfering on the docks. Maybe if every docker was to get Tim O'Leary's pay, it would disappear.

But the most important section of Prof. O'Leary's talk was on the Industrial Relations Act.

Of the following two quotes, can anyone spot which comes from Professor Tim's speech — and which from Robert Carr:

"The law of the country is law until it is changed. And we must acknowledge that otherwise we are paving the way for anarchy."

"Responsible trade union leadership can be the nation's safeguard against industrial anarchy."

Well, the first one was 'our' Tim's. But is there really a

Dreary O'Leary in fighting posture...



difference?

### "PAY THE FINE"

O'Leary made a suggestion that the T&GWU would pay the £55,000 imposed by the NIRC — despite the fact that the Union had at that time not yet made any official decision on the matter. He even had the cheek to suggest that the dockers should have a whip round to pay the fine!

One of the Manchester dockers present went on to ask Prof. Tim why he had signed away dockers' rights to 'stuff and strip' containers in Birmingham and Liverpool. His answer was that he thought dockers should

'stuff and strip' containers, but Birmingham was a bit too far away. To this he got the reply from the docker that if O'Leary had not, with other officials, signed away the right to work container bases, they would have been built in or near the ports in the first place.

We suggest that if Tim O'Leary wants to speak to the bosses, he first attends a mass meeting of dockers to hear what they want to say. And that he tells the employers what the dockers told him.

Remember, 'Professor' Tim — you are our servant. If you have anything worthwhile to say, tell us first, and the bosses second!



# where we stand

THE HOOK is produced by socialist dockworkers in the ports of Runcorn, Preston and Manchester. We have a political outlook which says that the whole of society has to be reorganised on democratic socialist lines.

That means that the factories, land and docks are taken out of the hands of the few people who own them and put into the hands of the vast majority who work in them. It means that those who produce the wealth of this country should own and control it.

On the docks we stand for nationalisation with control going to elected representatives of dockworkers. That is, hiring and firing, work speeds and work methods should be decided by dockworkers. And those elected representatives should themselves be controlled by being subject to the decisions of a meeting of all dockworkers.

The National Dock Labour Board falls far short of what we call "workers' control". Most dockers don't have any say in what their representatives on the NDLB do.

However, the NDLB is unique in British industry. It gives a first line of defence against redundancies. It must be defended against the employers who would dearly love to get rid of it. This means that all work on containers must come under the NDLB or else before long there'll be no registered dockers left.

We welcome comments, articles, letters, reports etc.

From page one

## SHOWDOWN

Normally the Union makes sell-out agreements and is responsible for the present plight of dockworkers. It sabotages militancy — but not well enough to satisfy the bosses. (The Devlin Report, let us not forget, took the T&G to task for not being 'militant' enough to have enough authority to sell out its own members effectively.)

What the NIRC is now demanding is that the Union officials really take control of the docks, to control and subordinate us to Tory law.

Some hopes! The trade Union top bureaucrats are moving in one direction... but the dockers are going the other way.

Jack Jones has started moves for a 'solution' to docks problems, which will only speed up the erosion of our jobs.

He is having discussions with Macmillan on 'docks employment problems': "One proposal which Mr. Jones will put forward will be that a levy should be imposed on containers passing in and out of British ports, similar to arrangements in some North American ports. The money raised will be spent on redundancy payments to dockers, together with other advances, such as warehousing within dock areas." (Financial Times, April 28th.)

This is not a recipe to fight the effects of containerisation on dockers. It is a little bit of sugar for the bitter pill. Sugar is nice, but it's job security that we need.

The present high national unem-

We stand for 100% unionism on the docks. Everyone should have the right to join a union of his choice, but no one should be allowed to remain without a card, reaping the benefits while not contributing anything.

We say that the Blue Union should be recognised in all negotiations. The fact that in some ports the Blue Union is not recognised only weakens and divides.

At the same time we stand for democratic unions. This means that union officials are the servants of their members. Union policy should be decided by meetings of all members and union officials stick to that policy. The fact that union officials are there for life means that they can flout the decisions of their members with impunity. They should be subject to recall by mass meetings.

We are against productivity deals on the docks such as the Devlin scheme. Prod deals mean that less men do more work while the unlucky ones end up on the dole queues. If new and better equipment is introduced then we welcome it — provided that it benefits the dockworker. If the same production can be achieved with less work then why not shorten the working week with no loss of pay, instead of putting men out of a job?

We stand for an end to the piece-work system and a high basic wage for all dockworkers.

employment rate makes this 'new' proposal just another route to the dole queue for dockers. Redundancy payments, however high, are a snare to lure dockers into the stagnant pool of mass unemployment.

Since April 870 London dockers have accepted severance pay of £2,300 (about an average year's wages). But how long will that last? By all appearances, mass unemployment will last a good deal longer.

### BIG FLAME

Dockers must be on guard against such deals, which solve the bosses' problems at our expense. We must be on guard against secret deals between the Union leaders and the bosses or their government.

Leaders who have gone soft on the N.I.R.C. will not lead a hard fight on containerisation.

If the NIRC hadn't brought the issue to a head, would the Union leaders really have organised a national strike in defence of our jobs? The answer is clear and the lesson is obvious.

Serious consideration must be given by dockers in Manchester, Liverpool, Preston and other ports to the recent experience with new weapons of militancy like sit-ins.

The Government can seize the Union's money over the Liverpool blacking. They can threaten Walter Cunningham over the Hull blacking. We can seize the ports.

Before this issue is settled, the Big Flame of direct action against the system may yet catch light in the ports of Britain.

## Manchester

Below The HOOK reprints a section from the minutes of the local Modernisation Committee of May 5th 1971 — a time when Manchester dockers were in dispute over Phase Two. The point is that while dreary O'Leary and the bosses tried to pull the wool over the dockers' eyes, at least one of us was aware that port workers would lose out over the container deal. "Everybody was aware that containerisation had become essential on North American service, and a full effort had been made by the SHIP CANAL COMPANY to attract trade to ensure continuing employment opportunity for their employees. This effort would be completely wasted unless the port reverted to normal working."

In reply to this bosses' drive — "Mr. Magennis said that it would be wrong if somebody from the workpeople's side did not challenge the Chairman's statement regarding containers and said that the men had co-operated with the employers in respect of container traffic and yet a container base was to open in Trafford Park, which was taking work away from Manchester dockworkers. Mr. Magennis was reminded that the port had its own container base within the Terminal Docks, and Trafford Park container base did not pack cargo shipped via Manchester."

Well, containers packed at Trafford Park are now shipped through Manchester docks. In other words: it's never too soon to start fighting. Waiting until the last minute or believing the employers' words is straight suicide!

## Preston

May Day saw Preston docks at a standstill. The Friday before, the Preston dockers had voted to black Containerways and Roadferry and to go on a one day strike in support of their Liverpool brothers and in protest against the T & GWU paying the £55,000 fine.

In an attempt to dodge the blacking the container bosses switched their cargoes and certain lorry drivers to Heysham nearby. Not only this but they have been using Holyhead in North Wales to get container units loaded.

One of the Preston stewards went over to Heysham to get the men there to support the blacking, but failed to get much sympathy for the dockers' case. The majority of the men at Heysham are NUR members because Heysham is a railway dock.

Their response is particularly depressing at a time when NUR men are hoping to get the support of other trade unionists in their important struggle for better wages and conditions.

Readers of The Hook will no doubt give the NUR men full support — what about a bit of support in return?

This incident only emphasises the point we make in the article on page 4. The bosses, owing to the improved lan-a-links for containerised goods, can switch loads around to evade blacking — they can switch them to less militant ports, to unregistered ports, or to NUR ports.

## Liverpool

Before the T&G paid up the fine, our reporter Paul Barker spoke to Jimmy Simes, chief steward for Liverpool Docks, and Chairman of the joint Docker-transport Workers Committee.

He asked him — "What has been the reaction of the dockers to the injunction on the T&G?"

J.S. — The Union never supported the blacking from the start, but we're not going to let jobs go down the drain — we're ignoring the injunction. The blacking will continue. No Heaton lorries have been seen on the container bases since we started.

P.B. — "What do you think the Union's attitude should be towards the fine?"

J.S. — I think they shouldn't pay. If they're going to fight this law they should fight it now. Industrial action should have stopped the Industrial Relations Act before it started.

### the 9 points of the dockers' charter

1. No redundancies.
2. Retention of the National Dock Labour Scheme.
3. All loading and unloading of containers to be controlled by the NDLB.
4. All workers in a port to get the average wage in the port, and for the 'pool' to be in fact temporary, and not the never-ending limbo at £20 a week that it is now.
5. Earlier retiring age.
6. Strict adherence to the Bristow Committee's definition of dockers' work.
7. A minimum national manning scale.
8. A 30-hour week.
9. Nationalisation under workers' control.

