

INTERNATIONAL DOCKERS' STRUGGLES IN THE EIGHTIES



**WORKERS OF THE
WORLD, TONIGHT!**

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WORLD, TONIGHT!**

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FRONT COVER:

Neptune Holding The Picket Line

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Workers Of The World Tonight!

Like Sleeping Beauty, workers everywhere are re-awakening. Hopefully at long last to finally realize their desires. Although now becoming clearly visible, this world re-awakening has been long in preparing and has gone through many unsung routes. This pamphlet is about one of them.

Most of the translations appearing here are leaflets/short texts which the Spanish dockers have written over the course of their struggle. Some were addressed to assembled workers, others were handed out on the streets during demonstrations and others were published in dockers' newsheets.

These texts have a special importance because they deal clearly with the problems facing the modern proletarian movement: problems related to political parties and their rival gangs including unions, technological innovation and unemployment and their effect on the autonomous class struggle to abolish all classes.

Everywhere containerization has been introduced it has provoked strikes. The ones that hit the American seaboard in the 50's (containerization was some 10 years in advance of Europe) were worlds apart from the 'corrupt' gangland unionism shown in "On the Waterfront". The spectacle of the reformed hoodlum battling for an honest trade unionism may have been sweet music to the ears of the American liberal establishment but it was only a screen because the film's premier was barely over when plans were being laid for one of the biggest container ports in the world: New York's Port Elizabeth. This container port, and others like it in the US were duplicated throughout Europe, the Tilbury container dock being opened in 1976, some 3 years after Port Elizabeth.

At long last, following the multinational character of the world economy, more and more proletarians are making concrete, international contact. Although there is much that is uneven in this, it's a step in the right direction. Obviously one has to keep one's distance from the bureaucratic international of world trade unionism and related bodies. (e.g. TIE - Transnational Information Exchange; itself partially funded by the World Council of Churches).

The third international of European dockers, (together with exiled

dockers from Latin America) was held in 1979 in Barcelona under the slogan: "The emancipation of the working class will be the task of the workers themselves, or it will not be at all." Since then many other such meetings have taken place frequently in different European ports. However, despite the commendable autonomy insisted on by the Barcelona conference of '79 (and of course since then), trade union rank and file guys with their sights on official positions weren't criticized. What's more, neither were occasional low ranking bureaucrats. Rightly political parties were given the elbow. Nonetheless, a section of that obnoxious Lenin-look-a-like - the International Communist Current - was given rope - but not enough to hang itself. However, the example of this conference and the victory which was to be achieved by the striking dockers afterwards, meant that the Spanish libertarian experience was concretely communicated internationally. The Danish dockers in '83, themselves influenced by the Spanish example, said of their own strike: "Not since the 30's has there been so much international solidarity as was shown --- all through our recent 10 week long strike".

Both strikes received hardly any mention in the worlds press which has now abandoned its 'duty' to merely falsify and misrepresent struggle, leading to what might be termed a media induced depression where trifles swamp any mention of life-giving class conflict. In the midst of the "information society": absence of information.

The strikes in Spain and Denmark unlike the recent dock strikes in the U.K. came from clear autonomous initiatives. At certain points, however, the autonomous national organization of the Spanish dockers, the Co-ordinadora sat down at the negotiating table alongside the big central unions of the CC.OO. and the UGI. This really has not to be judged as an instant act of collaboration and betrayal of the autonomous movement. Rather, the Co-ordinadora allowed the unions to sit down with them based on whether or not

the unions supported the real movement. Thus their practical interests momentarily co-incided. That's all. What's more some dockers have been ever ready to criticize the Co-ordinadora when they felt something was wrong (c/f the Gijon report in May '83 - no fetishism of 'pure' organization here....) Obviously too, there's also an ever present danger of a creeping burocratization in some permanent, though consciously anti-union link up organization. Any collapse into a variation of parallel unionism or the old syndicalist example has to be watched, (e.g. using the term 'union' for an autonomous body like the Co-ordinadora, when such a term, is just too marred to be recycled). And if in the future, the Co-ordinadora, because it is a permanent organization gets in the way of real subversive movement, well then, it will just have to be subverted along with the rest of alienated society.

The example of the Co-ordinadora has, so far, proved an inspiration to other workers' collectives in Spain and through contacts made during the dockers' strike, many of these collectives have formed an inter-enterprize co-ordination. This co-ordination provides concrete support, circulates news obviously neglected in the press and gives direct aid to other proletarians who move their arse. In January of '82 there was published the first issue of a bulletin called "TODOS A UNA" (ALL TOGETHER) which presented certain texts of different collectives. Although at first, "TODOS A UNA" was full of left wing commonplaces and half truths, it has since improved quite a lot moving towards a clearer anti-union (including the CNT), anti-leadership perspective,* together with a commitment to the open assembly form.

The assemblies which conducted the Spanish dock strike and much of the theoretical elaboration within them, marked something of a break from the woe-ful tale of what happened elsewhere in the downturn of class struggle: assemblies becoming props for the unions; merely spectacular assemblies. Even so, there's something of a disparity between the practical radical temper of "OUR ORGANIZATION", to the somewhat dull machinery of the Statutes of the OEPB* where, there's a danger of separation into various categories (economic/cultural), which mirror the larger separations existing within bourgeois society. These separations could, at a later date, delay the emergence of a more

fully developed unitary critique. But due to the dogged and splendid efforts of some Barcelona dockers (as part of a delegated committee), a small radical library exists, which as well as containing files on docks (and dockers' struggles) throughout the world, contains theory of a high order. Collected there, for example, is much of the really good stuff handed out by autonomous workers in the SEAT car factory in Barcelona. (Incidentally some of these proletarians received draconian prison sentences for their activities). Existing functionally, such a center is also an example of how practical theory, escapes the rather fevered ideological collectives which tend to gell around 'radical' bookshops. And probably it's best to see the barbers shop attached to the OEPB as part of that long and good tradition of collectivised "barbarism" in Barcelona. At the same time one has to be clear that many of these organized liesure activities - gymnasiums, T.V./Video rooms etc can easily be placed within a social welfare framework and the self-management of alienation. Yet, it is obviously better to learn karate alongside your mates with the common aim of opposing authority than under a macho gym master who wants to impose even more authority.

When compared with the many anecdotal commentaries written by Spanish workers detailing and criticizing their own struggles which took place immediately (or rather became intenser) after Franco's death in late '75, the documents published here mark a real advance. Unlike the more recent dock strike in Spain, demands for the abolition of wage labour and the transformation of everyday life did not come top of the list. Linked to an actual struggle these demands acquired a proper utopian concreteness breaking out of their status as rather empty, make believe truisms.

The Barcelona dockers' open assembly remains an example to us all especially given the fact that it was a defensive struggle, "a question of survival", as they themselves put it. Most importantly though, the workers won. However these texts are uneven in quality - some are inspiringly clear, others a little muddled. Also there's some repetition. But before raising an accusatory finger bear in mind these texts are an example of workers writing accurately about their own struggle and attempting to communicate their knowledge and experience to others.

Would there was more of it about because spoken communication, though essential, evaporates like morning dew if not set down in a more durable form for all to see. Moreover such communication increases self-confidence and helps to break down isolation and feelings of impotence. Anyroad here it is warts and all.

Since the conclusion of the Spanish dock strike, insurgency in the docks, particularly in 1984, has grown by leaps and bounds, with major action taking place in India, the Phillipines, Japan and the U.K.

We have put together an article, included here, on dock struggles in the U.K. concentrating in particular on the past 15 years or so. Our efforts to

track down "The Dockworker", a magazine influenced by the libertarian example of the Spanish and Danish dockers, proved fruitless. Research officers in the TGWU all but hung their heads in shame, when forced to admit they had never even heard of it.

The new period of open confrontation between capital and the proletariat must surely supercede what has been published here - no matter how good it is - by those who out of necessity must create the new world.

But we, who are not dockers but have produced this pamphlet have said just about enough. Where it's possible, LET THE DOCKERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.



Barcelona Docks

The Transport of Commodities and the Dock Struggle

The following text is taken from the No.2 issue of IN/DOLENCIA, an occasional magazine published in Barcelona. The article was the outcome of hours spent talking to striking dockers and its detailed discussion of the mechanisation of the docks surely makes it the best article to have appeared in IN/DOLENCIA.

The primary aim of capitalism is to produce commodities which have a determinate level of profit and an objective realization of value, resulting in their transformation back into money.

Transportation of commodities, a techno-operative task of little weight within the Marxian formulation of the capitalist cycle, has turned out to be an important sector both from the standpoint of the individual capitalist with a view to calculating costs and in the degree to which it tends towards strategic domination of the world commodity market.

—Primo Maggio, No.13

Valorization of capital does not end in the factory with the production of a commodity but is a process which continues in the sphere of circulation and beyond—a trajectory which begins with the act of making the commodity and ends with the act of selling it.

Calculating the costs of transporting commodities has always been a headache for capital. Taylorism never entered the docks and the organization of transport was backward compared to the organization of production. While capital was being concentrated in trusts and monopolies for all sectors of production, the rich buccaneer was the lone trader on the seas and the family haulage company dominated transport. (Only with railroads, because of the high initial investment required, did monopolies—whether state or private—appear.)

The big ports, where hiring practices and labor conditions were very oppressive, proved to be important sites of proletarian struggle. And the dockers' history has always been bloody. We have only to recall the great strikes of the San Francisco dockers in the 1930s and the 1970 Polish dockers' strikes on the Baltic coast which left many dockers dead.

Transport companies are now rapidly expanding the sector through monopolies. Today they own ships, fleets of lorries, trains, containers, and factories where container cranes are built and docks are repaired. If to this one adds that the big monopolies (oil, tobacco, fruit, etc.) organize their own transportation, the net result is a picture which shows that production and distribution are in the same hands.

Sealand operates 135 ports in 52 countries and has berths in each. Many are owned directly and others are state concessions. Sealand possesses a fleet of 63 ocean-going ships and 25,000 lorries. Since 1969, it has worked hand-in-glove with R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., one of the biggest U.S. multinationals, and has cornered 35% to 40% of the American shipping market.

With the advent of motorized shipping, shipping lines were able to regulate themselves. Fleets were established. Shipping times were calculated—thus ensuring a fair degree of accuracy for costs. But this did not amount to greater control over the time commodities spent in port. The organization of labor in the ports, like in 19th century pre-Taylorite factories—remained in the hands of the workers. It was the dockers themselves, orga-

nized in work gangs, who controlled work speeds and tonnage.

Class struggle, however, prodded the transport companies into using containers. With containers, they could rationalize the organization of labor in the docks. They could impose their own authority so that the dockers' gangs would organize nothing and they would organize everything.

Containers are the extension of the production line into transportation. Commodities leave the assembly line containerized, then go onto a ship, then onto a truck or lorry or train, and are transported to the selling point. From the factory to the door-to-door sale, the rigidity of the production line—the dream of every capitalist—is maintained, making the worker a slave to the machine—in this case, the container—and unable to control the process of loading and unloading.

But the worker's ability to bring the assembly line to a standstill (a fundamental part of the workers' struggles in the 1960s) reappeared in the sphere of transportation. In Spain, 13,500 dockers were able to endanger the smooth and rapid circulation of commodities by the flimsiest strike. Hence the acrimony and intransigence of the port bosses, as well as the whole of capital, each time trouble looms on the docks or in other transportation sectors. It is enough to recall how the bosses acted during the latest strike in the Asturias haulage firms.

From market port to terminal port

The most important market centers and industrial zones were founded and developed near the ports. The traditional port is a market port where commodities are stored and auctioned. Barcelona's port retains vestiges of the traditional market port—even bananas are still sold there.

The market port was dominated by shipping lines. Ships had to bring goods to market—which was, traditionally, the port. The physical layout of the port was a product of the work which was necessary on traditional ships: lots of storage depots and, in order to facilitate the dockers' work, a minimum distance between where the boats were tied-up and where the commodities were stored. Next to the docks certain sectors of the bourgeoisie invariably sprung up. Since their profits were high, they had little incentive to modernize—technologically or organizationally. The property of the state, whose task it is to facilitate capitalist exchange, the market port is also home to the state civil service.

The workers of the market port were recruited from the *lumpen proletariat*. Over time they became skilled workers who liked their work and knew it well—since it was they themselves who organized all tasks. The lack of hierarchy and absence of intermediaries created a strong sense of solidarity among the workers. This intense solidarity formed the basis of their fierce struggles.

The market port was, to a great degree, where the transport of commodities ended, but the modern port is merely an intermediate point in the transportation of commodities. Shipping lines no longer dominate the modern port—the port must be connected to the rail and road network. Many times we have heard the President of the Chamber of Commerce, *Senor Fiqueras*, and the president of the Port of Barcelona, *Senor Guell*, bemoaning the lack of infrastructure around the port. Their complaints have been listened to: plans are already underway to connect the port to the transport network—even though it will create an urban disaster.

The terminal port does not have a huge array of storage depots because it no longer must stockpile goods. Instead, the terminal port is made up of huge wharves piled up with the all-efficient containers. Although an infinite number of companies appear to operate in the modern port, there is in effect only one company.

The port is totally mechanized. Cranes and *toros* carry out the

actions workers once performed and dominate the work process on land and on ship. The terminal port tends toward specialization: the port of Barcelona handles general goods, the port of Tarragona handles grain, while the port of Bilbao handles scrap iron and steel.

The organization of labor is controlled in the offices of the dock companies just as sea transport is internationally directed from three centers: New York, London and Tokyo. From these centers, ships can be directed on a moment-to-moment basis into ports where there is less congestion or conflict. The centers of transport know at every moment where goods in transit are and what stage they have reached in the circulation time of commodities.

Dockers in the terminal port are not very different from factory workers. The pride and pleasure in being a docker—with its solidarity and rejection of hierarchy—have been lost along with control over the job and freedom of movement.

Technology and the docks

In analyzing the history of containerization it is necessary to take into account the impetus that war gave to this method of transporting goods. Containers first appeared on the scene during World War II. The first containers were utilized during World War II to prevent the personal property of the American military from getting lost in bases in Asia and Europe. During the Korean crisis military spare parts were shipped by containers from New York to bases in Yokohama, Japan. By 1952, the American army possessed a stock of containers estimated at around 110,000. In 1966, Sealand was using a containerized fleet in the area around Saigon to transport arms to American military depots. This service was amply paid for by the U.S. government, which signed a contract with Sealand worth \$21 million. The company used this money to promote the use of containers on sea routes in the North Atlantic (1966) and in the Far East (1968). Sealand also used this money to further the use of containers in Port Elizabeth (Port Authority of New York).

In 1955, Maclean set up the first container-producing factory. He founded Sealand four years later with the financial backing of big business. Requiring a large capital investment, containerization was, from its inception, controlled by multinational corporations.

By 1973 there were from one to one-and-a-half million containers. They were distributed as follows: 63% shipping, 33% land-based, 3% railroads, and 1% transport firms. The cost of fitting out a ship that could carry about 1,200 containers was around \$15 million. The majority of land-based container companies were situated in New York, with subsidiaries strategically situated throughout the world. The most important of these was the ICI (International Container Transport), with about 30% of the containers, followed by Integrated Containers Service, Interpool, Sea Containers, SSI Containers Corporation, and Uni-Flex Containers. The monopolization of transport into a few firms and the linking of these firms with industry and finance indicate the degree to which containerization is a spatial extension of the factory. The container is not only a mobile docker but the extension of the factory in space.

Bit by bit, containers are displacing the traditional system of transporting goods. The daily quota of dockers is constantly being reduced since the loading and unloading of a containerized ship requires fewer workers. Capital demands not only that the number of dockers be decreased but that dockers be done away with all together. In Hamburg there is a container terminal that has been installed by Siemens. Here loading and unloading are totally automated and dockers have ceased to exist. The terminal is supervised by closed-circuit TV and the only people to be seen around the docks now are security guards who, from their huts, ensure that no one enters the compound. The entire operation is computerized and controlled by a data base in Bonn. When the Spanish dockers went on strike demanding to keep their jobs they had Hamburg in mind.

A container is a standardized metal box. Commodities in containers suffer no damage when being transported. More important, however, containers effectively stop thieving—that practice of auto-reduction by which dockers traditionally topped-up their earnings. After World War II, thieving had taken on industrial proportions in New York: companies were shocked to learn that despite spending huge amounts on security they had lost some \$1.5 million in stolen goods in 1948 alone. Shipping companies were quick to see the advantages of containerization: faster distribution meant a quicker return on capital while increasing the ratio of tonnage to wages meant a reduction in labor costs. Moreover, containerization also eliminated—or greatly reduced—the black market, a byproduct of proletarian auto-reduction.

The growing use of machinery such as cranes and elevators on the docks complements containerization. The central point for the distribution and production of loading-unloading container cranes is on the west coast of America, home of the Pacific Coast Engineering Co. and Star Iron and Steel Co. Pacific is a subsidiary of the Fruehauf Corporation, the most important producer of containers in the U.S., which itself belongs to United States Lines, a shipping company which has a stake in land-based container firms.

Roll-on/roll-off ships are another technological innovation similar to containers. These ships have direct access to distribution warehouses, where motorized transport—trucks, cars, container rigs—can actually be driven onto the sea-going vessel. Needless to say, the roll-on/roll-off ships are a replica of Yankee war ships from which tanks, guns, and trucks could disembark.

But automation has achieved its maximum expression in grain ships and in ships carrying liquids such as oil and gas. These ships do not require dockers. In the port of Barcelona grain is mechanically loaded and unloaded through wind funnels. The company in charge of this, Condeminas, has only to hire a limited number of workers.

Commodities in containers have a secret character: they can not be seen. The containers themselves are stamped in military fashion with numbers. This considerably hampers the struggle against arms shipments which dockers the world over wage. Through the use of containers, the abstract character of commodities in their circulation phase is intensified, alienating wage labor more still.

Technology in the docks has changed the conditions of labor. Dominated by the inexorable pace of the machine, dockers no longer suffer as much from physical fatigue as they do from nervous fatigue. Dockers have always had high accident rates but with mechanization the tendency is now towards more and more fatal accidents. Occupational ailments have changed from sore muscles and back problems to nervous exhaustion and stress. As in the rest of industry, safety conditions have changed and have given rise to new dangers for workers.

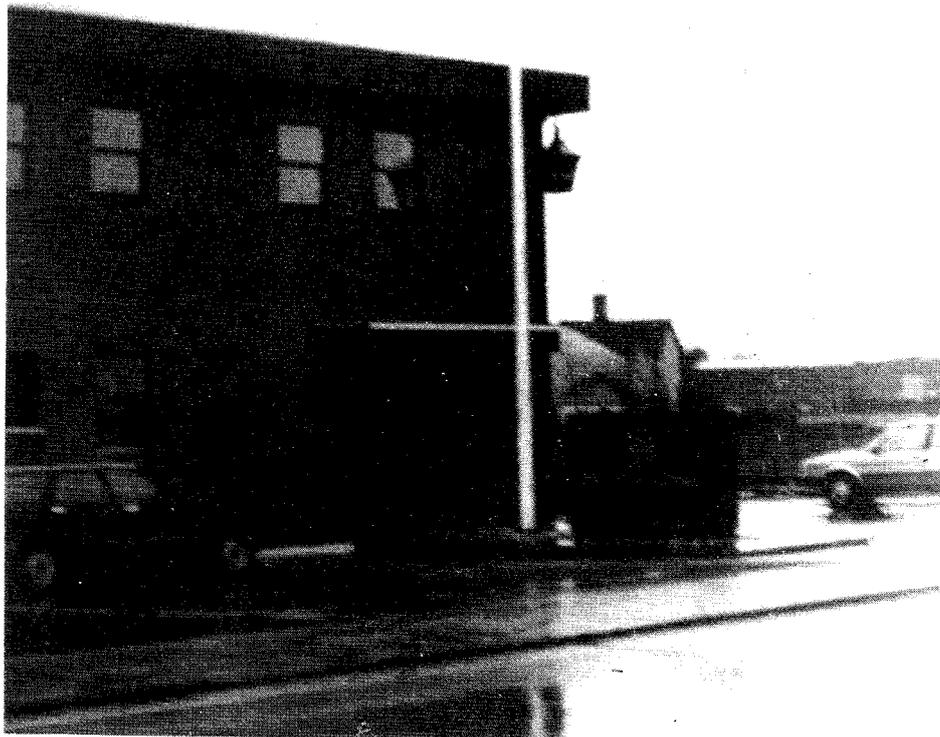
Port Organization of Work and Wages

The work of a docker essentially consisted of loading and unloading commodities from the ship to the port and from the port to the ship. This was carried out by a gang of workers and mechanics (related administrative work was shared between the workers and foreman). The gang was always made up of the same people and had considerable control over such work situations as work speeds. The gang not only wielded a high degree of power on the job it also engendered a strong sense of solidarity. The solidarity and support between members of the gang knew no hierarchical gradations. This generated a collective expertise that was passed on from generation to generation. In this way, the organization of work remained in the hands of the dockers themselves, who created directly democratic organizational forms that went beyond those organizations primarily concerned with the sale of labor power.

The way dockers got paid was different from the way factory



Dover: Roll/On Roll/Off



FELIXSTOWE: The police station situated directly opposite the dock gates. Immediately after this photo was taken, shortly after the beginning of the miner's strike this year, the photographers were rounded up, taken inside and interrogated - and then put aboard the first stagecoach outta town, 'cos Felixstowe ain't big enough for the three of-us, o.k.?

Felixstowe on the East Coast is the biggest container port in the U.K. and the fifth largest. In 1983 the throughput of containers reached an all-time high of 456,600. Yet only 30 years ago Felixstowe was a moribund backwater with little trade and only 9 dockers. Now it employs over 3,000 dockers and is the largest port outside the Dock Labour Scheme. It is owned by European Ferries, a multi-national company with assets in the U.S.A., Norway, Australia, as well as in tax havens like Panama, Jersey, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man. European Ferries owns the Townsend Thoreson shipping line of blockade running fame, dating from the siege of French ports by the French fishing fleet in 1980.

workers get paid. A docker's wage was determined by the tonnage of goods his gang loaded and unloaded and also by the kind of goods that were handled. The wage received per ton was divided equally among the gang (see Table 2). It was a daily rate, set by the OTP. Permanently employed dockers receiving a weekly wage were exempt. This manner of establishing wages made workers more aware of their labor as being just one more commodity—and partly explains their high combativity and consequent high wages. In other words, the dockers *knew* what they were selling. Looking at Table 2 we can appreciate the extent of their victory: their rates increased while minimum rates changed only minimally.

But the introduction of containers has changed the wage-tonnage relationship to a wage-container relationship. Wages therefore are no longer determined by the tonnage moved. The bosses try to hide this fact through legislation and by introducing more technology. They know that their idea of wage/productivity is substantially different from the dockers'. The worldwide tendency in the majority of ports is to eliminate the wage-tonnage pay structure and to substitute it with a guaranteed wage, making dockers more and more like other industrial workers.

Elements for a Short History of the Port of Barcelona

The historical relationship between the port of Barcelona and the industrial development of Catalunya will not be analyzed here. Nor will we discuss Barcelona's importance as a French port or the profits accumulated over the centuries by the bourgeoisie from the wages they paid dockers. We shall limit ourselves to discussing the type of work and contracts made since the birth of the OTP, and the workers' struggles they have given rise to. *

From the beginning of the century until the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, dock work was characterized by favoritism and a tap on the shoulder. Favoritism involved humiliation and reached such great proportions that it even included on occasion being kicked through a hoop—i.e., those who didn't go through the hoop didn't get work. The plaza, the pen where workers sold themselves daily, functioned so that the bosses could choose the most loyal workers. Labor conditions were harsh—for instance, the dockers had no shelter from foul weather.

Though the bitter strikes of the 1920s laid the basis for the end of favoritism and the beginning of job rotation, the Republican government abolished this practice. After eight months of bitterly fought struggle—in which eight workers, mainly from the CNT, were killed—the practice was reestablished in 1931. After July 19, 1936, the port itself was collectivized and after the

events of May 1937 control of the port passed into the hands of the Generalitat or, more correctly, the Republican Army. When Franco's troops entered the ports in 1939 the dockers' collective suffered a great defeat. Many dockers were killed. But those who survived cut loose the moorings of the ships in an effort to destroy them.

After 1939, the dockers were made to sing *cara al sol* and once again had to parade up and down the wharves. In 1944, the OTP was formed. Created by Giron, the OTP was a vertical trade union and company labor exchange, which the port bosses had to use in order to hire dockers. The OTP also took over the management of social services, such as care of the aged, which this Minister of Labor was so interested in. Like the CNS, the OTP's structure was vertical—and standing atop the pyramid was the Under-Secretary of Labor.

The OTP re-established the rotation system of job hiring, setting up a registry of dockers and ensuring that all dockers had the chance to work. In time, workers were accredited with unemployment pay for the days they didn't get hired.

The OTP also enacted some labor ordinances controlling work speeds and wages—though it was up to the dockers to see that these laws were enforced. The abuses by the dock companies made these ordinances a dead letter until the dockers collected their forces under the protection of Giron's paternalistic legislation and saw to it that they were implemented. This was the first demonstration since 1939 of counter-force on the docks.

Like other vertical unions, the OTP was used by the workers to aid their struggles. The dockers had a double motive in using an organization like the OTP since it was both a labor exchange and a trade union. As is the case in many European and American ports, union cards were needed to get work. If the workers were too disruptive or did not obey the dictates of management/union they were fired.

Bit by bit, control of the OTP passed into the hands of the dockers' collective. The first thing the dockers did was to ensure the rotation of job hiring. Then they guaranteed social assistance and pensions. When the vertical union withered away, the dockers latched onto the OTP as their own organization. Once the tool of aggressive dock capitalists, the OTP became the bulwark of workers' power. It is easy to understand the companies' annoyance: an organ they had created to discipline and suppress dockers had become their principle enemy. Dockers are not naturally oriented toward a sort of guild organization nor are they corporatist (as more than one union leader has called them at press conferences). They are imbibing the same brew that the companies made them swallow—but now for their own ends. They don't want soup. Then drink from glasses!

The Organization of the Dock Workers

The following chronology of the 1980 dockers' struggle draws heavily from one prepared by a member of the Coordinadora. It is based on his own experiences and also on information he received from all the Spanish ports. We had intended to publish this chronology in its original form—but the final part, which presumably would have explained that the *dockers won* was never completed. Spanish dockers within the Coordinadora have told us that one day there *will* be a conclusion. We hope soon. In the meantime, though incomplete, this chronology—as a *worker's statement*—is an excellent subversive factograph and is potentially much better than the text from *In/dolencia*. The original Coordinadora chronology was printed in *Luta nos Portos*, edicoes Contra a Corrente, Lisbon, 1982.

To explain how our organization arose we must go back to December 1976. Twenty-one unforgettable days! From our collective there arose the cry: "Strike defend our wronged comrades!"

—El Port, No. 6, Bulletin of the Barcelona Dockers

The *Estibadores Portuarios de Barcelona* (OEPB) had its origins in a strike which began on November 12, 1976, the day a general strike had been called throughout Spain. As did workers elsewhere, the dockers suffered repression at the hands of the bosses for joining the general strike. Seven dockers were sacked. But in contrast to other workplaces, the dockers answered back. After paralyzing the port for 21 days, they got their comrades reinstated.

Born of this struggle, the OEPB was the direct expression of workers' autonomy. It had nothing to do with the official workers' movement and had even to battle it to survive. The OEPB was part of "the *other* workers movement," an assembly movement which had been openly proclaimed during the shoe industry strikes in Vitoria and during the construction industry strikes in Roca.

The press—without exception—accused the new assembly movement of being unruly and irresponsible. Capital and the unions tried to bury it through the Moncloa Pact. But the "*other* workers movement" continued to manifest itself for several more years: in Fasa, in Ford, and in the ports. After the 1978 and 1979 strikes in Fasa (Valladolid) and in the Ford Almsafes factory were defeated, however, it was the dockers' collective that alone survived. But the OEPB had always gone against the current both in its organizational form and in its high combativity.

Conflict in the docks took on a new clarity with the OEPB. Management asked: what do these dockers want? The dockers answered: the organization of all the docks in the country. And so the Coordinadora grew—outside the control of the majority unions of the CC.OO and the UGT. Over time it created an international network of dockers and had the Third International Congress of Dockers convened in Barcelona. Present at this Congress were representatives from Italy, Germany, Denmark, Holland, Sweden, England, Belgium, France, and Spain as well as delegations of exiled dockers from Latin America.

The 1980 Dock Strikes

In 1979 the OEPB called a strike for December 21, 27, and 28. This strike proved to be the baptism of fire for the Coordinadora and the beginning of a huge conflict which would sweep the ports in 1980. The immediate cause of the strike was the privatization of the docks and a proposed reform of the OTP which would have meant that dockers would no longer be able to use it as a contracting body. Twenty-four docks controlled by the Coordinadora—about 12,000 dockers, out of a national total of 13,500—joined the strike. In those docks controlled by the UGT and the CC.OO work went on as usual. This despite the fact that the UGT and CC.OO had agreed to walk out.

In Coruna scabs tried to break the strike and caused confrontations that led to the intervention of cops. In Galicia there were many arrests and injuries. This was to be the shape of things to come for all Spanish dockers. In Tenerife the army, the police and the *Guardia Civil* had to form a security cordon for the scabs. However, in the end it didn't do them much good anyway since the ships were boycotted, through go-slows, when they got to their final destinations. In England, dockers refused to unload cargo that had been handled by scabs. They declared that they would call off their boycott only after:

- 1) Striking dockers were paid the same amount of money as the scabs that had loaded the ships.

- 2) The company gave \$1,000 to a good cause.

- 3) The company apologized to the Coordinadora.

According to English dockers, these demands were made "at a moment of high tension: the port authorities had threatened a lock-out and the dockers a general strike if they attempted to impose one." These three demands—"a bitter pill for the bosses to swallow"—were finally met.

Conflict began anew in May when the Coordinadora decided to push for a collective agreement in which dockers' jobs and the former system of labour contracts would be guaranteed. It also tried to stop the "secret"

negotiations that were taking place between the Administration and ANESCO (the port bosses' group) in which dockers' rights were being whittled away.

Strikes continued throughout the summer, leaving a trail of injuries and even death. On July 21, Belen Maria, the daughter of a Canary Islands docker, was run over by a car when she joined her family in a sitdown protest at one of the entrance gates of Las Palmas.

By the end of the summer, management had to concede defeat—for the first time in the transitional years. It reluctantly signed all the points of the agreement the Coordinadora had proposed.

The Decree and the Dock War of 1981

"Once the union battle was lost, then the political battle began." This is how one ANESCO representative described the port bosses' plans after the strife-torn summer of 1980. Taken over by a team of analysts belonging to the OECD, dock management began to try to reverse the provisions of the agreement they had signed with the dockers by waging a war against the dockers and against those small dock companies which, because their profits were threatened during the strikes, had been the first to sign it.

Under the banner of modernization, a new decree was proposed which threatened these small dock companies with extinction. It set a minimum number of workers companies had to pay weekly and forced even small dock companies to contribute heavily to paying for dock infrastructure. The decree also proposed converting the OTP into a labour exchange, which companies could use whenever they needed workers. Under the new proposal, if a docker refused to work for a particular company that company could hire from among the unemployed. This would be the avenue by which the dock companies could legitimize hiring scabs. The decree also called for the setting-up of local councils made up of equal numbers of management, dockers, and administration representatives to maintain worker discipline and control work speeds. Since each group in the council had the same voting rights, it was obvious to the dockers who would run them.

What the bosses had lost in the agreement they signed with the Coordinadora they tried to get back through a clean decree from Madrid. The decree unmasked the true intentions of the State, which had all along feigned neutrality by defending only the "right" of bodies to negotiate.

Since the decree was so openly anti-docker it could not be enforced all at once. The bosses decided to attack the dockers' collective at its strongest point. They applied the terms of the Royal Decree first to the port of Barcelona—"where," according to the bosses in Hoja del Lunes, "the national leaders of the Coordinadora are to be found." Dockers responded by calling selective strikes when four companies (CEOSA, MAPOR, Contenemar, and Maritima Layetana) tried to carry out provisions of the new decree. These strikes led to 4,000 instances of workers being disciplined and the firing of 173 workers. But the strikes themselves were ineffective because the companies hired scabs.

Throughout the year we can distinguish two stages, both clearly defined by the methods of struggle. The first stage was marked by the selective strikes against the companies that had applied the decree - above all in Barcelona and Tenerife. On the first of November 1980 the barrio of Barceloneta came out on a general strike in support of their neighbours - the dockers. The dockers' wives played an important part in the struggle. As a protest, 400 women occupied the Santa Maria and on 17th November '80 a demonstration of women and children was broken up by the police using all the anti-riot gear at their dis-

posq. Barceloneta was stormed by the police and defended street by street by the dockers and their neighbours. The final result was several arrests and many workers and police hurt.

On the 6th of January, 1981, the *Diario de Avisos* published the proposals of dockers from Rochester in England who refused to unload 45,000 boxes of tomatoes and 3,000 bales of peppers from Tenerife. The 'Asociacion de Casecheros y Exportadores de Tomate de Canarias' signed an agreement with the dockers, consenting to export its produce through companies which had not signed the decree and would not employ scabs. On the 26th January the selective strikes were called off. 300 scabs continued to work, 200 of them belonging to the 'Fuerza Nacional de Trabajo'. The president of this organisation was to be seen afterwards at the EFE Agency.

On January 28th the President of Barcelona Port, Carlos Guell de Setmenat declared to the press: "The workers taken on by the port have saved the Catalunian economy." It was a homage to the scabs.

The second stage began on the same day as Guell's announcement. In a confrontation between workers and scabs hired by Maritima Layetana several hoists were chucked into the harbour, with scabs still on them.

The dockers decided on a go-slow to prevent the scabs from putting them out of a job. On February 1st the Barcelona dockers refused to work on the "Cuzco", a ship bound for San Salvador and waiting to be loaded up with 20 Fiat tanks. Other ports were told to keep an eye open for the ship so the boycott could continue. Later, the dockers were told the ship's cargo was bound for the Peruvian military.

On February 10th '81, sacked dockers occupied the Italian ship "Aquila" as a means of bringing pressure to bear on the matter of getting their jobs back. On February 23rd and 24th a general strike was called throughout all the Spanish ports in solidarity with Barcelona. These were particularly tense days but the failed coup did not succeed in stopping the mobilisation.

Management spokesmen did not delay in sending communiques to the press announcing the total ruin of the port of Barcelona. Nevertheless in Maritima (a local publication dealing with the port) the following news item could be read: "According to studies carried out, the only 3 European ports in which tonnage shipped in 1980 actually increased were as follows: Amberes 2.4%, Hamburg 1.4%, Barcelona 4.8%."

The daily *El Pais*, one of the newspapers most favourably disposed to management, announced that the strikes on February 23rd and 24th would lead to a loss of 50,000 million pesetas a day. Meanwhile companies belonging to the port announced their intention to close if the climate of anarchy and violence did not cease. On February 25th, temperatures on the wharves rose and incidents between scabs and workers only ceased when shots were fired. The strikes set for the beginning of March were called off as a demonstration of the dockers good will, faced with the prospect of negotiation.

On March 10th, the bosses agreed to the readmission of 72 workers in CEOSA. On March 18th, *El Noticiero Universal* mentioned the attack on the Mapor headquarters and the beating up of its Director. Given this background the bosses refused to negotiate. Lopez Fando, director of the OTP made a statement to *La Vanguardia* in which he stated "all dialogue must take the Decree as the basis for reform - the numbers of workers employed in the port is superabundant and the best paid in the world." (March 25th). Antonio Llado spoke to the press in similar terms: "A go-slow means working two hours a day hence the price of goods rise."

On April 2nd, the *La Vanguardia* newspaper published a statement by the dock's bosses about the conflict: "In 3 months, from the 9th December to March 24th 1981, 262 of the newly contracted workers have been hurt, some of them badly and there have been 56 aggressive acts. A container hoist was wrecked worth 83,000 ptas., 3 cars were burned, the lamps on 6 cars were broken and there have been 32 slashings of tires. The *Correo Catalan* spread more light on these imperfections: "3 tractors ruined, 3 hoists thrown into the water, 2 hoists with their wheels broken, 2 hoists with their motors ruined, 17 platform supports wrecked."

On April 25th '81, the courts (Magistura del Trabajo de Barcelona) voted in favour of the workers, declaring the sackings of the 23 workers null and void. On April 28th, Barcelona dockers decided to work a normal shift calling off their go-slow. This was a gesture of good will, leaving it up to the courts to reinstate the sacked workers. On May 15th '81, the *Servei Territorial de Treball de la Generalitat* ruled in favour of the workers demanding the reinstatement of the sacked workers. A comment sprayed on the walls went as follows: "Whenever they take charge of a matter it is already too late" (para una

vez que tienen competencia sobre un asunto, llegan tarde).

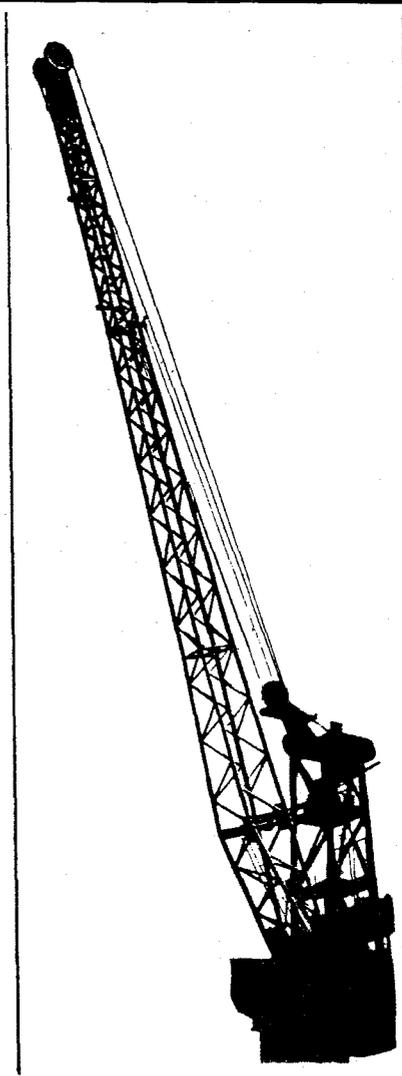
On May 22nd, the workers tried to evict the scabs once more because the companies ignored the verdict of the courts. The Civil Guard and the National Police were there to prevent them. On June 15th '81, the Greek ship 'Trade Monter' was occupied to protest against the failure of the companies to implement the court's decision. Two days later, the occupation was called off, even though the companies still continued to ignore the courts. On June 8th, the Contemar company, in a letter to *El Correo Catalan* condemned the practice of sabotaging port machinery.

From this chronology one can judge the bitterness of the conflict which in its second stage seems to carry us back to the 20s and the years of 'pistoleroismo' when the Catalan ruling class supported by scab unions broke strikes and shot union leaders, forcing the worker's organisations to also shoot back.*

At the height of summer a peace formula was finally agreed on. On July 8th, scabs left Mapor. A few days later, a rumour began to circulate about a possible local agreement concerning the port of Barcelona that might bring peace back to the port. Meanwhile, the courts ruled in favour of the sacked workers declaring all the sackings null and void, with the exception of 17 sackings, which were pronounced inadmissible in court. CEOSA and Mapor rehired the sacked workers and the 17 workers whose case was declared inadmissible were returned to the Plaza (the practice of sharing out work equally). Sacked workers belonging to Maritima Layetana have still not been rehired but they have been paid weekly by the company since June 13th.

As a result of the agreement signed August 31st 1981, scabs are continuing to work in the port but not for very long. At the moment, Maritima Layetana has 98 scabs, Contemar 38 and CEOSA just around 12.

This local agreement is simply a temporary peace treaty and both sides are conscious of the fact. It is necessary to get rid of many jobs and do away with the Coordinadora if Spanish ports are to comply with the interests of the multinationals. The workers know this and will in the future be on the look-out.



'Our Organization'

v This text was written by Barcelona dockers who had been elected to co-ordinate the strike movement in the Barcelona docks in 1979. In an interview in the Diario de Barcelona, (December 2nd, 1980) with some Barcelona dockers we can read: " Our organization was born within the assembly movement of 1976, with the break from the verticalist CNS union. The committee which had led the 21 day strike was mandated by the assembly to form a more stable organization. We put this idea out all over Spain and it was accepted in the majority of ports ". The document, dated October 1979, elaborated an organizational proposal and was presented by the Organization of Barcelona Dockers (OEPB) to a national conference of docks' representatives held in Barcelona in October 1979.

1

The union practice in our country was totally annihilated after the fascist victory in our civil war (1939). The systematic persecution of the militants of the traditional unions, and of those men within the working class who demonstrated their combativity, wrecked all possibility of organized struggle.

All the workers who were left imprisoned in the centrally controlled union,- the CNS, were dominated by the high ranking leaders of the Falange. Amongst our victorious enemies these people stood out the most. The workers' representatives in the factories and work places were chosen by the bosses and entrepreneurs. The CNS with its black - lists was an organ of control and a means of purging the more rebellious workers.

During the 60's the first struggles began to bubble up. Strikes broke out and people were mobilized. They were set in motion by the class itself by means of clandestine organizations created by the workers in their place of work. These organizations were intended for struggle and were not influenced by, or dependant on, any political party.

From the co-ordination of each factory section and struggle an independant and unitary form of organization began to re-appear. This organization was the Workers Commissions (Comisiones Obreras - CC.OO.).

It was initially an absolutely democratic organization consisting of assemblies formed by delegates from the factories, regions etc. The Communist Party, after several years of political opportunism, ended up taking over this organization, turning the CC. OO. into the mass organization, mouthpiece and the political platform of its' militants and leaders. Their slogans and manipulations fucked over its' unitary and councilist character. This provoked the large splits out of which grew different organizations and different unions. These splits came from the left of the CP and each new party which formed gave birth to its' mass, or union organization. The great workers' struggles that took place in the last epoch of Francoism couldn't help but be fragmented and encumbered by the weight imposed on them by the political groups which took them over or pushed them along.

2

In any case because of the anti-francoist character of the whole movement there had to be some common ground. On the trade union level, this meant principally the destruction of the fascist union, the CNS and trade union freedom. But here also there appeared two clearly differentiated forms of practice:

1. That of the majority unions which, though illegal, were already expanding and taking shape (CC.OO. - already totally dominated by the Communist Party; the UGT, traditional union of the socialists of the Socialist Workers Party of Spain; USO - Union Sindical Obrera etc.)

The alternative was to take over positions within the CNS. So they put themselves up for CNS elections as mediators and civil lawyers in the factories. They believed this provided a legal cover from which to direct the struggle in the firm and avoided the repression meted out to other militants while enjoying a wider audience amongst the masses. Clearly they were out to inherit, in the near future, a structure (given the crumbling of Francoism) which afforded the possibility of capitalizing on struggle and militant unionism.

2. The leftist parties with a small class presence; groups of independent militants who began to define themselves by the autonomous, self-organization of the class, and anarchist groups organized in their union, the CNT. They defined themselves as being for a direct struggle against the CNS, with the aim of destroying the vertically organized union.

Their struggle was brought to a head with a successful boycott of the CNS elections for mediators and civil lawyers and a demand to isolate and sack those that remained. At the same time there developed an alternative organization totally on the margins of the CNS which, by its' ability to struggle, had to be permitted by the employers as the only negotiating organ. Basically, the form of organization generated by this group was the ASSEMBLY and the COMMITTEE OF DELEGATES. The former was the ultimate decision making organ and the latter was a body elected by the assembly, whose members were, revocable at any moment, to carry out decisions reached in the assembly. These organizations of delegates from the factories co-ordinated themselves on an area, or, branch of work basis.

3

Up to that point in time, the struggle in the Spanish ports, as in other branches of production, had followed this dynamic. In the docks a number of comrades had managed to rise up to prominent positions in the CNS and from these positions of surrender had succeeded in attaining a relative peace on the waterfront. Confronted by management and the harbour companies their personal intervention had weakened conflicts which could have taken on a more general and radical aspect. Organized in work gangs, the combativity of the workers was alone capable, when problems arose on board ships during working hours, of resolving in their own way the thousands of questions that the specific organization of dock work raised.

The organizational problem in the docks began to be posed when it was recognised the CNS was already, because of the wear and tear of the system and the increasing discredit of its representatives, an outdated organism.

There had been ports where posts of mediators and civil lawyers had been occupied by CC.OO. militants and militants belonging to other unions (Corunna, Vigo, Sevilla). Because of their support for some struggles these leaders had been sacked.

Concretely, in Barcelona, although spontaneous flare-ups existed which exploded into strikes, the representatives of the CNS easily succeeded in recuperating the movement. In the 1975 elections, CC.OO. candidates were victorious and traditional representatives were obliged to step down. (Amongst them one could probably find honest men of a combative spirit who had been recuperated by the uselessness and bureaucracy of the vertical system).

It was because of the strike convened by the central unions - the COS (in the docks the CC.OO.) on the 12th of November 1976, when 7 comrade-representatives were sacked, that the dockers' collective came out on indefinite strike (with the opposition of the CC.OO.) which lasted 21 days. The strike demanded the daily gathering of the Assembly to keep people informed and to directly control the extent of our action. We were forced to be the authentic protagonists of our decisions. The assembly demanded of our comrades that they give up their positions as mediators of the vertical union, which, once again, appeared to be allied with capital in order to repress us. The assembly elected a strike committee which was at any moment subject to recall, and whose delegated members had no power of decision, nor of negotiation, beyond that decided by the assembly.

The most difficult stage of Barcelona's dock struggle, during the francoist era, took place under the cover of this form of organization.

4

The lesson was not in vain. The committee of delegates had to be accepted by the bosses and management as the sole organ of the assemblies' representation. Even after the dock strike they had to admit to the assembly as a fact of life. The unity and strength with which the collective was prepared to defend the tools of its daily struggle was total because they had proved their worth.

Once the strike was over the committee of delegates asked to be allowed to step down because the reason they'd been elected no longer applied. But the ASSEMBLY gave them the task of drawing up an organizational proposal based on their estimation of the way the strike had been run and which could assure future struggle.

At this point in time there began a great polemic between the different options of the moment, a polemic which was already being debated in the general context of the working class throughout the whole of Spain. (Franco had died and with him there began to perish many of the Francoist structures, amongst them the vertical union). The unions were beginning to understand the task of controlling the workers was down to them. Each union, as one may guess, had in its' possession the sole solution. Our unity was being threatened by the sectarian struggles waged among the central unions.

The unity maintained during our difficult strike had taught us that this unity was too precious to be destroyed now by endless slogans, membership cards, sectarianisms etc. We understood that our decisions could not be delegated to union bureaucrats. This experience had a decisive influence on the consciousness of our struggle. To hand over proletarian responsibility to representatives is to throw away our need as a class to participate in social transformation. We realized we would never arrive at the social revolution through leaders or liberators. Those caught up in and distracted by the obligations of their position and the representative function they flaunt, end in distancing themselves from those they represent. As they are not affected by the same problems, troubles or struggles they end up almost unable to recognise them. The estrangement is inevitable. But there are too many invitations to dialogue, to negotiation, to integrate etc for this ever to become apparent to them.

We were conscious that large organizations which are not continually inspired and invigorated by the base end up bureaucratizing themselves. They serve their own structural ends and defend only themselves, forgetful of their authentic objectives.

We realized our organization must not have as its sole aim the task of entering the job market to fix the price of labour. To negotiate the terms of this sale and thus perpetuate it, is the role allotted to the unions in the capitalist organization of society. For this reason they are re-inforced by the State, by the bosses' organizations and all the realms of power. They concede to the unions their role as moderators, as walls of containment of the energies the working class can develop to radically

transform the environment. These barriers prevent the WORKING CLASS FROM QUESTIONING THE existence of the sale of labour power, the social organization and finally from questioning its existence as a class.

We understand that we cannot fall into the trap which capital has prepared for us to divide our life, our behaviour, into different spheres - political, trade union, cultural etc. Our social life is one, everything is inter-related. The sole object of this division is to reduce to undialectical categories for discussion that which for us is a real global problem which demands a solution in practice and which cannot occur without a transformation that implicates every aspect of social life.

5

Confronted by the previously described conjuncture and based on the preceding points of analysis (without suggesting these are the only ones) the decision of the ASSEMBLY of Barcelona dockers was to create an organization where all power of decision remained always in the hand of the assembly. This organization was to be UNITARY, CLASS BASED, AUTONOMOUS, INDEPENDANT, and SELF-ORGANIZED.

UNITARY: because it tends to unite all the dockers of the port of Barcelona, independantly of their political, religious, cultural opinions etc.

CLASS BASED: because all its' members have to be wage earners and for this reason to belong to the working class and consequently antagonistic to capital. Their demands won't remain restricted to the economic level but will also be social in the widest sense, right up to the elimination of exploitation of man by man and the alienation of work for capital.

AUTONOMOUS: because it will be the workers themselves who will decide on the aims to be pursued which means giving consideration to and employing whatever methods are necessary to regain control over their lives.

INDEPENDANT: because it is not, nor will it ever be, subordinated to any political party, nor to any union, ecclesiastic organization, nor to any other organization such as the State or civil service.

It will be permitted to contact union bodies that are representative of the working class, always given that they show mutual respect for the principles of LIBERTY, AUTONOMY, internal DEMOCRACY and INDEPENDANCE.

DEMOCRATICALLY SELF-ORGANIZED: because it will be the workers themselves who determine the organization and what bodies it requires. In the same way their representatives will be elected from amongst and by its members. These necessarily will be dockers, who will also be freely revoked whenever a majority of those they represent consider it necessary. In accordance with the aforementioned, we will take care to avoid burocracy by not allowing anyone who holds a burocratic position in the docks to vote on any question, problem or issue.

During the past three years we have struggled to remain loyal to these principles. The procedure organic to its functioning has been to hold a General Assembly once every two months and an assembly of 24 delegates at least every week. In addition we have already held two elections to delegate committees taking care to ensure that between delegates and the committees appointed to carry out certain tasks no burocracy whatsoever arises. Throughout, the assembly has been kept informed of any measures that have been taken and an information newsheet has been set up which any docker can have free access to.

We were confronted with serious problems in our practice:

- a) The lack of class consciousness. The degree of integration reached by the present day society of consumption. The ideological vacuum we are suffering from and the internalization of bourgeois legality.
- b) The problem of facing a difficult epoch of crises and political change where all the forces of the left showed themselves interested in helping capital overcome its' difficult situation.
- c) Constant attacks by the bosses in the docks in order to obtain a change in our organization of work which would allow them more room for manoeuvre and enable them to realize their profits. In the same vein they wanted to strengthen their authority over the manual workers and extend privatization favouring docks infrastructure and trade.
- d) There were hardly any organizations like ours which could have come up with a better kind of support and which was to the mutual benefit of both of us. However democratic illusions have in some ways caused us to submit to the renunciation of struggle and a desire for pacification developing in the big central unions. So the workers' struggle has receded. This has retarded co-ordination and reciprocal solidaristic struggle.
- e) The continual attack on the part of the State and the bosses towards all the minority, assemblyist, autonomous organizations. This attack we share with the CNT (anarchist union) which nevertheless, did not stop them from being seduced by the siren-songs of the Grand Negotiations, the offers of participation, the promises which came from on high etc.
- f) And that which has been the gravest of all - the continuous attack launched principally by the central unions - the CC.OO. (Communists) and the UGT (Socialists). They have yet to digest the defeat they suffered in such an important sector as the ports and the part they play in the economic life of the country. Let's not forget the ports could bring a significant pressure to bear on the political-economic framework of the country bearing in mind the internal repercussions and the international attention any action in the ports could attract. It is for this reason that the political realists understand that it's a sector which should not be left in the hands of anyone and which they are interested in dominating as a support for their politics.

Their efforts have been continually directed at hindering any successful outcome to the struggle and collective negotiations going on within the ports. Questioning the validity of representation directed from the base by committees of delegates, they proposed themselves as the sole valid expression and representation of the whole of the working class in the country, by virtue of being majority central unions. However their presence in the docks is minimal, a fact which has constantly defeated their endeavours.

The systematic use of the media which in this so-called democratic epoch is to a great extent already a dominant force, boycotted all our information and attacked us mercilessly as if we deserved to be treated as enemies of the working class.

Without doubt the principal themes of their attack has been to define us as cowards and of being guilty of a corporatist mentality. This is not the place to enter into our defence but it is simply worth mentioning that our struggles have been constant, our methods radical and to point out what we've achieved by struggle without conciliation and without making pacts with the bosses, the support and solidarity given us by other comrades and sections of the class and as far as possible, in each situation, the critical capacity of our analysis of the capitalist organization of society, etc.-all of this demonstrates, given what was possible in each situation, what we really are. Our definition and defence lies in our movement, in our actions, in our daily practise. And this is public and daily and in the service of the whole of the working class - and it is from them that we await the verdict and not from the politicians with opinions and ideological systems which defend external interests.

Here we should make plain the difference between ourselves and the radically different position held by comrades in the CNT. Their position as an organization has been different all along. Right from the start they did not seek to pit themselves against the will of the ASSEMBLY. Rather they put themselves at its service and participated actively in its struggle, aware that only through this form the unity of the dockers' collective could be safeguarded. They supported the assembly organization, including their militants within it, without, of course, stopping being a union.

7

The rest of the dockers' collectives in the country were also caught up in the efforts required to leave the dictatorial epoch behind and to discover their direction within what should be union freedom.

Judging above all, by the results of the first free union elections, we can delineate three organizational tendencies, taking into account, of course, that, although we lump them together, each port has its own peculiarities - we hope that their contributions to this congress will define them with greater accuracy:

1. Those who opt for a massive or majority affiliations to the large central unions existing throughout the country: principally, the CC.OO. and UGT. With a presence in the little ports and with a minority of all the national dockers' collectives, it comes to 13,500 dockers. On top of this there are those dispersed in unions of a national character in some of the regions of the country (principally basque).
2. The docks which chose to create a local union which was exclusively for the docks and had the clear structure, principles and goals of traditional unions. With a presence in the large ports and many of the small ones, they amounted to a good part of the collective.
3. Those who chose to support our self-organized Assembly experience, giving to it an organic form and a legal front. With a presence in the large ports, they amounted to another large part of the collective in a number of docks.

One must make it clear that a lot of the time there were two of these in the same port. As a consequence there were internal struggles until one or the other obtained predominance. In fact there are docks even today in which alternate forms still vying making it difficult to comprehend what's going on.

8

Despite all these differences a living desire united us: the necessity of having a nation-wide unity to confront the common enemy (the central administration and the national organization of port employers, ANESCO), one which struggled to overcome wage differentials and sought to introduce labour regulations on a unified basis.

Here there arose the difficulty of moving towards a national co-ordination of the dockers' organizations.

Basically, we all understood that this co-ordination had to be based on absolute respect for the organization or alternative which each collective had made in their port.

Only the UGT and the CC.OO. intended unity to come about through their unions since they are national central organizations. For this reason they were excluded from the co-ordination and went onto the attack with their typical accusations. However it is necessary to note these worthwhile exceptions of docks which, while having a massive affiliation to these central organizations and which, without abandoning them chose to continue with the CO-ORDINATING ORGANIZATION (Cartegna, Alicante, Motril....)

The CO-ORDINATING ORGANIZATION continues to understand that only solidarity in the daily struggle, continual non-sectarian discussion, the taking up of common positions vis-

a-vis common problems... can yield the fruits of a total unity at every level - ideological, organizational and in terms of action.

In the meantime, we continue to consider a plural, democratic, assembly CO-ORDINATING ORGANIZATION in terms of the reality of the base which inspires it. The guarantee of this co-ordination is equally present in its practise of absolute information, assembly decisions imposed from below and, above all, in the common actions carried out unitarily in all the docks until now.

The CO-ORDINATING ORGANIZATION recently came to constitute itself with some statutes and guidelines for its functioning that we put forward as a contribution and working tool to this congress.

In order to state our purpose somewhat more clearly, we can say we want this to be an organization of unity and struggle which shuns bureaucratization and bosses. All decisions are to be arrived at through the assembly. No one is obligated to belong to it neither are they excluded from it. Being dockers is what counts.

9

Finally and in conclusion, we want this report to be simply an instrument, without any other purpose than to provoke discussion at this congress. We don't propose this as an exhaustive and conclusive struggle; we are conscious of its multiple pit-falls, of the hasty way we have dealt with a process spanning a considerable period of time and containing a great number of nuances, circumstances and multiple happenings. At times certain statements could be gone into at greater depth.

With this as a basis we look at what is going on around us. We don't therefore want anybody to feel hurt for having being excluded or because we have set a limit to their experiences.

We are not trying to show that our process has been the best, nor the richest, nor even that it has arrived at the most correct conclusions. It is simply the nearest and thus the most familiar to us. We only want to propose it as one more contribution to the debate for the consideration of everybody.

We believe that it is only from this point, from our struggle, from our movement, from our contribution to the transformation of our social relations, from our own context in the exploitation of man by man, from the systematic destruction of nature... ..that we can extract the conclusions necessary to continue the fight.

We also expound those desires which impel us to pursue an international unity which becomes vital not only for the desire to establish a brotherhood without frontiers but also because of the multi-national nature of exploitation, of domination.

It is a workers' unity forged from reality. Without that we will be bowled over by pretentious claims. It has to be understood as a necessary process - but without beguiling ourselves with stages which have already proved their ineffectiveness in the historical experiences we have inherited from our class comrades.

Finally, one must understand that the emancipation of the workers will be the task of the workers themselves or will never take place.

Barcelona 12th-13th and 14th of October 1979.

The CO-ORDINATING ORGANIZATION elsewhere in this pamphlet is referred to as the Co-ordinadora.

A Message From Dockers To Their Unemployed Comrades.

All the docks in the country have been at a standstill for five months. The port bosses have attempted to take our jobs from us (as they'll take yours one day). Appropriately we in Barcelona have been on strike in 10 docks since Monday.

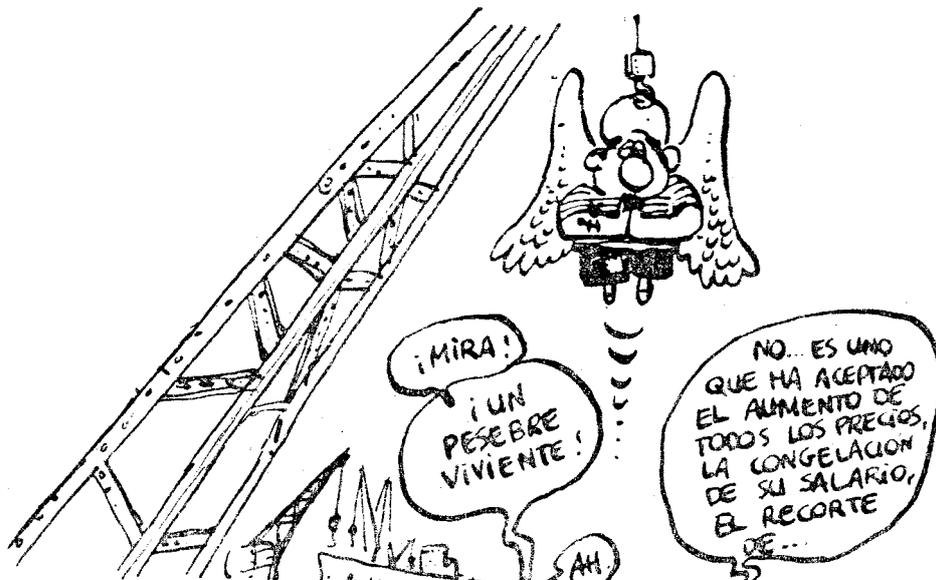
In order to break our strike the Government has declared that the use of scabs in the docks is legal. The Employment Office is taking care of apportioning scabs to the port bosses as they are needed. Under threat of suspending unemployment benefit, workers are sent to take the jobs on offer in the docks. The few comrades that have fallen in the trap have retreated once they have realized their mistake - especially after seeing how a job in the docks meant being under the close scrutiny of the Guardia Civil. Nevertheless there are groups of scabs and provocateurs who mingling with the unemployed have attempted to break the strike.

The dockers are intent upon continuing their legal strike and to resolutely defend our jobs. We denounce the shameful role the Government is playing which instead of resolving your grave unemployed situation, makes you undergo the shame of being scabs.

Although we appreciate your desperate plight we would like to dissuade you from being taken in by those who take advantage of your necessity, in order to continue exploiting you for their own profit. They shan't give you a job except you pit yourself against other workers. To achieve their purpose this is what the bosses are trying to do.

STRIKING DOCKERS
Barcelona. 21. 7. 1980.

The above leaflet was handed out in the streets of Barcelona.



Hey look - a real live angel!

No --- that's someone who's accepted price increases,
a wage freeze, cut backs in -----

ANESCO Circular.

Dated August the 13th 1980, ANESCO announce that they are "entering the political struggle" and intend to use the media and journalist/cops singling out the liberal daily El Pais and the Stalinist influenced Cambio 16. This circular and the dockers' reply to the Cambio 16 editorial was published in La Estiba No 4, the bulletin of the Co-ordinadora.

ANESCO
ref FGU/PGM

13th August
1980

INFORMATION CIRCULAR NO 22/80

As ANESCO has indicated, while having lost the trade-union battle in this serious problem that has laid waste every port in the country, we have begun to wage a political struggle in which we have succeeded in getting the media to mention the docks problem in a series of articles published in the largest and most prestigious periodicals and magazines, in order that public opinion is informed about the problems of the sectors with maximum clarity.

For your information we adjoin photocopies of articles published in the daily newspaper El Pais on the 9th, 10th and 12th of August by Rudolfo Serrano under the title:

"THE URGENT RESTRUCTURING OF THE DOCKS".

An editorial published in the magazine Cambio 16 no 454 and signed by D. Juan Tomas de Salas, entitled:

"A MAFIOSO MINISTRY"

An article published in the magazine CAMBIO 16 no 454, entitled:

"THE VERTICAL MAFIA - LEFTIST".

THIS IS WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "UNTARNISHED CLARITY" OF THE BOSSES, THE ADMINISTRATION AND SOME SO-CALLED PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS.

cambio

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A MAFIA MINISTRY

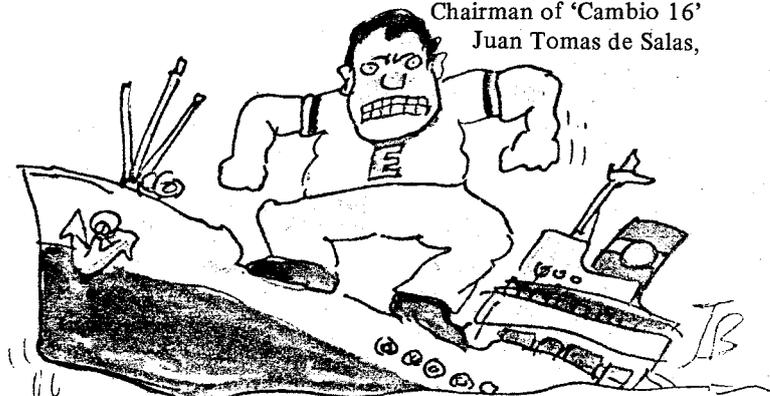
Festering at will, this country is a storehouse of surprises. The worst of it is, many of these surprises stink to high heaven, even more so if the State appears to be mixed up in all the stench. And worst of all, Franco-leninism continues calling the faithful to prayer, bringing civil society down to its level. It's a fair bet you didn't know the Ministry of Labour was organising and financing wildcat strikes in Spanish ports? It's a fair bet you weren't aware that notable Gironists (Francoist Minister of Labour), prompted by anarchists, super-communists, ETA syndicalists, and other radical elements have set up a docks mafia which would make Elia Kazan, Marlon Brando and the "law of silence" on the "Waterfront" green with envy. And all of them are, surprise surprise, in the Ministry of Labour, grouped under the autonomous organism of the OTP's negotiating sector.

There's more to come. A sub-secretary belonging to the Ministry pulls the strings manipulating the strikes. He is in control also of the large sums of money that go to finance the franco-leninist mafia and whatever's left over is divided up amongst State functionaries. It is Marlon Brando's Mafia thrice over. A shabby national disgrace.

What is to be done? The Government cannot continue supporting strikes together with all the extremists belonging to the sector. The OTP must go. As always, the CC.OO is attempting to take over the dockers verticalist organisation with all the lifts in working order. "Yesterdays' red shirts" turn into "yesterdays' black shirts" and the Giron verticalists have become even redder than Rioja wine once they saw their jobs as dockers' mandarins were at risk. The Comisiones Obreras, State functionaries and extremists have together profitted from this strike forcing management to give in and making sure that Spanish ports continue to be the most costly in Europe. Bread for a privileged few today but hunger for everyone else tomorrow. One cannot carry on like this.

The francoist dockers' structure must be dismantled and the UGT and ANESCO have drawn up a plan to do just this. The Government cannot organise a docks' mafia and collect money for it. The Ministry of Labour must stop providing "protection" - and receiving money - for dock companies and dock workers. Getting rid of the extraordinary OTP and restoring power to the dock companies and unions is the only solution. In a country with such a high level of unemployment it is intolerable that a mafioso minority should sustain itself on dock labour, receive awesome salaries, put the national economy at risk and prevent dockers who don't hold the sacrosanct OTP card from working in the docks. Dockers are dockers and not those the OTP say are dockers. And all of this is organised and supported by the Ministry of Labour. Incredible. Right honourable Minister, this country really deserves an explanation.

Chairman of 'Cambio 16'
 Juan Tomas de Salas,



Editors Note: As you have not deigned to give me an explanation, I am announcing that I am thinking of asking for one, week after week, until the Minister gives me one. Enough of complicity and silence. You are either asking for corruption or are against it. Ther is no other way.

A Docker's Reply.

From *La Estriba* #4

Workers cannot, of course, be made into slaves. But that does not mean that attempts to turn workers into slaves should be taken lightly. If such attempts were a laughing matter, we could dismiss Juan Tomás de Solas by shrugging our shoulders and saying "God, what a wretch that man is!"

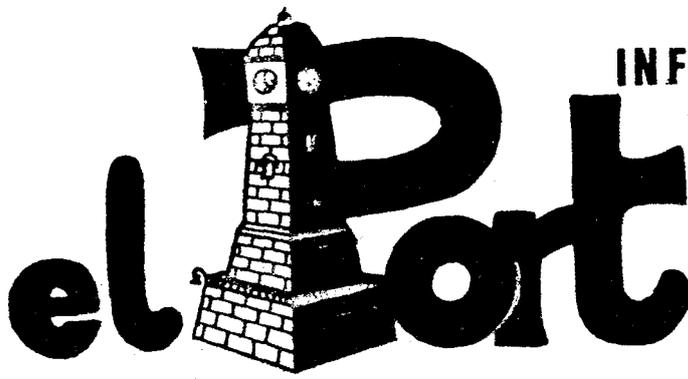
It is wonderful to see how eager Juan Tomás de Salas is to take up and peddle whatever lies his employers care to dole out to him. What humiliation for a man (a man?) to be forever spreading lies around that he didn't even think up for himself!

For example, Juan Tomás de Salas, you say that the workers have been exploiting ANESCO—the organization of their poor, gullible bosses. Where, exactly, do the workers get the power to that? Don't tell us you believe—or expect your readers to believe—that the dockers are so powerful that they can impose a code of silence on everyone, *including their bosses!* The simple fact is that you are so servile towards those who tell you just what to print that you affect not to know that the code of silence, here as in docks all over the world, is imposed by a powerful mafia otherwise known as the employers. Could you conceivably be unaware of this? Give us a break! Just tell us one thing: why should the workers of Spain—or of anywhere else for that matter—aid and abet their own exploiters by imposing a code of silence which brings comfort only to their enemies? Do you think there are one and a half million unemployed in this country because we, the workers, want there to be? ... No, Juan Tomás de Salas, the law of silence is always, *always*, ALWAYS imposed by the bosses. And it is imposed to humiliate the workers, to turn them into slaves, to oblige them to work more, and to back up the bosses' threat not to hire anyone who doesn't do *everything* they are told. This way, Juan Tomás de Salas, if the bosses don't like someone, all they have to do is *point the finger*. And it's precisely because they want to continue pointing the finger that they want to privatize the docks. It is ANESCO, esteemed Juan Tomás de Salas, which wants to point the finger, which wants to privatize the docks—and which imposes the code of silence ...

If I weren't afraid of the economic power to which you have given your allegiance, if I didn't already know just what that power was capable of, I would reply to you in the kind of language you would understand. As it is, I am afraid to do so. But don't go thinking, Juan Tomás de Salas, that I am afraid of *you*. How could I fear someone so utterly cowed, someone whose only purpose in attacking others in print is to get ahead at his newspaper ... Fancy needing so much schooling just to get ahead at that lousy paper! You miserable bastard! All that schooling and still so dumb! You would say anything to get ahead, but I know one thing, Juan Tomás, that you don't: YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE!



A SCAB GOING ABOUT HIS BUSINESS



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dels
ESTIBADORES
PORTUARIOS
BARCELONA

THE DOCKS CONFLICT.

A Safe Investment.

EL PORT. Information sheet 6/80 of the Barcelona Dockers.

The big dock companies are paralysing the port. A group of related companies and multinational firms protected by ANESCO, the port bosses' organization, have imposed a lock-out in all but name on the port of Barcelona. They want to suppress competition, crush the dockers and dictate their conditions through a monopolistic system. The case merits careful examination. Without the faintest pretence these big companies have announced their intentions. They are bent on taking sole charge of the port facilities - that is of a public service. In order to achieve their ends they had no misgivings when it came to a conflict. They could sustain a long dispute thanks to the important financial support they possess. The small and medium sized companies have no other choice but to beat a retreat and abandon the docks. The workers themselves will have to submit to the one boss. The country will incur the cost of this top level undertaking. To create a dispute any excuse served. With the aid of the Government Administration it proved enough to drive the workers to the wall. They knew full well the dockers' collective would never accept the dismantling of their work structure in the docks. On Oct the 29th '80 the dock companies got what they needed to paralyse the docks. With the aid of a simple decree, the Government abolished in one fell swoop a system and organization of labour the dockers had won under a republican government. They had always defended this and it had been legalized through an agreement - the last in fact that took into account the characteristics of dock labour itself in the ports. Leaving to one side the judicial aspects of this conflict, it is certain no decree could modify the conditions reached in the agreement. Nor could the Government Administration interfere in matters of labour relations which belonged exclusively and inalienably to those it concerned - as set forth in the agreement. But in this instance legality doesn't amount to much. For the big dock companies, it was a question of a "political struggle" permitting dirty tricks which were then dressed up. Was it really necessary to stop all trade in the docks just to get rid of the small and medium sized companies? Yet the docks ground to a standstill. Was it really necessary to put before the workers an unacceptable decree in order to bring the docks to a standstill? But this is what happened. Confronted with this conflict you can gauge the measured response of the dockers. Dockers' organizations in Barcelona and nationally, calculated exactly the scale of the problem and the consequences of each of their actions. They has always avoided regarding the bosses as a single entity knowing that the "political struggle" was also directed against the weakest dock companies. Therefore the dockers had attempted to keep things moving in the ports.

The strike which began on November the 10th '80 was directed against only four dock companies in the Port of Barcelona. Its sole purpose was to warn the bosses of the necessity of changing their plans. These four companies had signed and then not carried out the docks agreement. This is an exceptional situation and demonstrates a certain contempt on their part, although in general those companies that had no intention of carrying out the terms of the agreement, preferred not to sign.

Now they are losing their export trade and commodities are piling up on the wharves. The moment of truth has arrived. They are losing their export trade and commodities are piling up because a reduced number of companies are intent on taking over the port and won't make good the loss especially since they are run from a long way off. If goods remain on the wharves the company that produced them foots the bill and indirectly the country itself. So much so that dock companies, bent on saving their last penny, lay off 70 workers. The dispute in the docks has cost them very little and with luck and some help from the Government Administration could yield big profits.

Who's Who In The Docks' Dispute.(WRITTEN BY SOME DOCKERS)

The conflict has already been going on for four months. All are complaining about the losses this is causing not only in our port but in all sectors in Cataluna. Everyone appears fed up with it. But no one dares pronounce one word or take a step in the direction of even a glimmer of a solution. And it is the case that so many interests and influences are being brought into play in the port that we will never get to grips with all of them.

The Ministries of Public Works*, Labour and Transport appear to be the driving force behind the legislation which while attempting to restructure the sector have, in fact, organized a 'mopping up' operation. But this is only in appearance because the famous piece of legislation is the result of a political struggle which the big bosses announced in the media during August 1980, after they'd lost what they called the union battle. Protectors of the bosses in the Government are many but at the apex of the pyramid is to be found Calvo Sotelo* who appears to be the man that managed to get the legislation through for ANESCO. And it isn't so preposterous to think this considering his connections with the business world and more concretely with the CEOE*. Thus it's hardly surprizing that the administration puts so many obstacles before us, ensuring the legislation is properly enforced and legality respected. This was the present he handed on a plate to the bosses and it was they who dictated the letter of the text approved by the Council of Ministers. Faced with such extremes - as he exclaimed to a high official in the Ministry of Labour: "no piece of legislation containing all the recommendations put forward by business ever left this Ministry."

The Minister of Labour complained because he had been condemned the most in the entire "business". And in this vein everyone is thinking of the 1,000's of million pesetas that circulates through the OTP. All those who criticize the OTP of mismanagement of funds have arrived at this conclusion through an overestimation of the amount of control it has over this money. So much so that it cannot even meet paying its officials and dockers. But who can insist that another branch of Government administration can offer a more clear cut form of management?

The Ministry of Public Works who initiated the battle against the Ministry of Labour has, as regards the dockers, enlarged its ministerial powers. The bosses being able to elect the Minister, granted him in the legislation, overall responsibility, knowing full well this Minister's head is stuffed full of ideas which will make things better as regards the world of money. On the other hand this is the Minister who through the works juntas* is sponsoring the politics of privatization in the docks which the big multinationals are so interested in. In order to consolidate this new political initiative it was necessary to give guarantees in every structural, administrative and individual sphere. Hence the need to monopolize every function; because what this country has demonstrated is the inability of official organs to jointly settle a matter. When this happens an ideal situation arises and people are ordered about from every direction at once and the Government is able to shirk the consequences without assuming any responsibility for resolving the matter.

The OTP wanting to radicalize the situation more and bring the ports to the point of total collapse, lost no time in getting the dockers' collective to mobilize. Not being in agreement with the legislation, the OTP thought fit to interpret the legislation in the crudest possible way against the workers, believing the workers would then rise up. For instance social security is to be instantly axed (there is as much likelihood of this happening as doing away with the Marine Social Institute); we will all be unemployed; those that had a permanent job (though some of these have now being sacked) will not be given a pension. Moreover all administrative means shall be at the beck and call of the companies who will discipline us and refuse to have anything at all to do

with what one could suppose a proper organization of labour formerly belonging to the OTP. Its zeal led them to believe that they could even close the Port Library. The workers appreciate that the OTP is putting up a defence and are inclined to help but it just isn't on ethically at the cost of our skins. The OTP is mistaken here and we cannot at any price let it go because it is playing the same game the bosses are intent on playing. This is not surprising as far as the dockers are concerned because this has been their role since the start but there are times when deceit becomes even more intolerable.

The Transport Minister - third member of the triumvirate struggling to dominate the OTP - has upto now been waiting for his rivals to mutually cancel themselves out. However there exist many indications that point to him as the alternative. In a recent UCD* conference he presented himself as a force the OTP could be asked to depend on. The Minister of Labour faced with the Transport Minister preferred to give way so as not to lose when confronted with his secular enemy, the Minister of Public Works. And the UGT a union that has no representation in the ports, already senses a change at Government level under the tutelage of its master the PSOE*. So it campaigned for the alternative provided by the Ministry of Transport. Thus if nothing happens in a short time we could suffer another dizzy spell in the ports, with the Minister of Transport beginning to run the docks without asking for the workers' opinion. The present legislation has granted powers to the Transport Ministry which is linked through its regional authorities to the Marines whose military arm deals with labour matters. This is one of the secular survivals of the former francoist regime which the merchant marine has fought against and against which the dockers are already engaged in struggle. We have had some experience of how zealous some of them are in carrying out their disciplinary function.

In this situation of ministerial rivalry, the bosses assembled in ANESCO, which is linked to the CEOE, is being quite accomodating because, in view of the rich pickings at stake, what one side doesn't permit the other will. The bosses policy of putting itself in the front row of the Government Administration, making it dance to its tune, is producing extraordinary results. But ANESCO after the defeat it suffered in June is no longer a coherent body possessing a lot of members. Because of the policy of non-negotiation it has pursued, ANESCO has not known how to get out of the present conflict. So its members have been obliged to find their solutions on various occasions either actually in the ports or, at the company level. They remained masters of the situation in name only. ANESCO affiliates, although paying lip service, were situated on the margins of the co-signatories. Small and medium scale enterprizes were resentful once more of the association because they had found out that its policies implied their disappearance. Actually ANESCO apart from serving the interests of a few big businesses linked to the banks and the multinationals is an empty organization. Hard nosed technocrats belonging to these organizations make use of ANESCO's organization which in these moments represent no one. They amount to the most determined bunch of businessmen and industrial relations analysts who advise the CEOE in the country. They are made up of high officials belonging formerly to the CNS, their boss being Fabian Marques. The docks' struggle is testing his reputation as a member of a Government cabinet which has destroyed the most determined workers' struggle in the past few years. In the docks they have already suffered a defeat and in the present conflict, they are bringing every professional expert they have to bear on the problem in order to restore their lost prestige. What matters is not the docks nor its affiliates because the experts are only defending their interests from a professional viewpoint while the conflict lasts.

The Generalitat* wants to be a touch stone of the conflict. Although it's true the conflict originates in Madrid, it is Cataluña which stands to lose the most. But since it sees how black and impossible things are, it prefers not to participate so as not to compromise its image. But there are matters it can deal with, in particular the hiring of scabs. But having a common cause with such important supporters as port bosses, how could it be expected to expose the companies' gigantic fraud? In addition

the Bank of Cataluña has big investments in the docks. Also it seems Madrid did not want the Generalitat to intervene and if it did, it did so on the orders of Madrid. It did not know how to gracefully get out of declaring the employment of scabs illegal and so it has had to put up with them for four months. It is pitiful to see the Generalitat which has been primarily concerned with increasing its powers holding debates to avoid exercising those it already possesses.

The big central unions, the UGT/CC.OO. are hardly represented at all in the docks. Unfortunately for the bosses and the Government these unions have not managed to establish their sway over the dockers' collectives, so that they could be the 'responsible' managers stifling dissent amongst the working class in the ports. The circulation of commodities could be seriously held up here because 90% of Spain's import/export trade is dependent on the docks. These unions accusing the Co-ordinadora of being mistaken, attacked it on every occasion, accusing it of irresponsibility, extremism, cowardice, etc. Of course they did not support the actions the dockers undertook however just their demands might be. As the main union power, because of its dependence on the PSOE, the UGT was to back up the port bosses, signing the agreements that implied the acceptance of the entire capitalist plan of re-organization in the docks and of course what promises to be the monopoly of labour relations in the docks. The UGT and ANESCO instigated joint press campaigns against the Co-ordinadora which economically were supported by the bosses. The CC.OO. who at a general level is questioning the UGT's right to hold the leading position as regards union politics also tries to discredit the Co-ordinadora. Without supporting the Co-ordinadora's struggle it nevertheless makes overtures to it, so it can flex its muscles in front of the collective and take credit for its victories. But by maintaining close contact itself with the bosses, it was able to take over the structure and influential positions held by the Co-ordinadora. The Government, the bosses and those big central unions never ceased saying publicly that all what was wrong with the docks was the fault of the dockers themselves who weren't organized in Trade Unions possessing a 'majority'. Without doubt this reveals once again the function played by Trade Unionism in capitalist society. Their organizations were able to discipline and control the workers and are absolutely essential to the reproduction of capitalism. All attempts at a negotiated settlement to our conflict met with the Governments' stricture that these unions had to be seated around the negotiating table. No matter that they did not have the 10% membership required by law to play a part in the negotiations. This minimum required by law had been insisted upon by the UGT and CC.OO. to check the advance of smaller trade unions which they supposed would take up more radical positions than theirs. These big central unions together with all the bosses and the Government Administration are now planning repressive measures against the Co-ordinadora which one might suppose implies its disappearance.

But the options open to the dockers through their assembly led autonomous struggle becomes clearer the more trade unionisms' manouverings stand revealed. Their silence when it was apparent Fuerza Nueva* were being employed as scabs, their cordiality with the bosses lowered them in the eyes of the proletariat who continued to struggle with determination. This struggle clearly was pointing in the direction of anti-capitalist objectives, then, was obliged to lower its sights given the reflux of class struggle in Spain.

All internal struggle between different State organs, between different forms of capitalism, contradiction between small and medium capital, between one or another political and trade union power, we recognise perfectly as minimal, logical contradictions in capital's already too long voyage. But all they really do is mask the prime contradiction between labour and capital. In this moment of struggle it is within this contradiction that the dockers' struggle is inscribed.

*c/f Glossary

The Dockers' Assembly And Supporting Committees. To All The Workers Of Cataluña.

We the dockers of Barcelona have been on strike for the past month against four companies - the most important of the sector.

With the aim of installing a powerful disciplinary regime the port authorities are gambling on a ruthless attack on the workers.

On account of the new technical facilities they want to eliminate jobs leaving workers unemployed.

They are striving to destroy a workers' organization which has demonstrated - through the Assembly - its capacity for struggle and unity in action faced with the agreements - always negative as far as concerns the working class - which the central unions are imposing.

In the final analysis, it is an attack by multinationals in order to install their dictatorship; privatizing the ports and eliminating competition so enabling them to absorb transport costs within a monopolistic system.

During the last four years the dockers' struggles have not only hung on to the concessions we have obtained but needs to and are succeeding in maintaining and increasing the numbers of workers employed, reducing the working day to six hours and imposing a levy on all companies which reduce the workforce by installing new machinery, thus guaranteeing a wage for the workers who are made redundant.

We are struggling in short to combat the effects of the crises proposing solutions that benefit the workers.

Our mode of struggle has been direct action and immediately obtaining our rights. This has been rendered possible thanks to our assembly organization where none of the workers can delegate their responsibility in solving their problems. It is an organization which through the practise of joint struggles has equally demonstrated its viability through the Co-ordinadora - nationally and internationally.

ANESCO (the port bosses' association linked to the Spanish CBI) has brought all its influence to bear on the Government which, abandoning its democratic mask to carry out its real repressive function, is playing the role of protagonist. This has been done through a law eliminating our right to strike and legalizing the use of scabs protected by the police and the Guardia Civil.

With the aid of two more decrees, they are attempting to annul the Dockers' Statute and all that was obtained as regards the docks in last summers' (1979) agreement. They are implementing by decree the reduction of the workforce, handing over control of labour matters to the military marines and to the Juntas* where six authorities and six companies are destroying the workers' collective.

This climate of company-inspired terrorism has already begun to make its effect felt. There have been more than 3,000 instances when workers have been penalized and a further 172 workers have got the sack out of a collective comprising 1,500 workers.

Right now, the claims arising out of our struggle center on the negotiations concerning the Decree the Government has granted to ANESCO. Without making any concessions we demand the following:

- job preservation and stabilizing the number of workers employed.
- elimination of the disciplinary regime exclusively in the hands of the bosses.
- maintenance of rotation so that work can be equally shared out amongst all members of the collective.
- that the minimum number of workers that make up a gang is not reduced and that the minimum level of output required for each stint is not increased.

Without doubt, repression of dockers' struggles is one more to add to the list of other workers' struggles rebelling against capitalist domination in the present situation. This repression condemns us first to unemployment in order to persecute us as either hooligans or terrorists afterwards. This is evidently the case in the Caso Scala* trial where some young workers have been tragically converted into tools of the authorities to degrade a section of the working class. A comrade from Minie has been sacked simply for being voted onto the factory committee. It applies to the 2 million unemployed workers obliged to beg for their right to a living. There are the continual measures, lay-offs, company closures etc.

All these things are provoked by the same old exploitation created by the dictatorship of capitalism.

Confronted daily with this capitalist repression, confronted with a capitalist exploitation which grows ever more intolerable as each day passes, it is necessary to respond with unity and solidarity. We are calling on you to advance towards it together.

9. 12. '80. Barcelona

(THE ABOVE LEAFLET WAS HANDED OUT IN THE STREETS OF BARCELONA)

*c/f Glossary

The Port Will Win.

The following text was read out at an Assembly of Barcelona dockers on December the 15th, 1980 by a worker who was not himself a docker. The Assembly, held in a local Barceloneta cinema was attended by some 500 people and was held chiefly for information purposes. After describing some of the events of the previous days (the attack on dockers by scabs in a bar, the occupation of the Marine Institute by dockers'wives and the events on the Western docks) some Trotskyist politicians tried to address the meeting but were booed and hissed until they were forced to leave. When some CNT people tried to speak, there was the same reaction but the table in a paternalistic way, called on the meeting to let them speak. They did speak although hardly anyone paid attention. The following text was then read out and initially provoked a hostile reaction - when in calling for consciousness of the plight of the unemployed, it appeared to some deaf souls, to be justifying scabs. Finally it was listened to. This document was stamped by the OEPB and distributed afterwards.

Eye-witness report.

ASSEMBLY OF DOCK WORKERS

Comrades,

We daubed this slogan on the walls but once having done it a doubt crossed our minds. Will they win? The doubt won't go away and we have to recognise it for what it is. Only then can we begin to discuss your struggle and what the chances of victory are. Whatever we have to say to you is done with the sole aim of lending support to your struggle. Do with it as you please. If it is of no value to you, chuck it away.

1. Your struggle has attracted attention. During a moment of capitalist crises it is a response to a restructuring process calculated to expand capital. Mindful of your own interests you struggle against such a restructuring, doing whatever you hold to be right. So far so good. However doubts arise the moment you begin to defend small capital against the multinationals (i.e., the private sector) because you then set yourselves up as defenders of nationalization against a stronger opponent. When you do this, you are not only kidding yourselves but us also. You make the struggle between the multinationals and small and medium capital, between ANESCO and the OTP, between private and State capital, between the most reactionary and the most progressive factions of capital appear to be not an inter-capitalist conflict but a struggle between capitals' interests and your own. You therefore tend to confuse our anti-capitalist class perspective, the starting point, one day, of an assault on capitalism, with capitalist perspectives.

The same doubts creep in when you reason that it is the multinationals who have caused the crises and all that you are asking for is that the ports continue working normally. All you have done is confuse us still more because you do not say that the capitalist crises is we ourselves, the working class. If we did not sell our labour power, which is an essential commodity to capital, there would be no capitalism. Once we negate ourselves as a class and stop supplying this life blood, capitalism cannot reproduce itself.

We must not attempt to rescue a crises ridden economy and hold this to be in the general interest. Don't elect to "democratically administer the ports as a public service" because this is a capitalist option. We must never lose sight of our power to destroy capitalism. Capital wants us to fight on the same terrain as itself. Whenever we opt for a capitalist solution, like bothering about the state of the economy believing it guarantees our material well being, we do precisely that.

2. Your struggle has been branded corporatist by the big central unions, out to re-inforce your isolation, and by others who want to see you crushed. So it is - just like all our struggles. Corporatism always exists whenever a particular section of workers, makes a sectional demand that is detached from demands made by other sections of workers or groups. Take, for example, unemployed workers who demand a job or workers, still in work, who demand a wage rise or other concessions. Take those who daren't

demand anything at all for fear of losing their jobs. Take workers faced with the sack (like yourselves and others belonging to the "companies engaged in struggle") who demand to be kept on. This latter demand could be generalized to cover, at the very least, all the other companies engaged in struggle. But because these struggles were not timed to take place together or on account of the nature of the demands raised, they went their separate ways. Yet what serves to unite them is nothing other than our condition of being wage slaves, subject to the law of the economy. No matter how utopian it may seem it is here that the unity of the proletariat is to be found. The struggle against this condition raises the possibility of generalizing class conflict and extending class solidarity. Class unity is not essentially an organizational problem but springs from something we are all opposed to: our condition of being commodities in the system of wage labour. When we oppose it we are no longer acting according to sectional interests but as proletarians in order to cease being so.

The amount of class unity and solidarity is nothing other than the sum of the demands. This is not a question of degree or quantity but of vantage point. However trite a struggle may seem it is capable of uniting us provided we are struggling for something we want and refuse to be sidetracked by the state of the economy or the firm. We might appear to be giving our assent to what exists and acquiescing to any number of aspects of capitalism but from this vantage point we can focus on everything else. If this wasn't the case the end of capitalism would be a pure fiction because only an explicit struggle against the system of wage labour would then have the power to unite us. We have already seen today how this process gets under way, precisely because there is a continuity between the demands put forward and the abolition of wage labour. More particularly, we have felt its presence in the relevant questions raised, during struggles of this kind, to do with what kind of society we want, what kind of production we require, what kind of life we want to lead and how best to set about achieving them so finally we can put the capitalist machine we set in motion, behind us. Then we need never surrender our labour power to it again. Capital cannot substitute this commodity for another, in the same way, for example, it can substitute atomic energy for oil, should the need arise.

3. Generally, in pursuit of demands, violence is called for. (There is, however, in many struggles an obvious discrepancy between a disproportionate use of violence and the quality of the demands themselves). This could also be your failing. However this is not to deny its use provided it abuts demands and does not become detached from them. For example, dealing with scabs, although primarily a social problem, also involves the use of violence. Few of us have made provision for the day unemployment relief runs out, so, there have been a few violent arguments with scabs forced back to work because of unemployment. Solving this problem has more to do with extending the struggle than suppressing it on an individual basis.

4. A final word on the assembly which is your weapon of struggle. Thanks to it you have prevented the central unions gagging and manipulating you. On several occasions you have waged a successful struggle through it and it will continue to bring you victory. But don't handle it roughly because it is highly vulnerable, assailed by bureaucratic inertia and on the point of collapsing through our own weakness and accomodation. Don't allow it to waste away, don't convert it into a species of bourgeois parliamentarism. Let rotation and revocability always remain in force. Don't lean permanently on the same comrades no matter how honest they might be. As you told us in your open assembly two weeks ago: neither representatives nor represented. For every action embarked on, for every strike and clash, elect a committee. Hang on to it for all it's worth; cram it with a class content. Minus this content it is worth nothing, or, it is worth no more than a central union. Extend it, break out of your corporatism even more. Continue to open it up - to us, to your wives, to your neighbourhoods. In that way we are able to discuss your struggle and what solidarity action we can take because what you then do is also our business. We are rebelling against being unemployed, against domestic work and factory work, we are rebelling against our status as wage slaves and proletarians. One more step if we don't want to stay this way.

fraternally, some comrades.
(Barcelona. 15. 12. '80)

Some Historical Notes.

This article was written by a worker from Barcelona who, while himself not a docker, had accompanied the dockers' struggle closely. The article was written at the request of some French comrades and published by Contra a Corrente, Lisbon in 1981.

The Present Struggle Of The Spanish Dockers.

Establishing adequate political conditions to make capitalism more profitable both on the international scene and in Spain continues along its contradictory path, moving on from the old francoist regime towards its necessary modernization. Without the integration of the working class in the Economy and the 'national interest' this is not possible. Parties and unions get all steamed up over perfecting this objective. However they are constantly checked by workers resisting such integration and submission. This resistance goes from mere abstention (50% in the Parliamentary elections and in the last union elections) upto the explicit rejection of these forms of gagging. This occurs when workers organize in an autonomous manner in decision making assemblies with elected revocable committees. Just so the dockers. Their collective which has resisted manipulation by the central unions has, as outlined above, organized itself autonomously and an attack has been unleashed against the restructuring/modernization of capitalism in the docks.

The quantitative and qualitative importance of this branch of industry (representing 62% of the import/export trade with the EEC) - as well as the dockers' combativity over the years, accelerated the corporatist francoist organization of dock labour. (For example in 1931, a strike which lasted 8 months and left 8 dead, managed to re-introduce the equal dividing up of labour amongst the dockers which had been achieved in the 20's and then was got rid of by the Republic). Under the francoist Girón*(1944) the OTP was founded which combined privilege and corruption with the super-exploitation of manual labour and high accident rates. Dependent upon the Ministry of Labour, the OTP drew up the terms of the agreements which the dock companies had to accept. And this is how the rotation system dividing work equally amongst the dockers was once more set in motion.

The technological modernization of the docks (containerization, roll on/roll off) required the transfer of State managerial functions to private multinational companies able to support the cost of the docks infrastructure. Previously this had been the State's business because of the high investment required. Also there was the matter of competitiveness (all the more necessary because Spain was faced with integration into the Common Market) and the need to modernize Spanish capital mentioned previously. To achieve a greater profitability these combined factors required a major restructuring of the docks and ports entailing both the destruction of the OTP and the greater exploitation of dock labour.

This latent tendency resulted in direct confrontation even before the summer of 1980. An agreement putting an end to the OTP was signed by ANESCO. This association was intimately linked to the bosses' Confederation and to the UGT, the Socialist union which was hardly represented at all in the docks. But this agreement clashed head on with the reality of a workers' collective organized in autonomous assemblies. A victory was scored over ANESCO when the agreement was rejected. After a strike lasting several months, the Dock companies were obliged to come to an agreement with the dockers' Co-ordinadora (a nation wide body elected by Assemblies of dock workers) representing 85% of all dockers. This agreement included improvements contained in the Dockers' Ordinance and other advantageous aspects of the OTP which the workers had no intention of renouncing. The assembly organization which the dockers have adopted arose in heat of battle in the port of Barcelona in 1976 when a strike lasting a month was called against sackings. This organization, spreading to all other ports in Spain placed all decision making powers in the hands of an assembly and elected constantly revocable committees. Though in an absolute minority in the ports, the combined efforts of the big central unions have not so far been able to weaken the assemblies. They lack the presence of a typical trade union structure inside the docks.

With the agreement signed the battle had been momentarily won by the dockers. However ANESCO realized it could not speed up the necessary restructuring of the docks by seeking confrontation with the dockers in this way. So, getting the Government's ear, it started to play tough. In due course the Government passed legislation (October 29th '80) favouring ANESCO, in which the OTP was reorganized and the workers were handed over to the dock companies and the last word in repression i.e. the Military Marines and the Dock's Director. The Ordinance of Dock Workers acknowledged in the summer's agreement was done away with, the right to strike abolished, the use of scabs permitted and the number of workers employed forcibly reduced by law. Also labour matters were handed over to Tribunals composed of six lawyers and six dock companies who proceeded to crush the workers.

To prevent the legislation being applied the dockers resolved to fight back. On the 10th of November 1980 they came out on strike. The strike was restricted to those companies that did not concede the four minimum points which if not amounting to quashing the legislation, modified its application. Faced with a strike threat, the majority of ports signed an agreement but in Barcelona, four large companies (Contenemar, Maritima Layetana, Ceosa and Mapor) refused. Over-ruling the others they started to apply the legislation sacking dockers and bringing in scabs in response to the strike they had provoked. The four minimum points - a condition for calling off the strike - were as follows: the refusal to allow the dockers' collective, indivisible up to now, to be slit up into registered and non-registered, job conservation and job stabilization; maintaining the rotation system ensuring a fair work distribution; getting rid of disciplinary procedures exclusively in the hands of the companies. Lastly there were to be no productivity hikes per shift and the minimum number of workers settled on per gang could not be altered.

This selective strike has been going on for the past two months with other ports joining in (especially the Canaries). When workers struggle for their immediate interests taking daily decisions on the conduct of a strike, they are no longer reduced to merely voting and consuming. Passivity gives way to individual and collective acts of resistance. Incidents between dockers and scabs heavily protected by the police and Guardia Civil began to break out. Some responded with solidarity action, (one day the entire district of Barceloneta where many dockers live came to a standstill, many militant actions were undertaken by dockers' wives, assemblies sprang up and demonstrations joined by other workers took place), while there was a lack of solidarity shown by others (the big central unions). Sackings took place, workers were penalized and there were clashes with the police. Tension was high, becoming for the Regional Government a problem of public order. The dockers did not manage despite the violence and the insufficient extension of the struggle outside the confines of the port, to chuck out the scabs. But the police were unable to restore calm. The Civil Governor attempted to intervene in and settle the dispute. After a couple of months, the Dockers' assembly came to the conclusion it might be an idea to call an end to the strike in its present selective form (although this still hasn't happened). The assembly was prompted to do this faced with the impossibility of getting rid of scabs (which would have made the strike effective) and because of a promise by the Docks Director General for negotiations concerning the readmission of the sacked workers. Negotiations were also to take place on the points mentioned previously, softening the tenor of the legislation. Given the need to have concrete demands raised by the present struggle met and given the unfavourable context - in which there was a slackening of the struggle, both quantitatively and qualitatively - the dockers, even if there had to be a temporary compromise, had to look for other forms of attack in a struggle they knew would turn out to be long and hard.

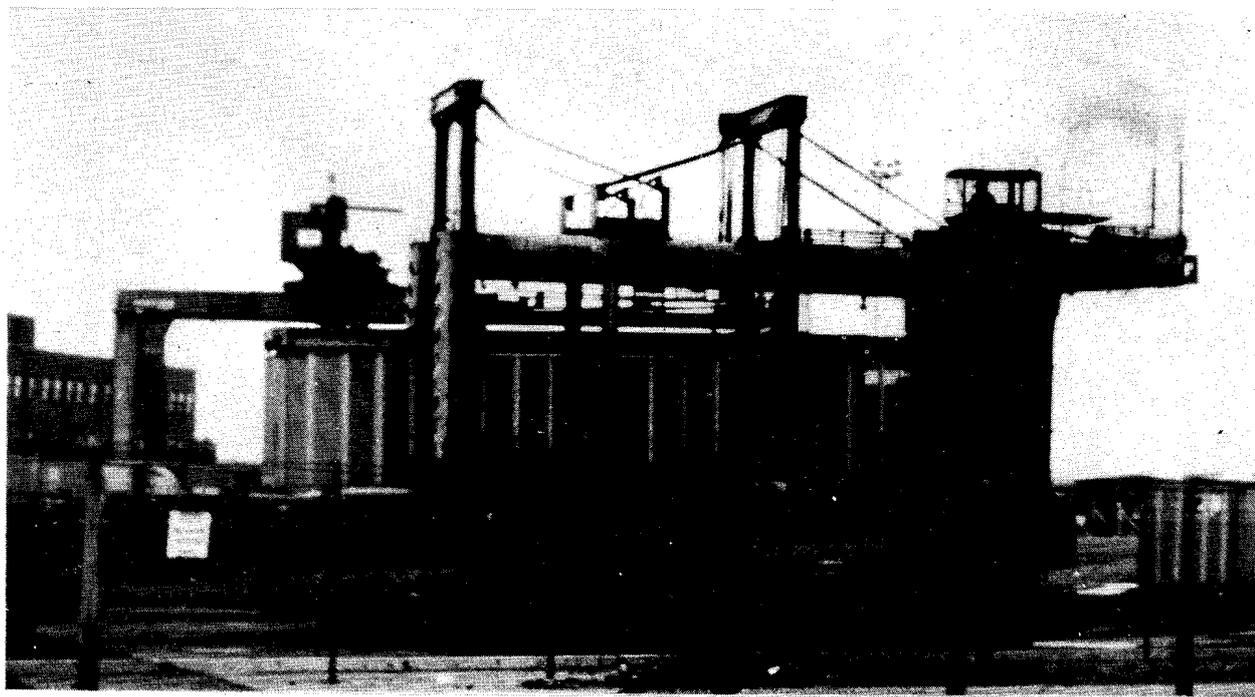
The entire process has up to now laid bare a series of contradictions in Capital and amongst the workers. We have seen how contradictions within capital between multinational capital, small and medium sized companies and the Government proliferated. The dockers made good use of these contradictions although over estimating them in several aspects. They were at times deluded by these contradictions inherent in capitalism aiding the resolution of its problems.

Now for the workers organizations themselves. There was a total boycott of the dockers' struggle by the UGT because it was totally hand in glove with ANESCO. The CC.OO. did not support the strike either and consequently did not call for solidarity from other ports in France and Italy where communist unions held sway. This was hardly surprizing because the organization of labour in these ports (where work was not shared out evenly and union elections still prevailed) was contrary to what dockers in Spain were demanding. The CNT was the only union that supported the struggle. It found itself obliged to defend itself before the dockers' assemblies open to all other workers. And inspite of what the CNT claimed, it had to do so from a pronounced anti-union viewpoint saying it wasn't a union in order to criticize, like the rest of the unions, the dockers' anti-unionism. The dockers were able to see this better as a result of the CNT's behaviour in the course of union elections. The CNT did not propose the Assemblies and revocable committees in place of the factory committees it denounced as being in the pay of the bosses and the Government. Instead it proposed union branches in the factory. As regards the leftists they just played at pledging their support for the strike, a support which collided head on with an autonomous organization containing neither representatives nor represented.

As regards the workers en masse, solidarity actions were few and far between and the dockers were consequently isolated. In a situation where there had been an alarming increase in unemployment (more than 2 million in Spain) fear of being out of work played its part too. So did the determination of the bosses and unions to completely wreck any attempt at autonomy. As regards the dockers, the tactic of a selective strike led to divisions at a national level when tactics began to be looked at afresh. During the struggle a number of contradictions were exposed. Because of the dockers rejection of the multinationals attempt to privatize the ports, illusions concerning nationalization and small scale enterprizes were apparent. At times these assumed the ideology of the national interest. Both are capitalist solutions and against the workers' interests. This wasn't sufficiently emphasized. Situated on capital's terrain the immediate demand, to better the conditions under which labour power is sold, once launched on this course, becomes cut off from the demand to abolish the wages system.

These contradictions do not just pertain to the dockers but to the working class, e.g. how to pass from immediate demands to the abolition of wage labour, how to move, while being either unemployed, employed, men, women, young, old, beyond corporate demands. How, in short, to unite the workers as proletarians so they may cease being so.

Barcelona. 18. 1. 1981.

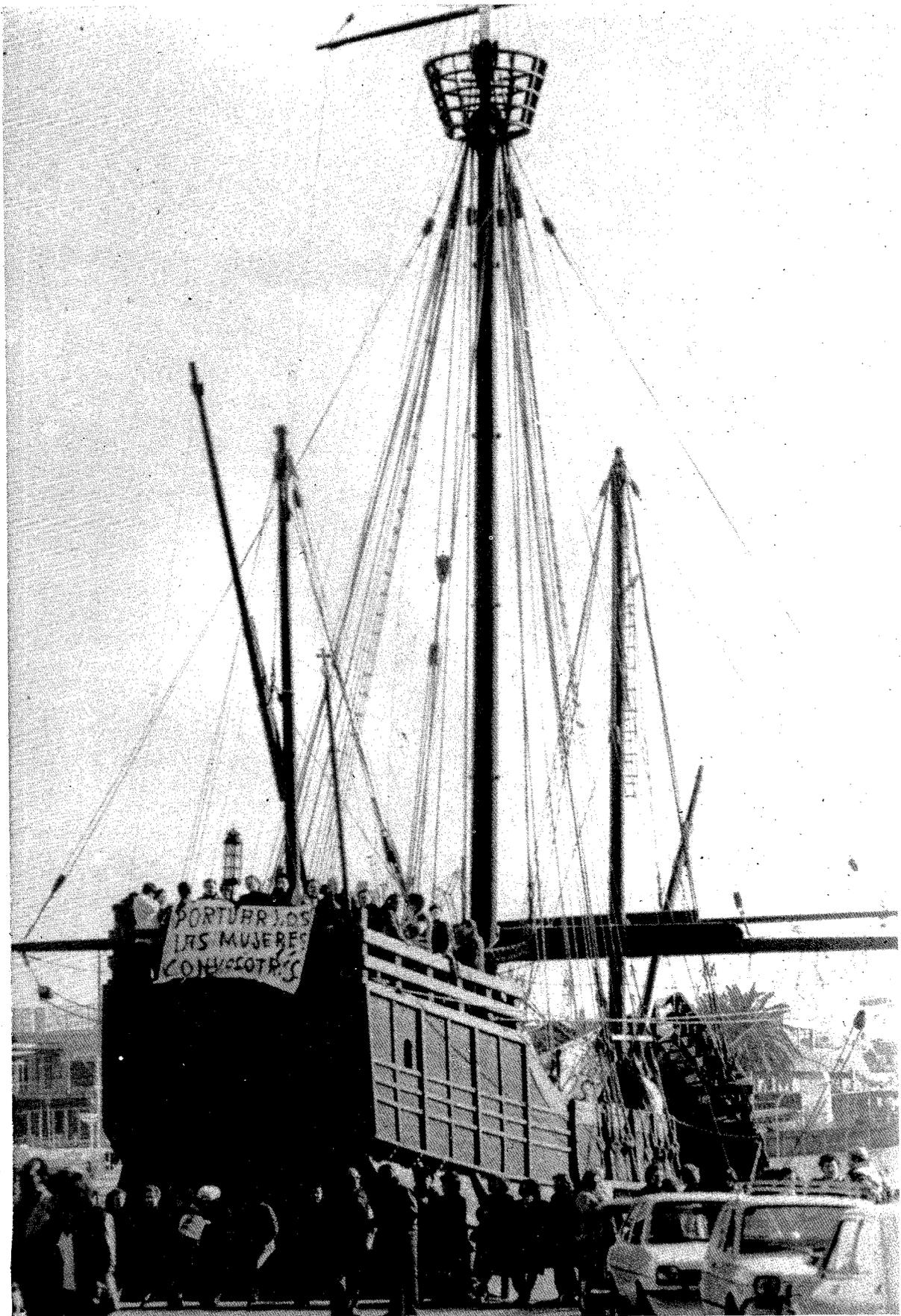


A container straddle-carrier snorting. In Spain they are known as "toros" (bulls) and during the Spanish dock strike in 1981 at least two were pushed into the harbour.



THE PORT STRUGGLE IS OUR BREAD.

In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue. In 1980 dockers' wives occupied the reconstructed Santa Maria on the Barcelona waterfront in search of a far better new world.



DOCKERS: THE WOMEN ARE WITH YOU.

SECOND ARTICLE TO CONTRA A CORRENTE.

Some days after the assembly which discussed terminating the strike the dockers abandoned their selective strikes at the four dock companies. They had not reinstated sacked workers and still continued to employ scabs. Talks commenced with the Managing Director of the ports (Minister of Public Works*) who, in turn, held separate talks with ANESCO concerning the re-instatement of those sacked. This request had been rejected by the Ministry of Labour. Given this situation the dispute was extended to all docks and ports in Spain. Note that, with the exception of Barcelona, there was no dispute in any of the other ports between the dockers and the employers because elsewhere the dockers' demands had already been granted. The employers knew that if they scored a victory in Barcelona it would be a cinch quashing concessions granted elsewhere. So with this in mind all the dockers, excluding Barcelona, came out on strike in solidarity with the Barcelona dockers and not because of any immediate grievance of their own. This, of course, raised problems of extending and radicalizing the struggle and especially reflected upon the Co-ordinadora which had not sought to press for solidarity actions. So it was agreed to strike on the 23rd and 24th of February '81, on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of March '81 and then to call an indefinite strike from the 9th of March. On the 23rd all the ports stopped, likewise on the 24th with the exception of Valencia because of the attempted coup on the previous evening.* This action went beyond its tragi-comic aspect, (assailants leaving Parliament still armed, arrested soldiers receiving military honours as they entered their barracks) and has to be judged by its effect on the assembly movement and working class autonomy. On the one hand, it increased repression and on the other, re-inforced the integrative role of the unions and parties who, playing on the fear of a return to the past, called on the workers to abandon their demands and defend democracy as something worthwhile in itself - i.e. the State and wage labour.

The Co-ordinadora deciding not to press for solidarity action and given the possibility of negotiating with the Ministry of Labour, called off the strike, after the total stoppage on March the 2nd. The Barcelona dockers, however, continued their struggle against scabs demanding the re-instatement of sacked workers. The struggle was marked by continual confrontations with scabs and police. Acts of vandalism in the four Barcelona docks occurred constantly (lorries, loading and unloading equipment were damaged) despite the unfavourable context i.e. - the heavy concentration of repressive forces in the port and their isolation from other workers who seemed more pre-occupied with hanging onto their jobs than taking solidarity action. The period is, moreover, characterized by savage attacks launched by the bosses, the reduction of the labour force, wage freezes or, allowing wages to rise less than the increases in the cost of living. The confrontations reached a decisive pitch (16th of March '81) when, following an incident with scabs, one of the four dock companies was all but destroyed - with machinery wrecked, straddle-carriers shoved into the sea, cars burnt and managers attacked. Meanwhile one of the four companies had begun to re-instate sacked workers while, however, continuing to employ scabs. In the courts a hearing on the sacked workers had begun. The outcome of this will indicate politically just what ANESCO has in mind.

During the past few days the Ministry of Labour has called on the dockers to negotiate under the following conditions: the dockers must agree not to strike during the period of negotiation (that is until September) and to return to the agreed-on work quota. Management in return was to accept the re-instatement of the sacked workers while wage levels and working conditions would be maintained as before. In Barcelona the assembly of representatives, open to all the dockers, accepted this, with the proviso the scabs were got rid of. In the meantime an assembly has been called for next Monday where it shall make its views known.

At the moment this is the situation and it is difficult to see a quick way out, although it is already possible in the long run to discern the outlines of an agreement. Both sides have understood their respective strengths and weaknesses and because of this are likely to tone down their respective demands. Concerning the four points the port employers are prepared to give ground with regard to the minimum numbers employed and on the stipulated productivity minimum. The dockers might concede to setting up a joint committee and agree to subsequent arbitration on aspects of discipline. However they are not going to concede a thing when it comes to the issue of workers registered with the OTP because that would split the dockers' collective into registered and non-registered dockers. There will still be a tussle requiring negotiat-

ion and struggle but one still open to the autonomous activity of the dockers. It is a contradictory process which goes from the rationality of negotiations and their outcome (emphasized by and through the representatives) to the rationality of sabotage and the struggle against their condition as wage-labourers.

However no matter what the subsequent development of the conflict is, the dock workers' collective has restored our confidence and that of 1,000's of workers at a time of passivity and impotence. We can therefore already write: the Docks have won.

Barcelona. 2. 4. 1981.

REPORT ON THE UNION ELECTIONS

Se adjunta a continuación los datos de las elecciones celebradas hasta la fecha

	Coord.	UGT	CCOO	OTROS		COORD	UGT	CCOO	OTROS
<u>ZONA ANDALUZA</u>					<u>ZONA CATALANA BALEAR</u>				
Cádiz.....	13	3	1	-	Barcelona....	23	-	-	-
P ^o Sta M.	3	-	-	-	Palamós	1	-	-	-
Barbate	3	-	-	-	S. Carlos ...	5	-	-	-
Huelva	10	3	-	-	Mahón.....	3	-	-	-
Algeciras ...	9	-	-	-	<u>ZONA NORTE</u>				
Malaga	9	-	-	-	Coruna	-	-	13	-
Almeria	5	-	-	-	Ondarroa	-	-	1	-
Sevilla	4	-	9	-	Pasaje Comercial-	-	6	2	1
<u>ZONA LEVANTE</u>					Pasaje Pesquero -	-	-	-	9
Cartagena ...	9	-	-	-	FERROL	-	-	3	-
Alicante ...	13	-	-	-	Avilés	-	8	1	-
Aguilas	3	-	-	-	Santander ...	-	2	7	-
Gandia	5	-	-	-	Gijón	-	3	-	6
Castellón ...	9	-	-	-	Vigo	-	4	8	-
Valencia	12	-	-	-	Total.... 214 29 45 16				
<u>ZONA CANARIA</u>									
Fuerteventura	5	-	-	-					
La Palma	9	-	-	-					
Tenerife	23	-	-	-					
Las Palmas ...	23	-	-	-					
Lanzarote ...	9	-	-	-					
Gomera	5	-	-	-					
El Hierro ...	1	-	-	-					

THE UGT'S SCANDALOUS VERSION OF THE ELECTION RESULTS



EMPRESA	NUMERO DE TRABAJADORES	U.G.T.	CC. OO.	U.S.O.	NO AFIL.	COORD.	OTROS	TOTAL
JUNTAS DE PUERTOS, PUERTOS AUTONOMOS Y C. ADMINISTRATIVA	5.626	116 51.32 ^o / _o	67 29.64 ^o / _o	11 4.84 ^o / _o	10 4.42 ^o / _o	--	22 9.78 ^o / _o	226
ORGANIZACION TRABAJOS PORTUARIOS	3.742	56 45.90 ^o / _o	17 13.93 ^o / _o	--	--	43 35.24 ^o / _o	6 4.91 ^o / _o	122
AUCONA, S. A.	823	17 36.17 ^o / _o	8 17.02 ^o / _o	--	--	--	22 --	47
CONSIGNATARIAS/ADUANAS, Ltc.	622	47 90.38 ^o / _o	5 9.61 ^o / _o	--	--	--	--	52
TOTAL	10.813	236 52.69 ^o / _o	97 21.70 ^o / _o	11 2.46 ^o / _o	10 2.23 ^o / _o	43 9.61 ^o / _o	50 11.18 ^o / _o	447

This statistical breakdown of the results of the union elections was published on page 7 of 'UNION PORTUARIA' (December '82), the UGT journal covering the docks and customs and excise. The article was entitled: "Taking on the responsibility of being in a majority". This manipulation of the figures is scarcely credible. We trust this alteration signifies something else entirely.

The Docks Conflict Has Lasted A Year.

The struggle continues with the same determination and unity as on the first day. We are full of rage seeing how all of capital's powers bash our dockers' collective. We have a duty to resist this aggression for ourselves and on behalf of other comrades.

On this anniversary the Government has sent us a present: a new decree. This is the second one they have sent. And once again flying in the face of all legality the jobs of 13,500 dockers are in doubt. Through their intention to privatize the ports, the multi-nationals find favour and scabs are reassured, helped by the Fuerza Nueva* installed in our jobs.

A loony Jaime Lopez Fandos belonging to the ultra-right and empowered by the Government to ignore all legality, is commanding the operation. He is a typical provocateur belonging to OTP big wigs in the Ministry of Labour. He carried out for the big companies, the job of professional advisor, giving them all the Government support they needed. Thus the publication of the collective agreement dealing with the sector was stopped although it had been out in print for 9 months at the BOE. The decree did away with all our rights as working people, shutting us up in Employment Exchanges. And our life annuities were badly misused.

In Barcelona we have had to put up with 4,000 cases where workers were penalized and 73 workers sacked. All the court cases have been won but sentences are handed out without any end in sight. Sacked workers have not been taken on again even though their dismissal has been declared illegal. It is a clear indication that judicial rulings when they favour the workers, amount to nothing.

Everyday 100's of police and Guardia Civil protect scabs who are denying our constitutional right to strike. Preventing the dockers from approaching onto the docks they are simply carrying out the law. Thus once again, the repressive function of what they are want to call "the forces of law and order" stands revealed.

Although a little late in the day, the Generalitat* has declared the use of scabs illegal. However the Government in Madrid is not prepared to accept the authority of the Generalitat. So faced with the silence of the Catalunian authorities, Madrid is sabotaging their decisions dragging the major port of Spain, which is situated in Cataluña, to the brink of ruin.

The traditional dock companies are seeking negotiations as the only way out of the conflict. 28 companies have all but arrived at an agreement. But the Government and the three biggest companies are boycotting it seeking to stop the agreement from being signed.

It shouldn't come as a surprize that maximum use is being made of provocation. It shouldn't come as a surprize if, with the stroke of a pen, or, by violent means they try to take our jobs from us. If this happens despite ourselves, we will struggle to the very end with all available means. Because we have our origins in the docks, because they are our present and our future, because we are reclaiming our lives as on countless occasions they have claimed the lives of our comrades. Those responsible for our plight don't forget - we know who you are -and we won't let it go just like that.

Organization of Barna Dockers.
Barcelona. 9. 7. 1981.

* c/f Glossary

The Statutes Of The Barcelona Dockers' Organization.

111. - STRUCTURE, RIGHTS AND DUTIES.

- 4) The OEPB is made up solely and exclusively of dockers belonging to the port of Barcelona either working there or retired.
- 5) The members of this association possess the right and duty to participate and take an active part in this association being eligible to represent their comrades in the organization.

Moreover they have to carry out majority decisions taken in the assembly and respect the right of a minority to express its opinions.

Each member must do a certain amount of work each month which supports the organizations' aims.

IV. - THE ASSEMBLY

- 6) The OEPB is controlled by the General Assembly of Dockers and Pensioners.
- 7) The General Assembly is made up of OEPB members who possess the same rights to speak and vote as in the OEPB.
- 8) The Assembly as the supreme organ of the OEPB is able to debate and take a decision on any question that might arise during it.

Any possibility of delegation is ruled out as regards the following decisions to be taken in the Assembly.

- the nomination and revocability of delegates.
- the nomination and revocability of representatives.
- the nomination of committees and members engaged to carry out Assembly mandates which the Assembly considers appropriate and fulfilling its responsibility and purpose.
- the dissolving of any committee whatsoever.
- changing the statutes.
- discussion and approval of Strike action or any action which effects the majority and which the majority may have to take part in.
- the nominating of Strike Committees.
- the stipulation of tasks.
- expulsion of members.

- 9) The General Assembly holds regular meetings and extraordinary general meetings. The former takes place every two months. Delegates are elected by the first General Assembly of the new year.

Extraordinary General Assemblies are held whenever the following conditions arise:

1. When it convenes a Delegate Assembly.
2. When 10% of OEPB members demand one.
3. When a majority of members decide to hold one.
4. When a Delegate thinks a Committee is taking liberties or doing things lying outside of, or, against decisions reached in the Assembly.
5. When it is necessary to come to a decision on some question which must necessarily be settled in an Assembly.

10) In order to implement Assembly decisions the following committees have been convened.

- A cultural committee.
- An economic committee.
- A watch-dog committee.
- A health and safety committee.
- A social assistance committee.
- An industrial compensation/redundancy committee.
- A committee dealing with inter-port relations.
- A pensioners committee.

V. - THE DELEGATES

11) The Assembly is to elect from amongst its members, 25 dockers who will make up the above mentioned Committees. To this effect, at least one docker will be a pensioner.

12) Any member of the Assembly can refuse to be a delegate but once having accepted eligibility as a candidate, must agree to be a delegate if elected by the Assembly.

13) Delegates are to be elected on a yearly basis and can be re-elected.

14) Delegates can be recalled if

- a) the General Assembly decides to do so.
- b) for failing to observe the Associations' statutes.
- c) for not carrying out the decisions of the Delegate Assembly.
- d) going against in any way decisions reached in the General Assembly.

15) The 25 Delegates constituting the General Assembly are to:

- 1. Regulate and conduct the Assembly
- 2. Introduce motions to be debated and settled in the General Assembly and to make known their opposition to motions if they deem it right.
- 3. Propose to the Assembly the names of people making up the different committees as well as, should the need arise, re-calling and nominating new members and delegates to the Committees.
- 4. To co-ordinate the activities of the different Committees and to pass out information on the progress of these Committees.
- 5. To nominate representatives to national delegations.
- 6. To accept and present recommendations put forward by management having the capacity to delegate members to this end.
- 7. To co-ordinate with the rest of the workers' movement nominating representatives to this end.

16) The Delegate Assembly which is an open one meets once every two weeks.

17) All decisions are to be majority decisions.

18) The Delegate Assembly shall be chosen by each General Assembly which shall regulate it. The Delegates cannot reject their mandates.

19) The Delegate Assembly shall nominate representatives to promote the aims assigned to them in the present statutes.

VI. - THE COMMITTEES

20) The Committees are organs created by the Assembly to carry out its decisions.

21) The different Committees shall meet each week to discuss progress.

- 22) Committee meetings will be open meetings hence any member of the Assembly is able to take part in the meetings.
- 23) Committee meetings are to be regulated by delegates appointed by the Delegate Assembly and ratified by the Assembly.
- 24) Each Committee shall draw up a proposed plan respecting the general principles set forth here and which shall be discussed by the Delegate Assembly.
- 25) The functions of the various committees are as follows:
 - a) The Cultural Committee: This is made up of 4 members.
 Its aim is to promote educational, cultural and sporting activities which culturally and professionally form its components, plus related matters like publishing printed matter and reviews which contribute to the development of OEPB members by keeping them completely informed on the life of the organization, what takes place in it and things of general interest.
 - b) The Economic Committee: This is made up of 3 members.
 Its basic purpose is to take control of and distribute OEPB resources and funds according to Assembly mandates and at the behest of the Delegate Assembly.
 Committee members are to develop either amongst themselves or with the aid of technical means it deems the most suitable, suggestions concerning the OEPB's economic resources which must be submitted before the Assembly by the Delegate Assembly.
 In addition, it will manage funds entrusted to the OEPB's Committee members who having to hand in monthly accounts, will act as treasurers.
 - c) The Watch-Dog Committee: This is made up of 3 members.
 Its basic purpose is to see that existing legislation concerning labour matters in the docks is carried out, as are decisions taken on this matter in the Assembly.
 It is to accept personal reports on particular situations, doubtful and illegal practises and is to draw up proposals for the Delegate Assembly to take decisions on. In urgent cases it can take a decision itself which then has to be ratified by either the Delegate or General Assembly. It is to regulate and examine any system or technical innovation affecting work practises that they might want to introduce in the port.
 - d) Committee of Health and Safety: This is made up of 3 members.
 Its aim is to see that existing legislation on health and safety at work is properly enforced as are decisions taken on this matter in the Assembly.
 It is to implement them and prevent any work from being carried out that does not comply with the basic requirements of health and safety at work and is a danger to a persons physical well being.
 It is to accept recommendations and propose solutions to the Assembly with the aim of improving everything relating to health and safety at work.
 - e) Social Assistance Committee: This is made up of 3 members.
 Its purpose is to constantly improve social security and find out facts concerning the social security system and make recommendations and propose solutions which it will then pass onto the Delegate Assembly. Following decisions reached in the Assembly and Delegate Assembly, it is in addition, to distribute relief, grants, loans etc.
 It is to collect together for this end the greatest possible amount of information enabling the proper action to be undertaken.
 - f) Redundancy Committee. This is made up of 3 members.
 Its basic function is to represent dockers at meetings at a managerial level where the issue of redundancy pay is to be raised. To this end, it is to hold meetings with management to discuss, decide and clarify the regulations laid down to this effect in order to achieve a just settlement.

In case of sickness or the temporary incapacity of two or three members the Delegate Assembly should appoint a temporary stand in.

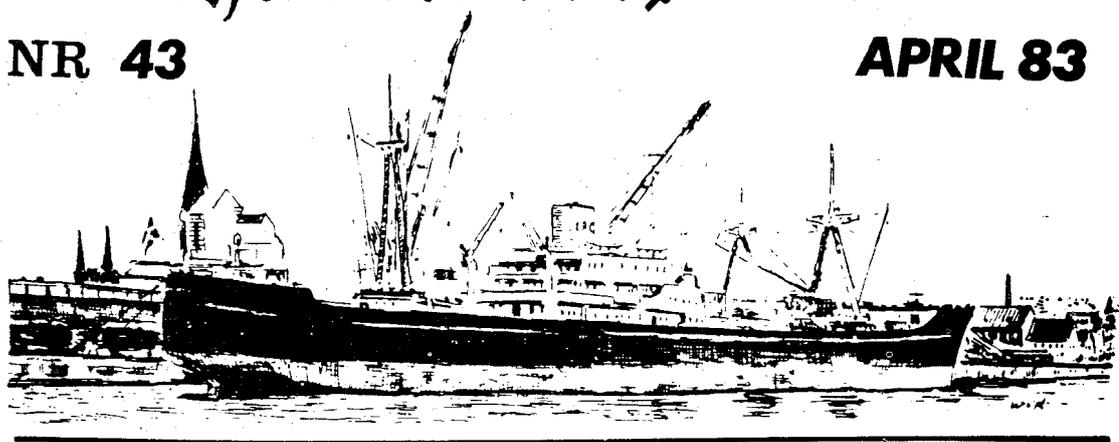
- g) Inter-port Committee: This is made up of 3 members.
Its aim is to establish and maintain contact with other ports both in Spain and abroad with a view to a systematic exchange of information between them. Periodically it is to give a progress report to the Delegate Assembly. One of its members must necessarily be appointed by the Delegate Assembly and represent delegations that were set up as a result of contacts and meetings with other ports and union organizations.
- h) Pensioners' Committee: This is made up of two members one of whom must be a pensioner.
Its basic function is to look into the question of pensioners and explore ways of integrating them into the life of the ports and the dockers' organization. It is to make recommendations and examine the pensioners' situation in order to steadily improve the pensions received by former dockers.

VII. - CUSTODIANSHIP AND ECONOMIC ASSETS.

- 26) With the object of carrying out approved aims, the OEPB will set up a custodial body to handle its assets.
This is to be assessed according to the moment the association was founded - being a basic asset of the confederation.
- 27) The Association's assets are made up of:
- a) Contributions and payments received from public and private bodies and from donations and legacies either donated by the person themselves or through a legal settlement.
 - b) From initial down-payments - a condition of membership affirmed by the General Assembly of dockers and pensioners.
 - c) From dues paid monthly by the membership at a level fixed by the General Assembly.

VIII. - IN THE EVENT OF DISSOLUTION.

- 28) In this event, which must necessarily be agreed by an absolute majority of members in an assembly, the assets will be handed over to the pensioners for their safe keeping. They are to establish, if they have not done so, a body, association, or foundation, made up solely and entirely of pensioners charged with administering the funds.
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The Danish Dockers' Strike Of '82/'83.

The following information was provided by individuals in Denmark who were right at the heart of the strike.

The 1983 dockers' strike in Denmark was a remarkable affair. Though it lacked sufficient clarity in its aims it had an autonomous character. Once again the event, which lasted ten weeks, was virtually blanked by the world press. Unlike the Spanish dockers, the Danish dockers failed in their objective. This was to repeal a labour law enacted by the new conservative government which meant that: "Workers who are not guaranteed a full working week (between 30 and 40 hours) should not get so much money when they are not allowed to work." This meant that dockers, nurses, part-time schoolteachers, part-time cleaners, and all people who worked part time lost between £1,000-£1,500 a year. All part-time workers would have to take a wage drop of about £30 a week." For dockers, the new law also meant that "dockers would lose at least £1,000 a year because they are never guaranteed 40 hours per week." (Report No. 2, *Concerning the recent ten week dockers' strike*, Denmark)

But the ground for struggle had already been well-prepared in the Danish docks long before this particular law came into existence. *Havnearbejderen* (The Dockworker), a rank-and-file magazine, has been coming out since 1974. Produced by a group of about 12 dockers from Aarhus, it holds weekly meetings in which any docker is welcome to participate. Produced by workers for workers, *Havnearbejderen* is read by dockers throughout Denmark—and during the strike it came out in in German and English as well. Starting out clearly in opposition to the local union, it has drifted from a modern Leninist tendency (which was used up after a few years) to a more and more libertarian perspective. Perhaps this was inevitable, as the healthy *joie de vivre* of the Aarhus dockers made certain that party politics had never been that popular in the docks. Today, party politics has no say at all. Discarding all the labels, however, *Havnearbejderen* is about the dockers' world as seen from a young, rebellious point of view. Their persistent and stubborn work built them an extensive network of contacts on a national and international level.

Without giving too much credit to one individual, one docker travelled throughout Europe from the mid-1970s on, documenting the growth of container traffic with his film camera in order to produce a comprehensive overview for the Danish dockers. Spontaneous friendships with dockers everywhere developed. This led to an international dock workers' conference—with delegates from most Western European countries as well as from Egypt and Australia—in September, 1982, in Aarhus. Towards the end of the strike itself (April, 1983), there was a long and detailed report in *Havnearbejderen*, which declared solidarity with striking South African dockers and, among other things, condemned the vicious racism of that country.

After the strike two Aarhus dockers wrote an interesting report—quoted above and throughout this article—which has since been translated into Spanish for the benefit of the dockers there. The following is a passage taken from it:

During the first weeks of the strike a tremendous amount of organizational work from the dockers was needed. For the strike to have any hope of success the harbours had to stand together, keep in constant touch with each other, and coordinate every move they made. There was so much to be done—but nobody was to be forced into doing anything. It was decided that all work involved in running the strike would be on a voluntary basis—and there was never any lack of volunteers. Dockers were falling over each other to help: many went out to factories and other places of work to explain why we were striking and to ask support. Others from the larger harbours (Aarhus, Copenhagen, Alborg) helped stop black-leg work in the smaller harbours.

There was enough to be done and there were enough people to do it. The solidarity shown between the separate harbours was incredible. Everyone was impressed by the will-power and fighting spirit of the dock workers. No harbour was considered too small to be insignificant. Every docker was on strike and every docker was equally important. The only fully-organized group in each harbour was the economic committee; otherwise, everyone had a free hand and was encouraged to use their own initiative and to help out however they thought best. From outside looking in, it seemed an impossible task to run such a strike. To coordinate a strike action between 30 and 40 harbours all over Denmark meant that the larger harbours sometimes had to hold a protective hand over smaller harbours. The port of Randers has only five harbour workers and though it may seem futile for five people to strike . . . was it hell futile! They were dockers—they were on strike just as much as other dockers—and, by God, they would get any help which was necessary and also send a representative to all the Striking Dockworkers' Committee meetings.

From blockading strike-affected goods to stopping black-leg work all over the country, dock workers were sometimes driving thousands of kilometers a week. The dockers were undaunted by these tasks. If a job had to be done it was done. No problem.

Unfortunately, other aspects of the report are not on the same gripping level. Certain illusions about social democracy and trade unionism (which, strangely enough, those who wrote

the report didn't have) are given credence. But the social democratic government which had recently handed over power to the right would probably have concocted a variation on the same wage cut—if it had chosen to remain in office.

Thanking workers all over the world for the support they gave Danish dockers during the strike, the report ends on a ringing call for international solidarity. It magnanimously adds that the German dockers work under even *more* slavish conditions, conditions enforced by "the State, by employers, and even by their own union representatives. If a shop steward even threatens the employers with sympathetic action, he is simply fired and also thrown out of the union."

During the strike, contacts were made everywhere. After its defeat, dockers saw the necessity of setting up a "national cooperations group"—a body obviously similar to the Coordinadora in Spain—which would be outside of union interference. International "economic committees" were formed during the strike by dockers in Oslo and Hamburg. These committees functioned as press groups, with information supplied directly by the striking dockers themselves and not via the shock/horror distorting mirror of the media. Out of these committees came a remarkable innovation. The German dockers' news group made a video about the strike "which was distributed in all German harbours." Later, two videos which publicized the plight of framed and jailed work mates were made by some Aarhus dockers. Obviously tactics like these are exemplary and should be used in the future by other workers who act autonomously.

The beginning of the strike was marked by enormous working class sympathy—especially among part-time workers who found it real nice that these tough dockers were fighting for their sakes too. But the dockers, who numbered about 3,500, were deluded in thinking that because their position was central to the Danish economy they could smash the piece of governmental legislation by themselves. At the same time, other groups of workers—those several hundred thousand who were effected by the wage cut—betrayed the example of the dockers by refusing to take similar action. There was only one solidarity strike: a two-day action by women in the fishing industries. Nonetheless, after the dockers' defeat about ten categories of workers received a special dispensation from the new labour law.

There were some meetings arranged between the unemployed and striking dockers but few attended them (although those who did often became quite active). As at Aarhus, assemblies tended to get swamped by competing political tendencies from leftist groupuscules—the CP versus the Albanian Maoists, etc., etc. But it took only the presence at these meetings of three or four dockers to prevent all that futile ideological crap from breaking out.

As in similar insurgent situations, there were beautiful incidents. During a "chinese auction" held in a music hall to raise funds for the dockers, a whiff of the future unfolded. One guy, after raising 1,500 kroner—1,400 of which he gave to the dockers—got hold of the last 100-kroner bill, saying: "This money, as it is called, is just plain crap. It means slavery. And so, for once I will deal with it the way it ought to be dealt with." He then took out a lighter, set fire to the bill and threw it away, shouting: "And then, comrades, give some more of this shit to the dockers, so they can go on fighting!" The dockers and others went wild with glee . . . everybody with their minds turned to the practical problems of raising funds for the dockers . . . and then, this beautiful reminder of a goal much farther away . . . In fact, a fitting episode from Hans Christian Andersen's stomping ground.

Finally, however, the dockers became isolated and were defeated by the combined efforts of police, media, blacklegs, and unions. Since the end of the strike, there have been selective reprisals. After a long court case, employers, "have now been given the right to blacklist any workers whom they consider to be 'difficult' or 'uncooperative.'" Victimized and sacked dockers—like the II dockers from Aabenraa in South Jutland—have become quite bitter with their employed workmates who, once

the rout started, never really defended them. Their Spanish brethren—whose strike was successful—were able to make certain that *all* sacked workers were reinstated. As audacious as the struggle was in Denmark, the defeat has been shattering for morale.

Once the dockers had declared their intention of bringing down the government—"we strike until either this damned law is removed or until this damned government is removed"—the police pounced on them like never before. A Rapid Deployment Force was formed and put in action all over the place. There were many mean clashes. One docker from Alborg was struck and killed by a Dutch truck while picketing in the small harbour of Hirtshals in northern Jutland. The police finally resorted to terror tactics. "During the strike, a factory in Esberg harbour was burned down—even though it was being guarded by the police at the time. Later, during a clash between police and dockers, two harbour workers were arrested and held in isolation, charged with violence against the police. After one-and-a-half months in isolation arrest, the police announced that the same two dockers had 'confessed' to setting fire to the factory."

In one of many incidents elsewhere, 500 dockers and about 100 sympathizers went to Padborg, the border station with Germany, to close border traffic. While negotiations were going on between truckers and dockers, police reinforcements with dogs charged the assembled flying pickets. Next day, the press was ferociously exalted over the savagery and brutality of these thugs: the DOCKERS. This was a severe blow to the dockers' self-confidence because, up to the Padborg incident, the media had actually presented a quite varied view of the strike. The rubbishing of the dockers in this way also succeeded in frightening away support.

But despite the vicious attacks by the State—through the police and the media—the unkindest cut of all inevitably came from the Special Workers' Union (SID). The largest union in Denmark, the SID sided with the government and the employers in crushing the dockers. But this was just a repetition of old, old news. Sixty years before, dockers were pitted against these same old enemies of the working class during a similar and lengthy dockers' strike. The only noteworthy difference was that this time the blacklegs were organized by the very same union that the dockers were in.

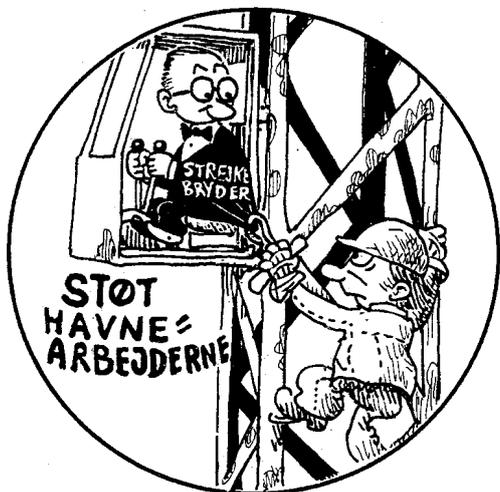
The *work courts* finished off what the unions had begun. These seemingly "fair" bodies are the monstrous creations of social democracy. In these courts there are an equal number of representatives from employers and employees, plus a Judge who is appointed by the State. In the case of the Danish workers, the court fined four union locals £15,000 each while each docker was fined roughly half the amount he would have earned during the period the strike lasted! Of course, the bosses can be fined too—but that is very rare.

To be or not to be, that is the question.



(From Havnearbejderen)

After reading the above, Frank, one of the dockers who wrote the report, said 'credence' was too strong a word.



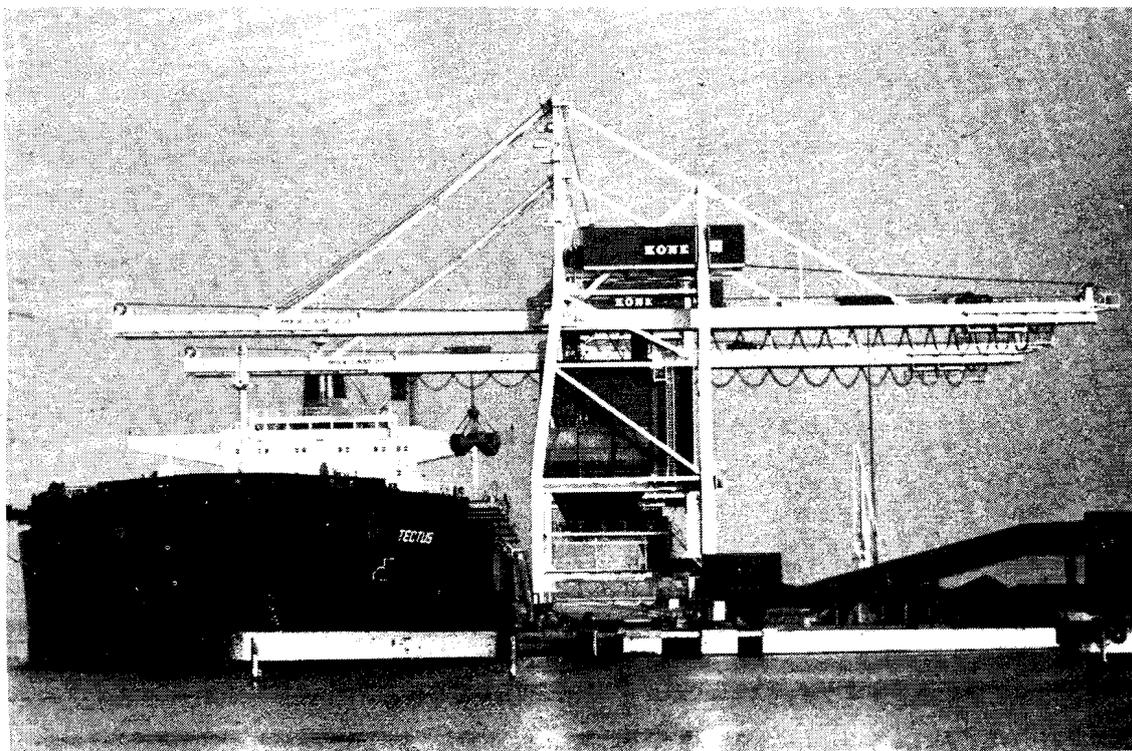
SUPPORT THE DOCK WORKERS

SUPPORT THE DOCK WORKERS

12

KUL PÅ

(MOVE IT)



Some of the potential blacklegs - farmers - who were going to unload ships in the docks were put off, when dockers suggested that they and their tractors "could end up in the harbour. The farmers decided that it was too cold a time of the year for swimming and dropped the idea." (from *the Report*).

FINALLY, AS AN AFTERWORD, THE FOLLOWING IS THE BARCELONA DOCKERS' REPORT ON THE DANISH STRIKE.

O. E. P. B. The Gijón Report.

c/. del Mar, 97

Tel. 310 58 23

BARCELONA - 3

INFORME SOBRE DINAMARCA

I N F O R M E I N T E R N A C I O N A L

(para la asamblea general de gijón)

20.5.83

Danish dockers have come out on strike because the Government reduced the amount of fall back pay a docker was entitled to when not actually working. A strike was called not only against the Government but also against the union (S.I.D.) because the union was in agreement with this wage cut. The first two days of strike action took place on December the 14th and 15th, 1982.

Not getting any response the dockers formed what they called a "dockers co-ordinating group" which transferred decision making powers away from the unions to an assembly. After lengthy talks with the official unions, dockers in the ports of Arhus and Alborg decided to go out on strike. A week later all the docks in Denmark came out on a strike which was to last 10 weeks. The balance sheet was as follows:

- 19 workers sacked
- 1 worker killed
- each worker received a bill amounting to 40 hours work and payable to dock companies. For example 257 dockers in Arhus owe 40 thousand pesetas.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DANISH DOCK STRIKE

The role of the Government

It is a right wing Government. In order to avoid a devaluation of the kroner it cut back on unemployment pay.

Firstly : it made a deal with the official unions.

Secondly: it deployed the radio, T.V. and the press against the dockers.

Thirdly : if the strike lasted longer than the anticipated two weeks, the POLICE WERE TO TAKE THE DOCKS.

Fourthly: scabs were brought into the docks in police buses. Then they were given protection at home.

Fifthly : it did not abolish the law.

Sixthly : the Governments' prestige has taken a severe battering. It had to pay 8,000 hours overtime to the police.

- . other trade unionists began to demand the same thing as the dockers.
- . and from this moment on they are much more wary when it comes to dealing with dockers.

The role of the official unions

- They went along with the Government with a social contract to maintain the value of the Kroner, no matter this amounted to a drop in workers' purchasing power.
- It did not support the strike.
- Told the membership not to support the strike and to continue working (thus making them scabs).
- Helped in getting the strike made illegal thus criminalizing the dockers.
- During the final stages of the struggle, disturbed by the threat the companies were not going to renew the agreement with the unions and were going to sign a new one with a christian union, (a fascist, ultra-right union), they deceived the workers by saying they had come to an agreement with the dock company association which had not sacked any workers. This was by no means true because the company belonging to the association's President had been the first to sack workers - a total of 9 out of the 19 workers sacked.

The role of the companies

In the beginning they sought to prevent the strike saying it ought to be a struggle between dockers and the Government and ought not to effect them therefore.

Afterwards they limited themselves to pressuring the Government, organizing scabs and seeing that their own administrative staff lent a hand in the task of regulating and controlling.

They sought costs and damages from the dockers (when work stopped they ceased earning money and therefore felt they were the injured and done down party).

The President of the dock companies' association at the outset of the struggle was the first to take reprisals and sack dockers - in all 9 out of the 14 dockers sacked.

International Solidarity

Sweden

The dockers absolutely refused to touch any cargoes to or from Denmark for the duration of the strike.

England

The dockers in the registered ports refused to touch any cargoes to or from Denmark. But at Felixstowe which today carries more cargo than any other English port (it began as a small alternative port like Burriana or Villanueva) they did not come out in solidarity, so all the containers bound from Denmark made for this port.

Norway

In Oslo cargoes bound for Denmark were also boycotted.

Germany

Videos and films on the strike were passed around the ports and dockers held assemblies with the danish dockers. The only help forthcoming was money.

Holland and Belgium

Information on the struggle was passed around the ports.

France

Money was sent.

Spain

In "some" ports and on "some" Danish ships there was a work to rule. Telegrams expressing solidarity were sent and a protest was lodged at the Danish embassy.

A whip-round was organized, each docker contributing 100 pts minimum.

Reflections on the Co-ordinadora's attitude

1. It did not grant to this conflict involving Danish dockers the importance it deserved. It was not only about money but an attempt also to break away from official unions who put their signature to everything. Also it had been a conflict directed against a right wing Government that was making the workers pay for the crises by decreasing benefits.

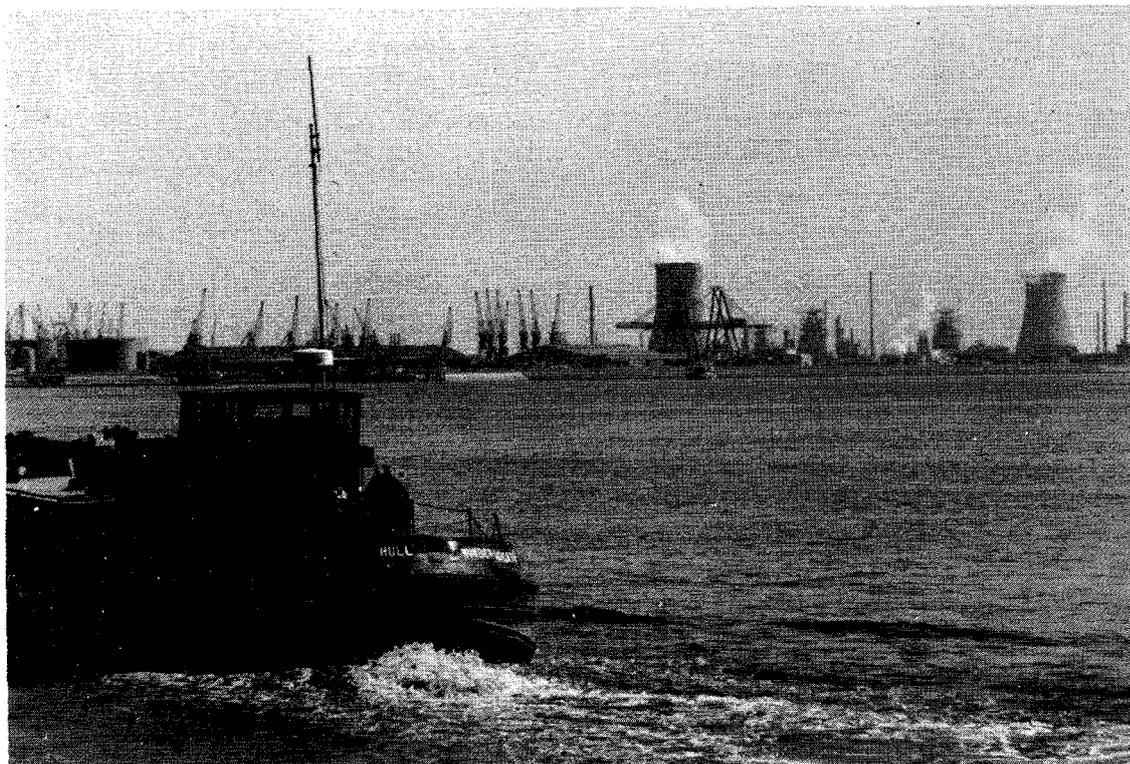
2. As regards international solidarity it was the baptism of fire seeing that no international organization responded to the workers pleas - like for example, the I.T.F. (International Transport Federation). This serves other interests and is in the hands of the "americans" and the big "social democratic" unions who demonstrated and gave their economic support in the case of Poland. But in Denmark's case they have done absolutely nothing and really it is just the same - workers against the Government and against the official trade unions (however in this case it was a right wing, conservative Government).

Moreover neither the resolutions and recommendations put out by the O.I.T. are of any use.

For all these reasons the Co-ordinadora:

- 1) must maintain its independence from the big unions.
- 2) must open itself up to other workers' (collectives) especially sailors and transport workers in general.
- 3) must prevent at any price the creation of alternative ports like Felixstowe.
- 4) must consolidate the international organization of dockers drawing on the force they represent so information can be passed on and aid granted whether in terms of money or industrial action.
- 5) promote the creation of a new international union of sailors in order to bring about a federation of sailors and dockers that responds to their interests unlike the I.T.F. which doesn't know whose interests it represents.

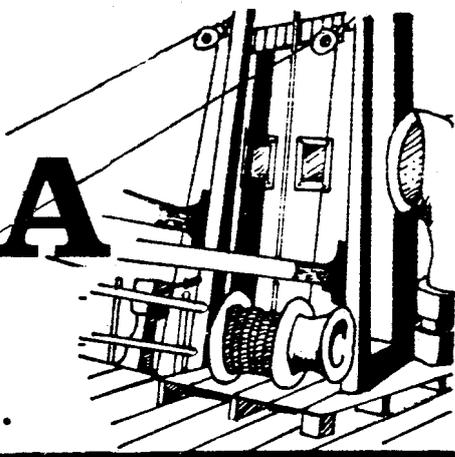
This finally must be the position the Co-ordinadora adopts prior to the new Congress which takes place shortly in Hull.



Hull Docks

LA ESTIBA

BOLETIN DE LA COORDINADORA ESTATAL
DE LOS ESTIBADORES PORTUARIOS



(THE DOCKER)

Other Struggles In Europe.

To separate what started to happen in the English ports—practically without a strike in the summer of 1980—from the great strikes of the summer of 1972 isn't easy. First, it is impossible to grasp what was at stake in the summer of 1980 without referring to the events of 1972. Second, the 1980 conflicts—one actually taking place, the other just threatening to—occurred under a Tory government which was attempting to curb the autonomous movement's most effective weapons: wildcat strikes and picketing.

1972 was the year that saw the expansion of containerization wreaking havoc in the docks. In five years the number of dockers had declined from 60,000 to 40,000. Dockers were thrown onto the dole in greater and greater numbers as private companies began to employ non-dock labour.

In April 1972, Liverpool dockers refused to handle containers packed by non-dock labour. London dockers came out in solidarity. During the strike, shop stewards—as prime minister Heath put it—openly defied “law and order.”

In July 1972, these same dockers went out again on a wildcat strike. Refusing to give in to the dockers' demands but forced to respond to dock pressure, the container depot operators proposed a joint management/union commission to look into the questions of casualization and the redeployment of surplus dockers. This commission was called the Jones-Aldington Commission, after Jack Jones, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, and Lord Aldington, managing director of the Port of London.

Before the commission actually sat, however, dockers again went out on strike—this time occupying the container depots. Invoking the Industrial Relations Act, the government arrested five shop stewards on July 21. Then, throughout England, a wildcat general strike began to spread—effecting all of industry. Meanwhile, a crowd attempted to storm Pentonville prison, where the five dockers were being held. The government was forced to give in and the arrested dockers were set free. But the dock strike itself was not called off. Since dockers all over England faced the same problems as the London dockers, delegates of the TGWU called for a total shutdown and the TGWU itself was forced to back them. This strike ended in a compromise, which was accepted only with reluctance by the dockers. The settlement was only marginally better than the “recommendation” already put forward by the Jones/Aldington report.

This “agreement” was not a real agreement. It was a form of protocol that proposed “recommendations,” which the dock companies could accept or reject. Clearly, the relationships of force between dockers and dock companies would in the future determine how these recommendations would be interpreted and applied. The agreement offered high rates of severance pay, which prompted dockers to take voluntary redundancy. This, in turn, helped depress the fall-back pay dockers received when unattached.

To better understand what started to take place in 1980, it is necessary to take a look at one of the conditions concerning

the Temporary Unattached Register (TUR)—a special register which unattached dockers could sign up to if they wanted to be allocated a new job. To begin with, the only dockers who had to sign up to the TUR were either victims of disciplinary measures or of dock company bankruptcies. Though the latter once were quickly found jobs by the TUR in ports covered by the National Dock Labour Board, the growth of containerization changed the TUR into something to be feared—and hated—in dockers' eyes. The TUR became a halfway house—leading finally to compulsory layoffs. In 1971, the number of dockers signed up to the TUR was growing and it was becoming increasingly difficult for the port authorities to find them jobs. Just prior to the 1972 agreement there were 6,690 dockers on the TUR. The Aldington/Jones report reduced the likelihood that port employers would ever use the TUR and, by the end of 1972, the number of dockers signed up to the TUR dropped to a figure that was no more than 1,650. The companies either had to conserve labour or take on the equivalent of 10% of their workforce. The redundancy payments came to as much as £8,500 per docker; those who accepted it did so voluntarily. In 1974, the agreement was improved once more by a recommendation not to employ the TUR other than as a disciplinary measure. With this as the basis, the TGWU agreed to cooperate with the port authorities to reduce the number of dockers employed.

Except for some local conflicts, there was no mass struggle for eight years. Through voluntary redundancy, the number of dockers declined from 41,500 in 1972 to 23,000 in 1980. The plan then had been a success but it did not satisfy those companies still wanting to further reduce the number of dockers they employed. While the crisis was causing work to dwindle and company profit margins to decline, dockers were at the same time becoming less eager to take up redundancy because of the increase in unemployment. Elsewhere, some branches of industry (especially the steel industry) were offering even higher redundancy incentives (between £10,000 and £15,000).

It is not by chance that conflict broke out in Liverpool, where port activity is in permanent recession (the region has one of the highest unemployment rates in all of England). In Liverpool, the dock companies were saying that they could not continue to pay the wages of several hundreds of dockers when there wasn't any work for them to do. (In August 1980, there were 635 idle dockers and about only 235 of them agreed to take voluntary redundancy.) The dock companies wanted to sign these idle dockers to the TUR—an attack based on the two following arguments:

1) The economic crisis has created a new situation and dockers should not look upon themselves, in opposition to other workers, as immune.

2) The Aldington/Jones report was only a recommendation and has no legal standing; port employers are free to ditch whatever does not suit them.

But what the dock companies failed to mention was that

they had a mind to exploit what they judged to be a favorable situation in class relations. A conservative government was in office; a picketing act had recently been passed; and there was demoralization amongst workers (after the failure of several abortive strikes and on account of the constraints the crisis itself exerts).

At the beginning of September 1980, port authorities in Liverpool notified 40 dockers employed by the Bowater paper group in Ellesmere Port that, owing to the closure of the factory, they were going to be transferred. To this figure has to be added the number of dockers who were already waiting to be transferred and whose fate was hanging in the balance. It was proposed that 178 dockers working for the two companies in financial difficulty—Merseyside Stevedoring and Bulk Cargo Handling Services—be signed up to the TUR rather than be reallocated amongst other dock companies. The National Dock Labour Board rejected this proposal but the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board declared that no company could support this burden and continued to press for its implementation. For the dockers concerned it amounted primarily to a cut in pay. An employed docker could expect to receive £127 a week (£114 in Liverpool), £78.50 a week if he was laid off, and only £55 a week if he was on the TUR.

But the problem didn't only involve pay. Letting bosses decide who got signed up to the TUR was to get rid of everything that had been achieved by the 1972 dock struggle. Such a precedent could lead from voluntary redundancies to out-and-out sackings. So dockers in Liverpool, Southampton, Hull, and Glasgow threatened strike actions if dockers in Liverpool were signed up to the TUR.

Faced with the threat of a wildcat strike, the TGWU was forced to convene in London a delegate conference drawn from the major ports. On September 15, they decided unanimously to call a national strike for Monday, September 22. The TGWU had no choice but to ratify this decision. Demands centered on getting rid of the TUR (except as a disciplinary measure), upping the levels of voluntary redundancy settlements, a shorter working week, and longer holidays. On September 18, an agreement was reached at a meeting between the dock companies and the TGWU: the Liverpool dock companies would withdraw their threat and the unions would encourage workers to take up voluntary redundancy. The government, meanwhile, would assist the National Dock Labour Board in paying for these redundancies and making good the shortfall in dockers' wages.

On September 21, a reconvened delegate conference called off the strike. The union drew up two declarations (up to that point, the negotiations had only been verbal) affirming that a) the TUR would only be used in disciplinary cases and b) all unattached dockers would be found work. On the day which the strike should have begun, September 22, the National Dock Labour Board announced that voluntary redundancy pay would be considerably increased. (£3,750 for a docker with five years' service, £6,000 for ten years, £8,250 for 15 years, £10,500 for 20 years, and £12,500 for dockers who had worked more than 20 years. This increase would come into effect before August, 1, 1981.) In addition, retirement age was reduced—without loss of pension entitlement which itself was improved—to 60 years old.

Although there was no strike, the conservative government—practically unnoticed—did everything it could to avoid it. This after having loudly threatened to put a stop to wildcat striking through new picketing laws. Proclaiming, according to its monetarist line, its wish to see bosses and employees "freely" discuss labour problems among themselves, it in fact brought considerable pressure to bear on port authorities. Not only did it force the port authorities to go against their own economic interests, it advanced them the money to meet the workers' demands. Since workers' autonomous actions indirectly caused the fall of both Heath's Tory

government in 1974 and the Labor government in 1979, it is obvious that capital and its present mouthpiece, the Thatcherite government, will do all they can to prevent confronting this movement again (especially in a period of crisis).

On September, 30, 1980, Liverpool dockers threatened once more to go out on strike in support of casualized dockers who were not covered by the new agreements and who were therefore under the threat of being laid off. The companies had to give in once more and find these dockers jobs. Another conflict broke out on October 6 in the fishing port of Grimsby near Hull. The Grimsby Landing Company refused to take on four dockers out of a total of 30 who should have been found jobs elsewhere in the port. After a one-day strike that company too had to give in.

All this leads one to think that, under pressure from the crisis, dock companies will once again risk similar conflicts in other ports. We could see economic realities clash with social struggles, forcing the working class to dump union leaders—who, despite their blustering, are incapable of solving the problems of a society in crisis—and take on the ruling class boldly and directly.

From La Estiba, No. 4, April 1981.



U.K. Dockers' Struggles. Part 2.

INTRODUCTION

As a distinct trade dock labour was slow in being formalized. Its largely unskilled nature (excepting stevedoring) meant it was, in principle, open to anyone. The huge increase in trade in the 19th Century, and the need for ports to have a labour surplus constantly on call, led to the creation of crowded hinterlands adjacent to all major waterfronts. The conditions of life in these waterside ghettos, always teetering on the brink of revolt, spread first alarms then reforming impulses amongst the bourgeoisie. It is possible to apply this generic term, for once, not as a vague abstraction because the 'problem' of dock labour, as it once existed, involved so much else: casual work, underemployment, seasonal work, multi-occupations, overcrowding, housing, undernourishment, street crime, rioting, demoralization, drink, charity, scrounging, etc, the list is endless. In the harbour waters there lay reflected, the totality of misery endured by the proletariat. But the threatened general insurrection never came.

Yet, in spite of the bourgeois' attempts to splinter this proletarian concentration into manageable fragments, dock conflicts still have a way of spilling over, and from an initial trades dispute a class movement is set in motion.

This is particularly true of the 1972 dockers' strike in the U.K. Unlike the miners' strike of the same year it remains neglected and almost uncharted, eclipsed by the sudden, momentous wildcat general strike following the jailing of five dockers. An exhaustive analysis of that general strike, in particular of its potentiality rather than actuality, is out of place here. Suffice to say that once the five dockers were released the storm blew itself out, leaving the dock strike to continue on in isolation for a few more weeks. Undoubtedly, the general strike influenced the remainder of the dock strike, raising it to a new level of generality, just as previously the largely unofficial struggle in the docks, in spite of the depressing acrimony between worker and worker, affected the general wildcat.

Never the less much of the fury unleashed by this mass strike was down to the Tory Governments attempts to introduce the law into "industrial relations". Fining unions was one thing, but jailing peaceful pickets was so grave an offence against customary working class freedoms it could only be answered in kind. Now, unfortunately, this response, somewhat weighted on the side of traditional liberties and subject to political co-optation by the Labour Party, (the Industrial Relations Act was immediately put into cold storage and repealed by the incoming Labour Government in 1974), has tended to cloud over the docks' struggle, which, even more than the miners' strike in '72, represented a terrible danger to capitalism. From highly partial beginnings, the strike was set to envelop millions of workers, when, in the nick of time, dockers were literally seduced by the recommendations of the Aldington/Jones report into calling it off. And those dockers who had put their heart and soul into the struggle were left to cry alone, so great was the lost opportunity.

READING OUT THE DOCKERS REGISTER TO THE REST OF THE CLASS?

It had all begun early on in '72. Worried by the advance of containerization, dockers' pickets in greater numbers than ever before, had begun to roam

outside the dockers traditional area covered by the dock labour Scheme. In addition to giving dockers an automatic entitlement to handle cargo within the dock area, this scheme had guaranteed to dockers the unique right to a job for life and was the envy of all other workers.

The pickets' main targets were container terminals like Chobham Farm in London (set up by a shipping consortia less than three miles from the waterfront) and Heaton's in St Helens some twelve miles from Liverpool. Their main hopes were pinned on gaining access to the work of stuffing and stripping (i.e. packing and unpacking) part load containers. This work had previously been carried out on the quayside prior to distribution. In order to grab this work for themselves, dockers were quite prepared to use their formidable strength and workers, who had taken jobs sorting and packing in container depots, complained of bullying tactics and felt aggrieved. As unregistered transport workers they were paid less than registered dockers, and if there was no work the dole was their only shepherd, not guaranteed fall-back pay.

Eventually, under pressure, Chobham Farm, the largest container handling depot in Europe, agreed to take on 18 registered dockers. This amounted to roughly one third of its' workforce because the firm, owing to its degree of technical advancement, only employed 63 packers and checkers. The workers displaced were set to do more menial tasks and resentment turned to hostility. Setting up an anti-dockers' picket they enlisted the support of truck drivers bugged by the threat to their own jobs implicit in the dockers' blacking of haulage firms who made deliveries to container depots. (In Liverpool though, lorry drivers often acted as scouts for dockers and a joint committee of dockers and haulage drivers picketed Heaton's container depot.) In London a warehousemen's and drivers' action group (WAPAG) was set up and, in retaliation to the dockers' action, the port of London was blockaded. At Tilbury there was a three mile tailback of lorries and the docks faced a total shutdown.

Highly satisfied by this turn for the worst the newspapers and the media in general were prompted to speak of a "civil war in dockland" And lulled by these interpretations and their own soundings the National Industrial Relations Court, created by the Heath Government, seized this apparently golden opportunity and pounced - with disastrous consequences. Five dockers went to jail and the unforgettable events that followed into insurrectionary history.

Had the Tory Gov and the N.I.R.C. (nerk) not been a victim of their own propaganda they might have guessed the outcome. Claiming it was after all only "a family squabble", the anti-docker pickets were immediately lifted. Even during the preceding weeks inter-class rivalry had been illumined by flashes of playful humour - a sure sign what united the feuding workers was more important than what divided them. One docker, looking at a queue of lorries at Tilbury, mused "where is it all going to end? The landladies will be picketing the drivers next for sleeping in their cabs." And when the tipstaff came to arrest the picketing dockers, one of them, objecting to being bundled unceremoniously into the meat wagon, insisted the correct procedure be followed. Released, he was tapped on the shoulder, formerly arraigned, then re-arrested. This light hearted piece of judicial play acting went down a treat with dockers and bystanders.

The setting free of the dockers marked a new stage in the '72 docks' struggle. The dockers had been heartened by the class response to a cause which up to then had not been all that popular. But mass class action, giving dockers a license to act with virtual

impunity, had disqualified them from treading on other workers' toes. The job security and privileges capitalism had hoped to keep confined to the docks was now in danger of sweeping all before it. In an anti-Scheme lecture delivered at Thurrock Technical College not far from Tilbury in 1970, George Cattell, chairman of the National Docks Modernization Committee and ex-head of the Dept of Employment's Manpower and productivity services, had asked sarcastically: "Why not registration for the rest of the people who are employed in the ports and, if for them, then why not for railwaymen, coal miners, steel workers, post office employees and countless others." In the summer of '72 Cattell's nightmare looked, for a while, it could materialize.

After the mass strike in support of the dockers, the squabble over who does what seemed to recede in importance. A sort of strike fever, in preference to work, took over, one that left the vexed question of job rights way behind. A Guardian editorial written in a fit of hysterical perplexity caught the mood of the time more accurately than the Guardian cared to think: "The dispute in London is not really about who does what but, in the long run who does anything at all" (July 21st '72)

But, as a first step, the dockers were going to make every effort to extend the Scheme. Just prior to the jailing of the five dockers, picketing was on the verge of spreading out in an almost haphazard fashion, as if the redefinition of dockwork involved the circulation of commodities in its entirety. Sir David Burnett Chairman of Hay's Wharf complained to the F.T.: "There are even instances of concerns being blacked which do not handle containers at all but happened to be sited alongside others which do." (July 19th)

There is even evidence to suggest that Ford's was afraid the re-definition of dockwork might begin to creep into manufacture. It was not likely to happen overnight of course, but the distinction, after all, between manufacture and cargo handling had been disputed in the past at wharves where timber was landed and then cut up and milled for distribution. Apart from the disruption a prolonged strike would bring to the shipping of car components etc, Ford's were also out to prevent dockers getting their foot in at the doors of loading bays at Ford factories. They were keenly aware that fifth of the containers passing through the docks were packed at the factories. And it was in their interest to keep the dockers' attention firmly fixed on the other one fifth part packed containers. So when Chobham Farm refused point blank to accede to the dockers' demands, Ford's turned the financial screws by threatening to withdraw its' contract (for details see The Economist July 8th '72). It was a dicey business because what was to stop dockers laying claim to handling the Ford consignment through Chobham Farm? The drift may have proved unstoppable. The right to strip and stuff the part packed containers was a concession to the traditionally labour intensive part of dock work but dockers were also becoming specialists in handling the mechanical equipment of the container age.

However Ford's concessionary tactics were all but wiped out by the fillup provided by the mass strike in support of the dockers. With the example of the miners' strike, earlier on in the year, before them, the dockers laid plans for a mass picket of unregistered wharves and more than 100 container depots situated throughout the U.K. Now the dockers initial demand for a 10 mile corridor adjacent to the docks was merely the trough of a wave sweeping inland to the hills. Panalpina Services and Panalpina Northern Ltd situated in Bradford were on a picketing hit list. Meanwhile the dock strike was actually spreading. Although Dover never came out, Felixstowe was drawn into the tail end of the dispute. The ports of Whitby and Scarborough were shut down prompting one flying picket from Hull to say, "there's nothing left to picket out here but sand castles." The container service rollon/roll off stopped at Heysham on August the 12th and emergency supplies to the oil rigs at Aberdeen were cut off. 3 days beforehand a coachload of Merseyside dockers had gone into

Glasson docks near Lancaster where prisoners and farm labourers had been employed to do work normally carried out by Liverpool docks. One wonders, given half a chance how the milk of class conciliation rather than confrontation might have fared here? A unanimous agreement: it was better to be a registered docker than in the dock?

The big push to consolidate the 'Schemes' greatly increased range never came despite the impression things were really building up to a head. The reason, in three words, was the Aldington/Jones report which jammed the cork tight on a major explosion, as we shall see. Maybe the plans to extend the dock labour Scheme were a shade too voluntaristic and grandiose for the dockers liking and involved uprooting and moving home. (-the Aldington/Jones report was to cynically manipulate this sense of "realism"-). The President of the U.K. Chamber of Shipping may not have been exaggerating when he pointed out that most of the jobs offered to dock workers in inland container depots had not been taken up. In the last analysis the dockers' cause, phase two, was still not enough of a conscious class movement with the call for open, rather than just dockers' pickets, going out loud and clear. And once the strike was called off the Schemes' spin off effect on the rest of the proletariat perished too. All that survived was a pale reflection embodied in the Labour Government's employment act "guaranteeing" greater security. As for the Scheme, well, that survived alright, like something consumed inwardly by a tapeworm. "All we're getting", said a Liverpool steward at the second delegate conference on August 16th '72, called to discuss the acceptance or rejection of the revised Aldington/Jones report, "is 200 container jobs -and losing 10,000 dockers' jobs. What an exchange!"

The underlying causes that fired the '72 strike in the U.K. have a contemporary feel to them because dockers were workers facing large scale redundancy through mechanization. And the docks were to be the site of the first major surgical operation carried out on labour to find out how best to painlessly cut the size of the workforce. The docks' struggle had been far more of a social than an economic struggle (although there'd been a national strike in '70 for higher pay) and the rallying cry to extend the dock labour Scheme hid a barely concealed fear of unemployment.

Rather than mollify their fears by actually extending the dock labour Scheme, the Aldington/Jones report (quickly cobbled together in response to the free wheeling agitation below) proposed to buy them out. Its' other major selling point concerned the abolition of the Temporary Unattached Register, institutionalizing, as it were, the democratic practise of distributing work fairly so everyone was guaranteed work. Now the onus (although non-statutory) was on the employers to provide places. But as for the rest, the Aldington/Jones report was laughable and in retrospect has confirmed the worst fears of the dockers who bust their way into Transport House and emptied a glass of water over Jack Jones, (the Gen' Sec' of the TGWU) to show their contempt. 12 years on and what became of the principle the report laid down that registered dockers ought to get preference in recruitment of workers to stuff and strip containers? About as much as the proposal to redevelop dockland by attract-

ing industry, warehousing etc with the aid of Government money. Dockers, especially in London, were well aware Dockland development sites were at a premium and that developers would build to maximize rent yields. And though industrial capital might then rent some office space in one of these new waterside complexes, the manufacturing base, to increase profits, would always locate in areas where rent levels were lower. In making this distinction dockers were not expressing a preference for one branch of capital as against another - just recognising they would be at a considerable disadvantage in the market for office jobs.

Had the dockers the gift of clairvoyance they could have read in The Economist (5th July '80) that the Hay's Wharf property development plan "would be the biggest ever undertaken in the capital" - (Hay's Wharf was the scene of picketing in '72 and in '69 the suspicion the river front was wanted for property development was a key factor in a short strike). And across the Thames from Hay's Wharf, Taylor Woodrow, one of the biggest building companies in the U.K., was to invest £70 million - nearly half of the groups net worth - tarring up St Katherine's Dock to look like a waterside Covent Garden where the only thing out of place in this pot pourri of international trade centers, Onedin line sailing ships and stripped pine craft centers is a docker! Yet another underlying fear in the '72 strike is the immanent destruction of dockland communities and the wealth of close knit loyalties and support networks that went with them. The torching of one of St Katherine's luxury riverside apartment blocks must have struck many a local resident left to fend for themselves in this high rolling money market as fully deserved, whether tax fiddle, the act of an agent provocateur or just plain, down home, proletarian revenge.

IS IT EASY STREET ON DOCK ROAD?

The eventual "acceptance" of the Jones/Aldington report, after a strike lasting several weeks, was a triumph of manipulation, cajolements and empty promises. Had it not coated the bitter pill and given top priority to hefty redundancy payments, the '72 strike would have rumbled on indefinitely. It was absolutely crucial to the selling of the Jones/Aldington report, and, on this account alone, marked the beginning of an era.

This brings us to the vexed question of "job selling". On the left, workers who are "bribed" by substantial sums of redundancy money, are generally regarded as fallen people - a traitor to their class. The left still refuse to see what is subversive in chucking in work and dropping out of the labour market and cycle of capital accumulation altogether. So capitalism, as pioneered by the Aldington/Jones report, was able to exploit the refusal of exploitation, passing it off as a form of collusion between workers and management which only the baddies fall for. Unions, it must never be forgotten, are partners to these deals. So how come

they end in opposing them? Hypocritical lip service aside, there comes a point when the cuts in the labour force are so drastic as to threaten the existence of wage labour, which it is the job of unions to preserve.

When left to trades unions and political parties, the campaign against accepting redundancy payments invariably is shot through with repulsive family sentiments which play on legitimate parental fears for their kids' future. For example at the beginning of the miners' strike, a poster circulated by Militant showed a pathetic child asking his father, a former miner in disgrace for accepting redundancy: "Will we be able to buy it back when I want a job dad?" Thus, instead of unemployment becoming a class issue, it is diverted into a trade issue, appealing in particular to groups of workers, like miners and dockers, whose jobs traditionally have been handed down from father to son. Keeping it in the family like this not only tends to exclude women but the larger class question as well. Constantly represented as the bread winner the father comes to embody hard work, effectively drawing a screen around the extent of shopfloor ducking and diving.

On the other hand, if workers did not accept redundancy, management would have a terrible problem on its' hands. Even at £25,000 a throw, the inducement presently offered to dockers, still represents a saving for capital. In Liverpool the present King Burger offer is undersubscribed by around 300 with only 162 agreeing to take voluntary redundancy. Short of sacking the remainder, which after the two dock strikes of '84 is temporarily out of the question, the port employers will have to bear the cost of surplus dockers. This could result in the sharing out of whatever work is available amongst the remaining dockers and a shorter working week for everyone. Dockers have in the past invariably resorted to this expedient when work has been tight. It is the basis on which a radical egalitarianism has taken root and the source of dockers conflicts with the trade union management of the various stages leading to decasualization. The eventual outcome of dockers refusing to take redundancy will be a highly unstable situation, forcing dockers to move beyond the economic horizons of capitalism. By recognising, amongst other things, there is a power in numbers ("overmanning") implied in the refusal to accept redundancy, the battle lines between the proletariats' social war and capitals' economic war are already being drawn up. The higher unemployment totals go, the more likely Liverpool's example - a response to the devastatingly high levels of unemployment on Merseyside - will be followed elsewhere. The crises of overmanning, which in proletarian speak is the right to be kept in degrees of idleness on full pay, is destined to assume a particularly acute form in the docks because management cannot sack workers. Whereas in the past, pay settlements in the docks have tended to trigger off pay strikes by other groups of workers, what bliss if the social standard set by the docks were to catch on elsewhere.



CLASS WAR OR PRESERVATION SCHEME?

The origin of these questions ultimately go back to the Aldington/Jones report. A pace setter in this respect it wanted to direct attention from the fact it had no intention of extending the dock labour Scheme. An incident at the time reveals just how loath the TGWU and port employers were to extend the national dock labour scheme to cover all remaining ports, let alone getting firms to honour the guarantees of work security contained in the report. During the months leading up to the delegate conference called to discuss and decide on the fate of the Aldington/Jones report, Hull dockers had been trying to stop work at the unregistered ports on the Ouse and Trent rivers. Many of the pickets had been drawn from the pool of unemployed on the the Temporary Unattached Register. One particular wharfe, Neap House on the Ouse, had become the scene of a violent confrontation. The changed viewpoints of the Neap Wharfe unregistered dockers (who continued to work on inspite of the picketing) over the weeks is testimony to the deeply ambivalent responses provoked by the dockers' strike. Going from an outright rejection and claims of intimidation, the unregistered dockers eventually asked to be included in the Scheme saying in a statement, they would refuse to stop work until they were granted full status as registered dockers! The path to extending dockers' working rights winds round many a horse-shoe bend. The Neap House dockers even asked Jack Jones to visit the wharf for a reassurance but he was too busy - no doubt pumping hands to seal a gentleman's agreement.

In the national dock strike of July '84 a similiar reluctance to extend the scheme was unmistakable. It never even came up in the negotiations. However John Connolly the TGWU docks representative must parade as the Lord Protector of the Scheme accusing dockers in a circular of backsliding in defence of the Scheme.

In the '72 strike unregistered ports accounted for 6% of trade but most of this was through Felixstowe, Harwich and Dover. Since then the figure has grown to 30%. Felixstowe, Harwich and Dover operate close to full capacity all year round, effectively ruling out their ability to cope with ships re-routed from strike bound ports.

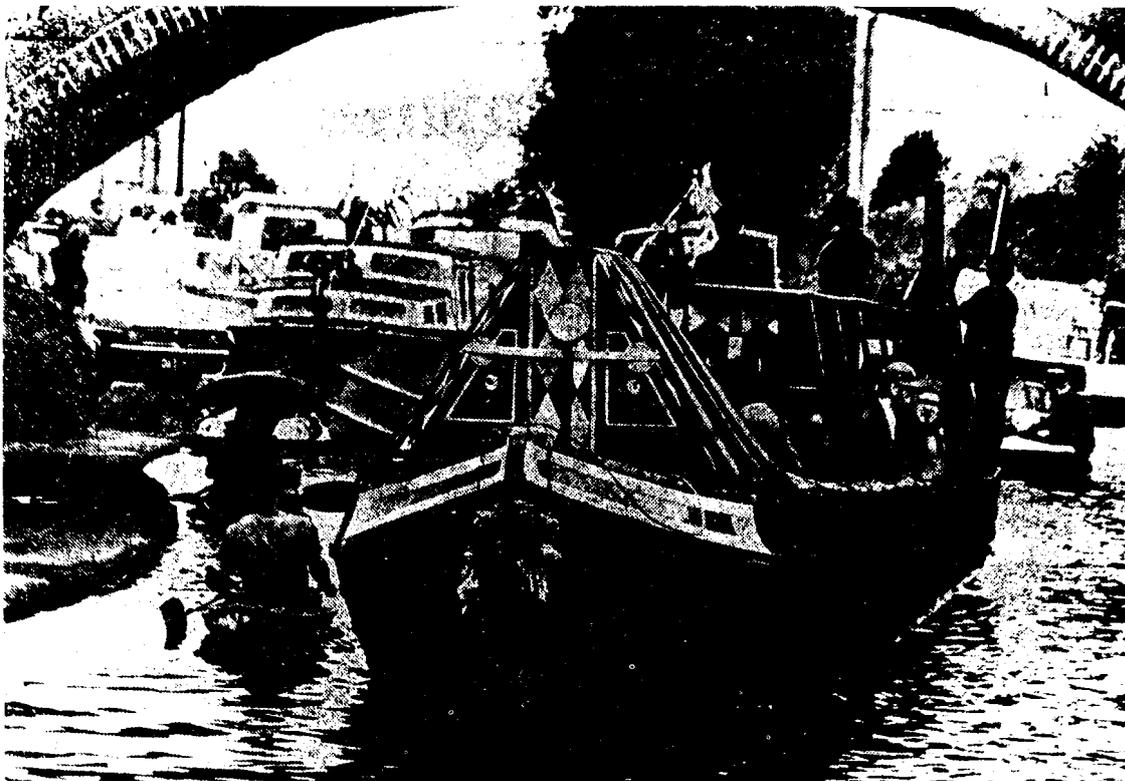
In any case the cost of recreating container traffic onto rollon/roll off ferries has been estimated at something like £½ million per ship. But the strike busting potentiality of small wharves has yet to be demonstrated. However British steel, during the present miners' strike, succeeded in bringing in coal and ore for the Scunthorpe steel works through small ports. Following their example shipping companies have begun to look into the possibility of subdividing bulk cargoes for transshipment through small wharves. The foresight of Hull dockers was obvious and years in advance of its time.

Barges, with their small draught and manouverability would naturally play a major part in the success of such an operation. And amongst the small family type businesses there would be no shortage of takers. Even in ports covered by the Scheme, dockers have always kept a wary eye on these businesses constantly tempted to overstep their 'licensed' entitlement. In the 70's a new twist was provided by the clearing up and dredging of canals. In 1983 Tilbury dockers refused to load barges looking as if they had come straight out of the travel pages of the week end colour supps. The barges belonged to D. Murrell a husband and wife firm. Transporting raw materials for Rose's lime juice from Brentford to Boxmoor on the Grand Union canal the firm breathed a small-is-beautiful period charm and its business transactions seemed as harmless as the kindly sweetshop in childrens' stories. In fact the Murrell's were innovators quick to see the age old business potential in the restored and rechristened "cruiseways". In addition, the Murrell's were delivering 350 tons of grain each week from Tilbury to Cox's Mill on the River Way. This exception to the working of the Scheme was tolerated by the dockers, but when the firm attempted to extend its operations and open a regular service between Tilbury and Beckett's wharf up river from London, the danger signals flashed and the blacking began. Small, once more, was proving to be dangerous.

In 1972 the Tory Minister of Transport had requested a survey of the small ports with a view to taking them over in "the national interest." The victorious Labour Government passed in '76 the Dock Work Regulation Act committing it (but within no specified time) to bringing all ports into the dock labour Scheme. Since '76 only one port, Hunterston in Scotland, has been brought into the registered network. (When, on August 23rd '84, the Ostia docked and began to unload Polish coal for



Pickets tearing down wire fencing and concrete posts round the perimeter of Neap House Wharf, near Humberside in 1972.



A MURRELL TYPE LONG BOAT.

the Ravenscraig steel work without using registered dock labour, the walk out of registered dockers at Hunterston was to trigger off the second national dock strike in as many months). John Connolly's unsuccessful efforts to persuade the Thatcher Government to introduce a new scheme covering all the ports is typical of the spirit of the National Docks Labour Scheme as administered by the NDLB. (National Docks Labour Board).

A timely word on the NDLB is in order here because much has been written and talked about it over the past couple of months, without anyone appearing to know anything about its origins and function. The NDLB is a joint body of employers' representatives and representatives from the TGWU sitting in equal numbers. The Government has the right to sit on the board but it never exercises this right because that would upset the balance of power and damage the board's neutral image.

It was set up in 1947 to administer the scheme but its blood lines can be traced back to the first joint union/management attempts to draw up a dockers' register. This eventual symbol of co-partnership was, in its earliest stages, associated with coercion, the tightening of work disciplines and an increase in the disciplinary power of union officials. Whatever their illusion about creating a democratic union Glasgow dockers in 1928 would, as a result, leave the TGWU to form a breakaway union because they believed registration conferred too much power on officials and acted as a dampener on struggle.

In its later stages a fully fledged NDLB would deal with a whole range of matters including security of employment, attempts to forecast the level of trade, demand for labour at each port, and, in the past decade, the administration of pensions and severance schemes. Lastly, it would oversee the non-statutory system where by, if a port employer goes out of business, dockers made redundant are transferred to other employers in the port. The NDLB expanded duties are a function of one all important aim. It was widely believed, when the board was created in 1947, that class peace was set to reign forever in the docks because of it. Not to put too fine a point on it,

the board has not come up to expectations. Yet it was the jewel in the crown of post war labourist "industrial democracy", securing the port employers objective of a maximum return on capital while the trades unions took care of the labour management side of the bargain. Arthur Deakin, Gen Sec' of the TGWU welcomed it as a form of "workers control"(sic) and true to its letter never made a dock strike official. Alas from the earliest days of the NDLB, dockers showed an increasing propensity to strike. Consequently this experiment in "co-determination" had no direct successors until, arguably, the Bullock Report with its call for "worker directors", arrived on the scene in the late '70's. This report was rejected out of hand by trade union leaders hiding behind in fact welcome accusations of "corporatism". Weighed down with the problems of getting the working class to endlessly swallow Labour Government policies, they knew any further association of unions' officials with management functions would further weaken their standing. Some even may have paused to reflect on the high hopes vested in the NDLB now dashed to pieces by years of wildcat strikes.

For a while it looked, during the June '84 dock strike, if the employers might have to accept a new form of wording, which "would considerably extend the Scheme by making alleged breaches an industrial issue before the court has ruled on them". (Financial Times July 19th) The actual text of the proposal put forward by the TGWU was as follows: that the national association of port employers "accepts that non-registered labour will only be employed on dock work in circumstances provided for under the National Dock Labour Scheme 1967, subject to prior arrangement by the trade unions". This statement, which port employers were being asked to sign, would mean for example, that while dockers are in some dispute with management and are waiting a board ruling, management would not be allowed to employ contract workers as is there right at present. Believe it or not this quarrel over words, side-stepping any mention of extending the scheme, marked the offensive stage of the negotiations. Wrapped up as it was in trade union cotton wool, it appeared to mark a break with the Schemes' underlying pacifying

intent. But this demand was pressed (the union could scarcely do much less if it was not to emerge from the negotiations thoroughly discredited) only so long as the unprecedented but passive show of strength held in all the ports. As the FT (July 18) said: "Employers hopes are pinned on rumours circulating in the industry that local TGWU officials may not be able to maintain solidarity for more than a week or 10 days". And once cracks started to run over the strikes' fragile unity, Connolly, the TGWU docks secretary, immediately settled for a defensive verbal reassurance the Scheme was safe and called the strike off. It was at the non-Scheme ports the strike first started to crumble. Had the token pickets at dock gates swelled into a force bent on ringing the non-Scheme ports, demands to extend the Scheme would have been uppermost. And that wasn't Scheme cricket at all because the NDLB, which administers the Scheme, is more like a rule bound judicial authority in essence, whose verdicts must not appear as yielding to mob pressure too obviously.

Lest this sort of action be taken as support for both the Scheme and the board, a word of caution. Dockers discriminate between the advantages the Scheme has to offer and the board. They know from past experience the board is not their friend. However judgements that go against them help by unmasking the role of the trades union. For example in 1981 the local board in Southampton responded to the unofficial action taken by the dockers in support of a wage claim by telling them to work normally during pay negotiations or face suspension. Heavy! The board was really chancing its arm by associating itself with such stern disciplinary measures. But as for union officials - by disassociating themselves so crudely from unofficial action they were acting like their predecessors in the '50's and early '60's.

Rather than use pickets Connolly, the TGWU docks' secretary, would have preferred ten times over to follow the procedure laid down in the 1976 Act by, first of all, convening an independent enquiry, then, holding a ballot of all concerned (yes, that means the employers too). If the answer at Felixstowe, Harwich and Dover had been no (a possibility because dockers at these ports are torn between the security the Scheme provides and the high earnings they have received up to now) Connolly would have found himself in the embarrassing position of having no escape route left, other than reluctantly sanction coercion by militant dockers.

The back sliding hesitation of the TGWU to extend the Scheme, using the first national dock strike of '84 as a pretext, was not just a question of the manner of its implementation, crucial though that was. Rather they feared the issue might be lost sight of altogether once the dockers started to move en-masse. Their hostility to a practical mobilization of dockers was not just tied to the protocol of the NDLB but to a dread it could spill over into class action and drift uncontrollably into an attack upon capitalism in general leaving the issue of extending the dock labour Scheme a half remembered second. An echo once more of '72. The miners' strike was turning into a form of guerrilla warfare, sterling was plummeting like a dead weight, interest rates had gone up and the bourgeoisie taking fright had begun to desert Thatcher in droves. It was not a typical power vacuum because the Government was dead to the licking it was receiving. More accurately, it was a vacuum filled with the meglomaniac illusion of power: a bunker of impotence tricked by its over-reaching Saatchi and Saatchi propaganda unit into believing itself to be omnipotent. The collapse of the dock strike only confirmed this delusion and the belief the Government was successfully living out the final days of the "Appomattox or

civil war" counter-insurgency scenario against dockers and miners outlined by Ridley, the Transport Minister, while out of office and leaked to The Economist (May 27th '78).

Retracing our steps from these beckoning horizons, port employers constantly moan about the cost of the Scheme. Comparing their overheads to those of Felixstowe etc make them more determined than ever to ditch it. The accumulated debt, which the industry's national severance scheme owes the Government stands at £47 million, a figure which does not include the cost, over the years, of paying surplus dockers for who there is no work. Nicholas Ridley (Transport Minister) had bent a willing ear in the port employers direction and, at a port employers get together earlier in the year, had thrown down the gauntlet and promised to abolish the Scheme. It would be as easy as swatting a fly. The July '84 dock strike scored a little victory by forcing Ridley to eat his words and give assurance the Scheme would be safe during the lifetime of the present Government. The port employers looked choked, but Ridley looked as if he'd swallowed the remains of an ash tray because he had now been picked out as the author of the "Appomattox or civil war" strategy.

If the docks labour Scheme (in which, to recap, dockers have jobs for life and the cost of underemployment is no longer borne by dockers but by the employers) was abolished it would not mean a return to the bad old days of casualism. Rather dockers would become like other workers - though dock work is notoriously subject to trade fluctuations. In the '72 strike the dockers unique job security was cause for conflict. As The Guardian rightly said for once: "Registered workers get fall back pay if there is no work. Unregistered transport workers get the dole." (July 21st '72) And though Felixstowe, Dover etc are today held up as shining examples of job permanency without any need for the Schemes' labour restrictions, they would automatically lose some of their attractiveness to shipping capital if other ports, now covered by the Scheme, could offer even more competitive rates closer to the big urban centers. Dockers from these non-Scheme ports, still growing at break neck speed, could then easily find themselves in the vanguard of a movement to reimpose a similar Scheme afresh. But it is important to stress that dockers, for example at Felixstowe, do have permanent employment, and fringe benefits like a pension and sick pay. There is also a profit sharing bonus scheme. What they do not have is a "job for life". So far Felixstowe has escaped lay offs. But to imagine that every morning at sun up, the hiring foreman appears at the dock gates is pure fantasy. Casualized hiring practises and containerization are incompatible because containerization requires a skilled and salaried personnel, specializing in the operations of mechanical equipment and control systems. Port employers at the major non-Scheme ports in any case feel pressurised by the existence of the Scheme and can act in ways more typical of Scheme ports. Like when Dover docks' management, in the July '84 strike, transferred dockers handling freight to passenger services. Dockers had decided to keep the latter running because they did not want to hurt working class passengers. Over manning is a typical accusations levelled at Scheme ports. But when Dover docks' management took this decision off their own bat, they were imitating the Scheme practise, in all but name, of redeploying surplus dockers.

Dockers in non-Scheme ports are also prepared to take strike action in defense of the Scheme, because they know the existence of the Scheme is one of their best bargaining counters. This hidden ally spurs port employers in non-Scheme ports, to constantly improve pay and working conditions in an attempt to stay ahead of the Scheme.

On the other hand, dockers in Scheme ports object to the hours worked in non-Scheme ports. It is not the wages non-Scheme dockers get for working say, a 12 hour shift, which angers them, so much as the threat it poses to working conditions should the Scheme be abolished. A Hull docker, picketing the Neap House Wharfe on the Trent in '72, pointed out that the 12 hours shift worked on the wharf would have been divided into two shifts in Scheme ports. Behind the, at times, glib accusations of "scabs" hurled at non-Scheme dockers, lurks the suspicion that attempts to get rid of the Scheme are bound up with the lengthening of the working day and the Tories promise to "restore the will to work".

What 19th century philanthropists feared, contemplating the masses of casualized poor huddled around the ports, was not the sting of their conscience so much, as the potential for revolt that existed in these seething alleys. Humanists and utilitarians, opposed to the hire and fire mentality of port employers, had at least this much in common: they desired to 'ease' the condition of the docker in order to divide the community at large. The first step to substitute a clearing house at the dockgates, in preference to the free call, was the waterside equivalent of moves to set up Labour Exchanges in society at large. Both were premised on the belief but for administrative lacunae, the supply of labour balanced demand (no room here for a surplus proletariat endemic to capitalism). And whatever was left over must, by definition, be a diseased layer incapable of work that had to be quarantened and deprived of all civil rights - a fit subject for therapeutic surgery by a public-spirited Doctor Death. Put like this (and the language is not too strong - Churchill, the Fabians and Beveridge, the architect of the Welfare State, entertained ideas like these), we get some idea of the care the bourgeoisie once took to divide the unemployed from the "able bodied" employed in the hinterland of the big ports. Even when the employed turned nasty, and resorted to strike action, the 'esteem' in which they were held did not necessarily suffer a reversal. It is simply astonishing to recall that the great London dock strike of 1889 was greeted with enthusiasm by City of London stockbrokers. The appearance of trade unionism in the docks - and the 1889 strike was crucial to the formation of the new unionism - signified to the bourgeoisie a species of trade incorporation, and a degree of self control and discipline they could use to their own advantage. Not many of their contemporaries today can match this for enlightenment.

If anything both the unemployed and the employed today are likely, depending on the scope and tempo of the class struggle, to be tarred with the same brush. It is an important proviso, because while they remain in their separate corners, the bourgeoisie will try ensure that all one side sees of the other is a deeply insulting gargoyle of a caricature - to the left, a tame cap in hand worker, to the right, a UB40 with cloven feet and horns.

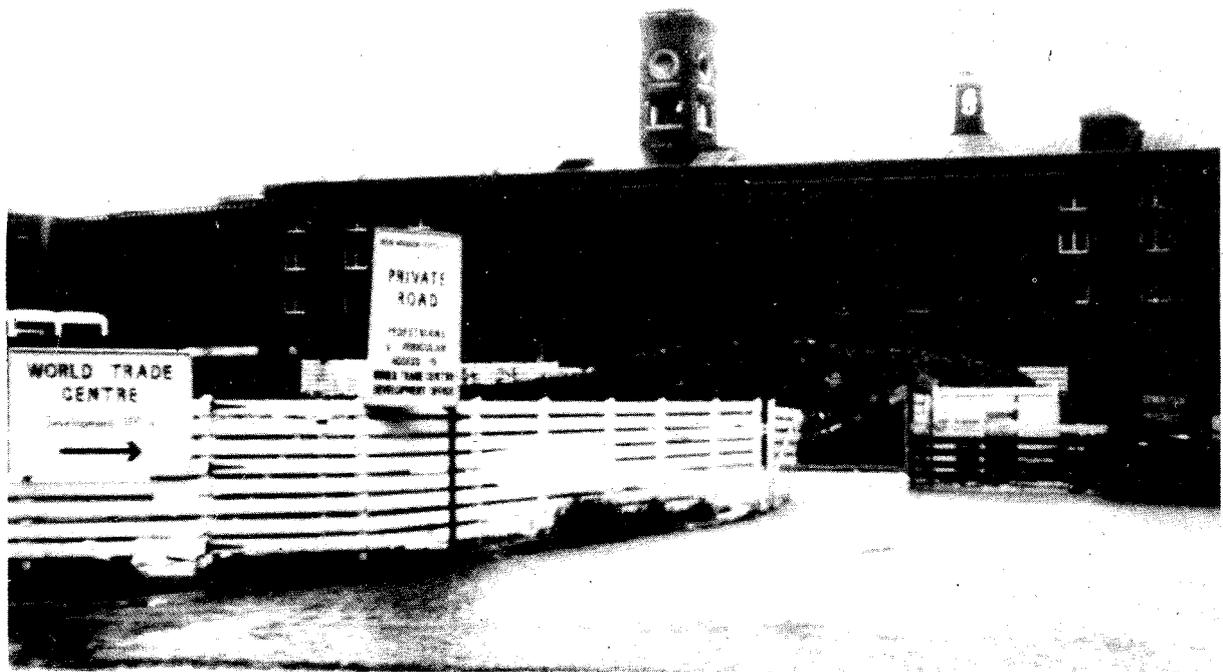
On the very weekend that Toxteth blew in Liverpool in the summer of '81, Liverpool dockers were gearing up for the third successive one day strike in a month. This duly took place on the following Wednesday, after some semblance of 'order' had been restored to Liverpool's riot torn streets. It was to be sure a pay strike, and neither the unemployed and pensioners can strike for higher benefits. But not very far in the background lay the knowledge Liverpool port employers wanted to cut back the workforce even more. And if the dockers refused to accept the redundancy terms offered, the cost of supporting the surplus (i.e. idle) dockers would plunge the employers even further into the red.

The unfortunately separate struggles of the rioters and the dockers may have remained something of a mystery to each other - and unions, underlined by the NUM's willingness to condemn "rabble protesters" pitching in with the miners, are prepared to go to great lengths to perpetuate this division. But when James Fitzpatrick, the managing director of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, insisted at a meeting of enraged dockers, "that the company was living from hand to mouth on a Government subsidy which could be turned off at any moment" (July 4th '81 - our italics) he was beating the dockers with the stick once reserved for the unemployed, implying, in effect, dockers were undeserving welfare parasites, living from one week to the next, in mortal danger of losing their entitlement to benefit.

Between sectors of industry like the docks, where overmanning is widespread - and to flinch from admitting it is to play the game of the bourgeoisie - and the unemployed, who have found a means of earning that indispensable extra on the side, there exists, in the broadest sense of the term, a profound 'economic' closeness. Unemployed workers who are fortunate to be able to do this have, because of the existence of social security in the U.K., become "decasualized". They are guaranteed each week a certain level of income, even though it is a pittance. And any attempt to "decasualize" them by providing a proper job, is resisted because invariably it means a drop in income. What they gain in legality (the freedom to oppose and organize openly in the workplace) they feel in their pocket and reduced liesure time. Both sides of the same equation however have to proceed cautiously, and conceal the actual content of the working day from prying eyes, out to put a stop to this attempt to drastically reduce the working week. Prior to the June '84 dock strike, few people outside the docks knew of the existence of ghost workers who were simply paid to do nothing, while an equivalent number of unregistered dock labour did a job requiring special skills. It was the withdrawal of the "ghosts" at Immingham, while unregistered labour continued to unload ore for the Scunthorpe steel works, that sparked off the June '84 dock strike. And when British Steel, in an effort to settle the strike, offered to train registered dockers to do the work, many a person doubted if this news would be all that welcome to Immingham dockers.....

Several weeks before the strike, Connolly (TGWU docks' secretary) had criticized dockers for their readiness to allow other workers to do a job they could conceivably do themselves. Trade union taboos and he being a big leader, prevented him from confronting the question at all honestly. Writing after the strike was over, in the TGWU newspaper he said: "Where there is a request for specialist skills which currently can't be supplied by existing registered dock workers, they should be trained by the employer in these skills". It was left to the Daily Telegraph, which does not have to pay lip service to the ideology of labourism, for all the wrong reasons, to hint at the truth: "It is far from certain that this appeal will gain local support from dockers who would be forced to learn special skills where at the moment they are paid just to stand and watch" (August 4th '84).

Similarities between dockers and the unemployed don't only end here. Without mentioning ports, TGWU lawyers have their hands full defending dockers who are persistently late in turning up for work after a long weekend moonlighting. Dockers have the distinction too of being amongst the first to systematically exploit, to their advantage, unemployment benefit loopholes in the days before full maintenance was granted. After



THE RECONVERSION OF ST.KATHERINE'S DOCK, c.1973.

For property developers the urge to construct is also a destructive urge and the building of the World Trade Centre at St.Katherine's had "accidentally" involved the demolition of a warehouse by Telford. Shortly after this photo was taken a company goon, with no neck, and knuckles trailing on the ground, came up and threatened violence.

THE STANDARD

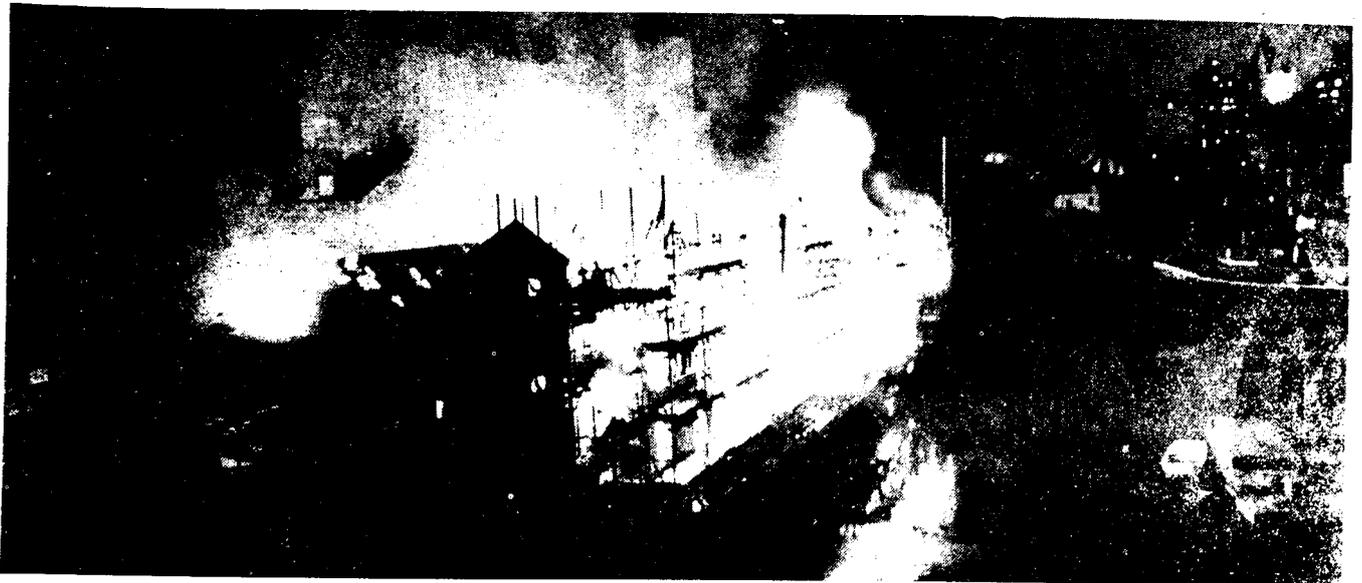
Thursday, July 21, 1983

17p

Incorporating the Evening News

LATE
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£500,000 blaze at St. Katharine Docks



1920, a shambles of a continuity role extending national insurance to cover dockers, allowed dockers to claim benefit if 3 days unemployment out of a spell of six continuous working days could be proved. It was an opportunity too good to miss, giving rise to the practise of "3 days on the hook, 3 days on the book." Using the escape routes provided by casual work, dockers would work like blazes for three days to ensure there was little or no work for the rest of the week. To be eligible for benefit all the dockers had to do was "prove attendance" for the next 3 days i.e. show up for work.

And as for pretending to work while management could only whistle and look unhappy, there is the true story of a legendary Portsmouth docker who spent his "working" life purposively carrying a chain about the yards. The casual building worker from Portsmouth who told us this tale got a rise out of it anyway —. At every turn, the docks offer a compendium of sliding-off ruses permitting labour to get one over on capital in an attempt to reduce the rate of exploitation. There was the practise of "ca' canny" which, though admittedly widespread in other sectors of industry, could in the docks turn a go slow into a dead stop. For instance a go slow schedule from London, which was not authorized by the union, listed 37 Clauses to be observed. Was it just scrupulous attention to safety when one clause stipulated: "Before commencing work ensure that red flags are displayed at both ends of shed." ? And in Liverpool the amazing industrial practise of welting caused more hours to be lost than all the strikes put together. Purportedly originating in gangs taking turns to work for only short periods in refrigerated holds, it spread throughout the pool. One half of a gang would go awol while the other continued to graft. After a while the first half would return from a piss up or whatever and the other would now go absent. The TGWU, the port employers and foremen hated this practise because it sabotaged their joint efforts to instill work discipline.

A word of caution. Correcting a bias is one thing but over emphasis can be just as dangerous. There are dockers alive who can recall strikes against working 16 hour shifts.

BEING CASUAL TOWARDS DE-CASUALISATION.

It is a little remembered fact but in 1967, when full scale decasualization was achieved in the Docks in the wake of the Devlin report, it instantly triggered off an unofficial nationwide dispute which dragged on for several weeks. The Devlin inquiry on the Docks had been set up within two weeks of the election of the Labour Government in 1964 and was a joint union/Labour Government/port management undertaking. The Labour Government was especially eager to associate the party with a "humanitarian" cause, particularly as large scale mergers and rationalization were alienating their working class support. The material basis of this "humanitarian" cause lay in the speed of containerization and the impact it was to have on dockers' numbers and the piece work system of payment based on the cargo era. The aim of the Devlin inquiry was to improve labour relations in the docks and, by implication, the control of the biggest union in the Docks, the TGWU. Though its brief was to usher in the container age, it

shied away from saying too much about the actual impact of container technology (that was acknowledged by the Aldington/Jones report hastily got up after the fact). Rather, the Devlin report chose not to say anything, for fear alarm would turn into panic then class violence.

For all its humanitarian wool pulling, decasualization was a pragmatic piece of social engineering done in the interests of class peace. The casual system as it stood could not have carried the impact of containerization. Even so, inspite of tip top job security for life, the old insecurities and fears were to bounce back as dock infrastructure was transformed at a helluva rate. No other industry was to go from labour intensity to capital intensity at such speed. And the "march of technology" has still to reach its final destination in the docks: the complete elimination of all dock labour like in a dock in Hamburg.

Trade union and management alike instantly brand all rank and file rejection of their joint accords as "backward". When, on September 14th '67 dockers in Merseyside, London, Hill, Teeside and Manchester struck against decasualization, this was the inevitable reaction of both the trade union and port employers sitting under the Devlin umbrella and venerated as a symbol of industrial partnership. At dock gates TGWU officials were out in force, trying to persuade dockers to go into work. The response of the TGWU district secretary on Merseyside was: "I feel very dissapointed indeed and I am at a loss to know how I can persuade our people to cross the picket line".

But the decasualization strike was not an infantile regression to past working habits, incomprehensible to anyone not versed in dockers' lore. Anyone who has done casual work will instantly recognise the dockers' grievances. There is nothing more demoralizing and head frying than doing three different jobs in three different places all in the same day. Decasualization meant that employers, with the consent of the unions, could push unattached dockers around from wharf pillar to post if not given a timely warning. Also dockers had lost the freedom of giving the two up to particularly lousy port employers. Now they felt they had no choice but to go wherever they were directed. Time schedules were also tighter, and dockers flexi-time was now just plain old bad time keeping, subject to disciplinary sanctions. Finally striking dockers thought the salary agreed on was too low and would lead to a drop in earnings.

But right from the first decade of the century the introduction of registers - the first step towards decasualization - had been resisted by dockers. In 1912, at Birkenhead on Merseyside, the register drawn up by the main union and port employers was only imposed after a long and bitter strike was broken by scabs brought in by the union. While casualism persisted in the docks there always was a slim chance that everyone who wanted to work there could. Registers were O.K. in principle, but not if it meant yours truly was left out. And the living situation of those at the lower end of the preference scale would bound to become worse.

But the issue of registers was not just a question of more work for some and less for others. It was a human crucible designed to change dockers' habits, involving a greater work discipline and commitment to the job. Bunking off for a spree after the job was done, then turning up bleary eyed and penniless days later, was as welcome to the system of registration as revolutionary militancy. And when, at the height of an unprecedented boom, full permanency did

arrive in 1967, a guaranteed income unlocked the final door to a system of consumer living on credit, denied to casual earners. Jack Jones said as much in his submission to the Pearson Court of Inquiry into the dockers pay claim strike in 1970, asserting that dockers did not earn a steady wage each week, which denied them easy access to a house mortgage (July 22nd '70). In the July '84 dock strike the F.T. hedged a guess credit ties of one sort or another would break the dockers' resolve. Some hope!

TRADE UNION REFORM: POURING OIL ON TROUBLED WATERS.

"The Government, trade union, employers, press and television will pour out lies and accusations. Ignore them."

- Dockers strike leaflet handed out in London, September '67.

In the U.K. particularly in the 50's and 60's and early 70's, there have been times when the official trade union movement in the docks all but disappeared from view, to be replaced by extremely powerful unofficial bodies which were a constant headache to the leadership of the TGWU. But it would not be correct to describe them as clear headed autonomous bodies able to see through the illusion of trade unionism. Rather whenever it suited them, the latter were simply ignored.

Both port employers and the TGWU leadership took a pretty dim view of this situation because while the conciliation machinery, set up to deal with disputes, was being ignored, the "stabilization" of labour relations would forever elude them. At the time of the decasualization strikes in 1967, a research worker on the docks from Manchester University, unwittingly gave the game away when asked, why won't the port employers negotiate while the men are out? He replied: "Because they are not in official dispute with the unions. If the employers negotiate before the official disputes procedure is exhausted, then there might as well be no dispute procedure. Then there might as well be no union." (our italics, The Guardian Oct 11th 1967)

That's right and clock that date because the events of the next 3 years were to bring politicians, trade union bureaucrats and paid hacks of every kind to a recognition they were dispensable - and the university researcher had, like the ventriloquists dummy, involuntarily given voice to the times.

The decasualization strike marks a critical stage in the TGWU counter offensive to gain control over the docks. At the end of September '67, the then Gen' Sec' of the TGWU, Frank Cousins, wrote to district officials instructing them to immediately introduce a system of elected shop stewards in the docks, to counter the influence of the unofficial committees. The union hoped this would "strengthen the lines of communication between members and officials enabling the unions to deal more quickly and effectively with problems as they arise. The absence of such a system has given much more scope to unofficial leaders". (The Guardian, September 27th 1967)

Actually Cousins' initiative reflected a deep unease in trade union first circles. Trade unions everywhere were losing control over their membership. To establish, once more, the authority of the center, without it appearing too obvious, would preoccupy trade union hierarchies over the years to come. This required, above all, a reshuffling of ideological, administrative and educational functions taking them as it were to the top of the trade union command structure. In the 60's trade unions had openly proclaimed an identity of interest between labour and capital on the basis of what's good for business is good for the workers. (The Devlin report on the docks was a major example of this) In saying this, trade unions were not so much departing from tradition, as in the manner of the "never had it so good" emphasis. True, mass consumerism had forged new shackles, and at its worst enforced an abject submission to capitalisms' goals. But on the other hand, the new found affluence, especially since its "benefits" were more evenly distributed than ever before, held out the vague promise of a utopian cornucopia. Getting shot of an authoritarian style of management was an overdue recognition by the trades unions, that the edge had been taken off many of the workers' traditional fears (they were to return with mass unemployment however). In other words workers were more likely, not less, to take direct action. Lifting the ban on proscribed organizations like the CP and the Trots was also a subtle application of the principle of giving enough rope-----.

However it was not just a question of bringing the unofficial movement (whose relentless attacks by the union were carried out in a spirit of "its' in your own best interests") back into the fold. Some lapsed members whose faith in trade unions was now nil, would have to be recruited all over again. For example, it was estimated that one third of Liverpool dockers in the mid '60's had either left, or, did not belong to a trade union, because they were too pissed off with the waterfront unions. While the imprecise term "unofficial movement" held sway, radically opposite currents - one just starting to head in the direction of autonomy and autonomous inter-enterprise committees, the other in the direction of trade union reform and trade union combine committees - could appear to be united by a common cause. But once the slogan "democratization of the union" was taken up by the TGWU, it proved possible to split the unofficial movement. Sowing the seeds of discord however always carries the penalty of a greater clarity. In the London dock strike in 1968 when recuperation was still in its teething stages, the shop stewards "right" to be seconded permanently from gangs was not supported by the mass of the dockers who didn't want life to be made too easy for the shop stewards. Even so the reluctant port employers eventually gave in.

This incidents highlights the opportunistic nature of the contemporary shop stewards movement which, at the earliest opportunity, sought to make life as easy as they could for themselves at the expense of the workers. But they were also an extra mouth for capital to feed because they stipulated, in the case of the docks, their places in the gangs be taken by "pro-rata" men. Loved by neither side of the class divide, shop stewards proved an easy target in the early '80's for Thatcher and her cronies, craftily

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

LONDON,

TUESDAY, JULY 17, 1984



PICTURE: SRDJA DIUKANOVIC

Mr Alan Green (left), the transport union's Dover district officer, making a statement after yesterday's decision to stop all freight traffic in and out of the port. With him is Mr Les Sharp, chief shop steward at Dover.

Al Green, S.E. District Sec. of the TGWU, was formerly a situationist-influenced individual loosely attached to King Mob. Instead of deepening this shambles of a libertarian critique he fell back, like so many others, into the crushing embrace of the alienated representation of the workers' movement: trade unions and the Labour Party. He is a friend of John Lloyd, the Industrial Editor of the Financial Times, who can boast (but prefers a thousand times not to) of comparable libertarian beginnings. In an article Lloyd wrote at the conclusion of the first dock strike in '84, it was obvious he had flicked through his desk top diary and given Al Green a buzz to scoop the story of life in the raw in the lone portacabin on Dover's western docks where Green and the Dover shop stewards had maintained their vigil. Al Green had stayed the length of the strike in Dover, an action more typical of the newer breed of trade union bureaucrats, who feel more duty-bound than their predecessors to keep in touch with rank 'n' file opinion. When photographers appeared to take a group portrait of the stewards, Al Green remained in the rear, a half-distinct figure, as if startled by the camera-lens and the painful memory of what he once was.

Both Al Green and John Lloyd have had connections with BICO (the British and Irish Communist Organisation) and the influence of this organisation on Lloyd's articles comes through, for instance, in his admiration for Ernie Bevin. Space does not permit even the briefest resume of BICO's ideas, but for the quirkiness verging on the perverse, it takes some beating. In one of their magazines devoted to the Stalin question, they praise Anton Ciliga whilst affirming Stalin's so-called political realism. No comment - especially not from the FT's well-healed Industrial Editor.

able to twist a genuine grievance into seemingly wholehearted support for capitalism.

But while it lasted, the divergent strands that went to make up the unofficial movement in the docks, had moments of direct democracy. It was, in several ways, more radical than the syndicalist agitation in the docks before World War 1. Strike committees were elected, in contrast to the syndicalist penetrated strike committees of 1910/13 appointed by the unions. On these strike committees union presidents could rub shoulders with prestigious individuals like Tom Mann. And shop stewards, prior to settling down into a trade union caste,

would not have dared gone against the wishes of striking dockers as blatantly as the syndicalist Ben Tillett when he and others in the London dock strike of 1912, insisted on a return to work after dockers had unanimously voted to stay out. For the next 10 days an armed wildcat, in defiance of union dictat, followed. Yet many a strike was blown off course, during the years of the "great unrest", once union recognition was conceded. This question never really arose with the unofficial movement, constantly at loggerheads with the trade union apparatus.

The more profound the struggle the more thorough going must reform appear, to keep abreast of events. Sometime before the 11th hour the TGWU woke up to consider how it could best perfect the illusionist art and transform the ruler it held in its hands into a giant cudgel. J. Jones the Gen' Sec' thought he had found the answer. He proposed bringing the shop stewards into the main body of the TGWU by giving them an administrative function at branch level in addition to their militant shop floor roles. This involved a considerable shake up at branch levels, (branch officials often despised shop stewards) which were not linked to work places and had not followed the dispersal taking place in dockland communities. Officials were also threatened with direct elections, which turned their air-conditioned offices for awhile into sauna baths. It was necessary so that, in the final analysis, things could stay the same.

This bifurcation of the shop steward role formed part of their "reeducation": they were now privy to "accurate" inside information which had previously been withheld from them by the union. Gone were the days when shop stewards could accuse the union of duplicity and withholding information. However bizarre some of the conspiracy theories advanced were, they at least had the merit of intuitively recognising the fundamental lie at the heart of trades unions. Moreover it is asking a lot to carry out union policy and oppose it at the same time. Consequently, so long as the shop stewards consented to remain a part of the official trade union apparatus, their agitational arm would be increasingly thrust aside by their official ideological function. Some stewards sensed this and were to leave bodies like the Docks' Group Committee. Mass meetings were also to change from having a directing power, to ratifying decisions taken on top. Either that or they were not held at all on account of their power to enforce a mandate, rendering all room for compromise, during negotiations, out of the question. The afore mentioned Docks' Committee Group for example, held institutionalized mass meetings as a means of reporting back to the base - much to the chagrin of the union branches who felt their function was being usurped by this recuperated shop stewards committee. However, when asked to call it a day because the trade union wished to negotiate in secret, it did so.

Nowadays, in conformity with TGWU procedure, mass meetings held at a national level are asked to vote for or against recommendations put forward by docks' delegates who are advised by the national committee, as to what their opinions should be. The Gen' Sec' no longer has the power, as in the days of Bevin, to order acceptance or rejection of deals. The restructuring of TGWU power, designed to extend the authority of the trade union downover, could only be pulled off on condition the Gen' Sec', and secretaries of the various trade groups, agreed to having their wings clipped also. On the eve of the delegate conference called to discuss the Aldington/Jones report in '72, Jack Jones

must have yearned, despite being an advocate of reform, for the authoritarian past when he could have ordered acceptance. Left with no other device than charismatic persuasion, he appeared on TV urging dockers not to strike. But despite the re-ordering of trade union power the charge of authoritarianism still sticks and irks workers tremendously goading some into strike breaking as a perverted form of protest against heavy handed methods. Using the slippery language of "democratization", "participation", "elections" etc, the real aim of TGWU reform was to nip the growth of a genuine workers' democracy in the bud.

The attempt to introduce the law into industrial relations by the 1969/74 Heath Government had the same aim. But behind the ritualistic howls of condemnation, trade unions feared it would do the opposite. Ex P.M. Harold Wilson described it as a "charter of militancy" - he never said a truer word. After the seige of Pentonville prison and the wildcat general strike, the law was never again used against dockers. In its place a TUC/CBI conciliation service, the fore runner of ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), due to start operating in Sept '72 was used "to help towards a solution of the docks' crises." It is very significant that the Thatcher Government has left this piece of conciliation machinery alone, appreciative of the fact it provides an opening which renewed attempts to bring the law into industrial relations does not always permit. In the July '84 dock strike, ACAS was on the scene double quick and stayed hovering in the wings throughout the duration of the strike.

The TGWU reforms were not by any means confined to it alone. They were, however in advance of their time because of the need to curb the sweep of the unofficial movement in the docks. Curiously the bid to fuse more life into TGWU locals was in direct contrast to Earnie Bevin's (Gen' Sec' of TGWU and Minister of Labour during World War 2) distrust of local branches which he considered to be wide open to "left wing" infiltration. By lifting the ban on Commies/Trots etc from holding office, the TGWU hoped this would be the result. The unofficial movement would then, the TGWU believed, lose its head of steam. The TGWU reforms were a remarkably clever acknowledgement that neither the CP or the Trots etc wanted to break the authority of the TGWU but to modify its policies. It is surprising how easy it is for one hierarchical power under threat to recognize and cultivate another. But selecting branch level as the main target was also a tacit admission that a movement reaching, at times, mass proportions was drifting outside the ambit of the trade union movement and that the only hope of controlling it was from near hand, not from afar. A very different situation then, from the time Bevin, during the years following the first World War, set about creating a centralized autocracy in the TGWU, based not on the threat, but the relative feebleness of a movement existing outside the control of the union.

The days when authority would ring its hands over wildcat actions have not

gone. Only the terms of the debate have changed (for, or against trade unions), in response to a quickfire policy of making strikes instantly official by the trade union. But it's a risky business because making things official does not guarantee control as "The Winter of Discontent" of '78/79 showed. To get some idea of the distance travelled in the trade union management of discontent, imagine the Winter of Discontent" taking place 10 years earlier, in '68/69. All the majority of trade union leaders would have done then is rage against the strikes, attributing their cause to a fifth column of wreckers. Now they stayed silent, having no other choice but to "support" the movement with the deepest regrets. R.I.P.

**"A MATCH TO LIGHT THE THAMES"
(and the Ouse, Tyne, Wear, Tees, Trent,
Orwell, Tagus, Yellow River, Mersey, Esk,
Humber, Severn, Spey, Skerne, Demon's
Beck et al).**

With the end of the Sept '84 dock strike, a few things are becoming clearer. The TGWU has, despite its years of "democratic" reconstruction, behaved like the limp rag it always was. Against the wishes of the Hunterston dockers on the Clyde (the site of the second national dock strike of '84) a pitiful apology of a deal was worked out by the big bureaucrats of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, more or less agreeing to supply whatever tonnage of coal the British Steel Corporation required for the Ravenscraig steel plant. At the end of the day the dockers had gained absolutely nothing, not even the whisper of a reassurance from BSC that in the future they would observe the dock labour Scheme. Connolly, the docks secretary, even suggested dockers cross miners' picket lines! But in the dust there lay shattered the notions of the "new" TGWU bureaucrats who fondly believed it was they who all along wanted militant strike action but were prevented from having their way by a reluctant, conservative workforce. On union orders, dockers had been marched to the top of the hill - then marched down again. The consequences of this absurd manoeuvre are dire. After the July '84 strike the employers and the State had temporarily backed off from tampering with the Scheme. But this capitulation is more than they had ever dared hope for. Once the port employers and the State judge the time is right they will go in for the kill with a vengeance, fortified by the knowledge gentlemanly reassurances are all the TGWU's servile retainers in the docks dare ask for. In fact the deal that settled the second dock strike was so lame Moss Evans, Gen' Sec' of the TGWU, in an effort to wipe out the shame, hastily issued a directive calling on TGWU members to black any movement of coal into the power stations. Evans thought some members would ignore this directive but to point the finger at the hapless John Connolly meant risking too much.

A national dock strike has been threatened every year since 1980. After the two disputes of '84 and possessing the benefit of hindsight perhaps the most a dock strike prior to 1984 would have done was accelerate the unmasking of the reconstructed TGWU. In 1982 Connolly had threatened a national dock strike after Thatcher had rejected TGWU proposals to extend the dock labour Scheme to cover all ports. That time Connolly had been spared by the national mobilization and jingoistic fervour surrounding the gruesome Falklands/Malvinas war. But prior to that dreadful farce dockers were poised to deliver a

punishing blow. The State had been severely weakened by the riots of '81 and through the breach created by the rioters a torrent of strikes was about to pour. However the only one that showed any demonstrable staying power (actually over a period of six months) was the health workers strike which led to the biggest mobilization of workers in support of a particular sector of workers since the 1926 General Strike. Yet the momentum was lost due to a reflex faith in trades unionism: what Thatcher could not do the TUC did for her in the disastrous regional days of action called in support of the health workers following the success of the national turn-out in their support.

Little wonder then, given the experience of trade union derailment of several struggles in the immediate past, when the TGWU called a second time for a total stoppage in the docks, there was some reluctance to fall into line especially since the first strike had achieved so little. Although around two thirds of registered dockers came out their heart wasn't really in it. On the one hand this desultory response reflected the dockers changed situation: much reduced in number, the mass experience of 20 years earlier - even '72 for that matter - had vanished, though their power to really hurt capital remained undiminished. On the other hand they felt their muscle was being used to further a political strike in support of the miners with the dismal aim of replacing a Tory Government with a Labour Government. So the passionate desire felt by many dockers to go to the miners aid gave way to stifled yawns.

Even so, joint dockers and miners' pickets had begun to appear as had happened momentarily in the July strike. However this time, more determined joint action (e.g. at the Scunthorpe steelworks) were circumvented by the police before they had a chance to reach their destination. Though tactically these actions were a failure, they were, in principle preferable to the miners single handed and partially successful attempts to block the huge Humber suspension bridge on the Monday morning after the July strike was called off. It was an action that caught the imagination alright but how much greater its impact would have been if it had occurred in the context of 2,000 miners converging on Hull and Immingham docks to speak directly to the dockers themselves. It could have tipped the scales once more in a broader class direction and caused many a dejected heart to soar again that day. And if police action in the September strike had not prevented dockers and miners from achieving their immediate objective TGWU bureaucrats might have found it a lot less easy to call off the strike.

Despite big losses to the port employers, taken together, the two national dock strikes of '84 have considerably strengthened the port employers hand. They are going to conclude the dockers are easy meat. More fool them. Though July was a teeny-weeny victory and September a disaster, the TGWU's wretched settlement is bound to fuel criticisms of TGWU bureaucrats in the docks and encourage the growth of more independent initiatives. Between the two national dock strikes wildcat action broke out in Liverpool and Bristol. And on the day the TGWU called off the Sept strike, tally clerks in Tilbury suddenly struck, bringing delighted smiles to peoples' faces all round. The two national dock strikes of '84 were summer squalls and that's all. Meanwhile storm clouds continue to gather over dock city.

There's every likelihood the present resurgence in the docks will recover what was positive in the earlier movements and move into a more conscious, higher key. This is less of a distant possibility than at first appears, because the example set by the Spanish and Danish dock strike is still reverberating across the seas. In "England your England", Orwell criticized British workers for their failure to take any effective solidarity

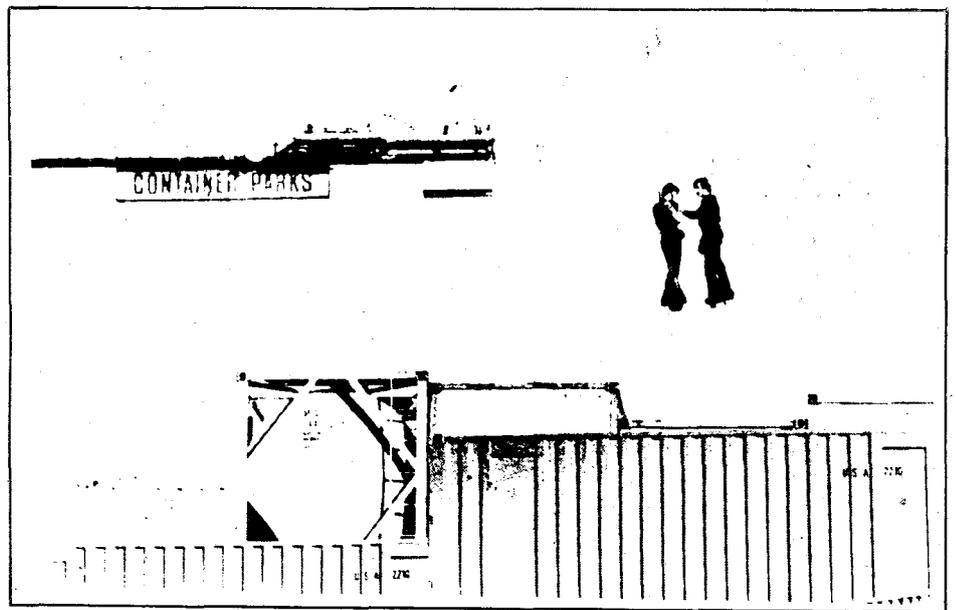
action with the Spanish insurgents of 1936. By 1980 in at least one respect, this had changed. Consciously supporting the Co-ordinadora and not the UGT/CC. OO, dockers in the U.K. played a part in securing a victory for the autonomous struggle in the docks in Spain. Dockers in the U.K. could soon begin to manage their own struggles, like the Spanish dockers, and throw out all hierarchy, officials and leaders. After all, they've already been halfway there before.

A genuine proletarian democracy could do much to prevent scabbing which, as mentioned before, on one level, is a muddled headed protest against being excluded from the decision making process. What is needed is a class unity which supercedes the priority given to trade unity. By a quirk of fortune, persistent scabbing can redress the balance in favour of class unity, because once it is apparent that hammering away at a smallish lump of scabbing workers is getting nowhere, it could encourage striking workers to go outside the trade and seek help directly from other workers. In the present strike wave that is not happening to the extent that it should - but, it is happening and deserves maximum applause when it does.

Direct democracy, revocable delegates, open assemblies which begin to take into account all aspects of an alienated everyday life - that's what's needed. At the same time such developments have an inner volition of their own and to lay down hard and fast rules is to court disappointment. Their form and content will arise out of unrelenting struggle rather than pre-determined criteria. Already dockers in Spain

and Germany have begun to encompass ecology which could be a major factor in tearing ecology free from its trade union/parliamentary/business orientation. What can be said with certainty if dockers in present and future struggles are to tread this path they will find themselves not only combatting the port employers, the unions and the State but capitalist society in its totality anxious to call a halt to a drift into insurrection. The stakes are upped everyday that passes.

One final observation. Thatcher is wild-eyed and hell bent on winning the defeats of the past. She has planned on fighting the old wars afresh, to exorcize the bitter memories of the failure of the 1969/74 Heath Government. Parrallels between the Heath Government and Thatcher's are not uncommon, given Thatcher's fixatedness on the past. But, almost by pure coincidence, caught between the miners and the dockers, Thatcher had to do exactly what Heath did in 1972 and settle with the railway workers who had threatened strike action. Today strikes however are only indirectly concerned with pay - action on the railways and public transport was only averted when Thatcher agreed to a six month moratorium on job losses. They are social not economic strikes and as such open up immense possibilities touching everyday life in its totality. A victory against the Tories this time will, more than ever, be a short lived thing because what, in the last analysis, is implied here, is an uprising against national and international capitalism both east and west.



Hanging On For A Global Strike?

Glossary

The Cortes: The Spanish Parliament.

Council of Ministers: The cabinet of the Cortes.

CNS: Vertical trade union structure of the Francoist regime.

PSOE: Partido Socialista Obrero Español. Spanish socialist party.

UGT: Union generale del trabajo. The socialist union.

CC.OO. Comisiones Obreras. Communist party union.

CNT. Confederacion nacional del trabajo. Anarcho-syndicalist union.

CEOE. Confederacion Espanola de Organizaciones Empresariales. The Spanish confederation of industry.

ANESCO. Asociacion Nacional de Empresas, Estibadores y Consignatories. The association of the big bosses in the ports. Linked to the CEOE.

The Generalitat. Comprises the regional Parliament and Executive council of Cataluña and covers the provinces of Barcelona, Gerona, Lérida and Tarragona.

AP: Federacion de Alianza Popular. A parliamentary right-wing party.

UCD: Union de Centro Democratica. Formed in 1977 as a center right electoral coalition of several parties. The coalition completely collapsed in the general election of October '82 as the more rightist AP took over much of the ground the UCD had previously occupied.

Fuerza Nueva: A contemporary fascist party of right-wing thugs.

Calvo Sotelo: Prime Minister of Spain from February '81 to October '82. President of the UCD.

The Spanish Republic: 1934-39.

Spain and the EEC: Full negotiations for Spain's entry into the EEC began in '79 but completion is not expected until the mid '80's.

Caso Scala: Refers to a fire at the Scala restaurant in 1978 in which four workers died. The work of an agent provocateur it was used to unleash a wave of repression against "anarchist terrorism". Though innocent three CNT members were given stiff prison sentences.

The February coup: In February '81 a group of armed Guardia Civil led by L.T. Colonel Antonio Tejero stormed into the Cortes taking hostage 350 deputies. The military commander of Valencia, General Jaime Milans del Bosch declared a state of emergency and sent tanks into the streets of Valencia. The coup failed but it succeeded in securing a further lease of stability in Spain even though 30 officers were indicted and later received long prison sentences. It took until 1984 for the Spanish proletariat to resume their general offensive again.

Works Juntas: Regional and local bureaucrats directly responsible to the Ministry of Labour.

José Antonio Girón: The fascist Minister of Labour from 1941 to '57.

The Statute: Drawn up by analysts belonging to the Dock management branch of the CEOE. It set out the number of workers to be paid weekly, per company, the obligation to invest heavily in dock infrastructure and the high minimal amount of tonnage to be moved per year. Inevitably it meant small dock companies would fold up but they as well as dockers were required to sign it. Small dock companies in particular were anxious to sign the separate agreement drawn up by the dockers while major dock companies, possessing the means to do so, continued to hold out against it.

Local Council: (Consejo local). The Statute suggested that discipline and work speeds would be decided by a local council composed of management, dockers and the Administration. All would have the same number of representatives and it's clear who would always have the greatest number of votes.

The 'Plaza': From the beginning of the century until the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, dock work was characterized by favouratism and the tap on the shoulder. The 'Plaza' was the pen where dockers sold themselves daily. It functioned so that the bosses could choose the most loyal workers.

The OTP: Created by Girón in 1944, it was a vertical union and a company labour exchange which the port bosses had to go through to hire dockers services. In addition it took over social services like caring for the aged, providing assistance which Girón, the Minister of Labour, was particularly concerned to introduce. Its structure like the CNS was vertical and at the apex of their hierarchical pyramid sat the Under-Secretary of State. But the conquering Fascist State still had to bend over to incorporate the workers upto a point and the OTP established once more the rotation system ensuring that every docker worked and a register of dockers. In time workers were accredited with unemployment pay the days they didn't work. As happened in many European and American ports in order to work, it was necessary to belong to the union. And if the workers were too disruptive and did not adhere to the dictats of management/union, they were sacked. Although initially a fascist union body, throughout the years, the character of the OTP changed as the workers in a metaphorical sense, increasingly 'occupied' it. Thus the OTP of 1980 was not like that of 1944.

Pistolerismo: Refers to a savage counter-attack launched by the Barcelona bourgeoisie after the successes of the 1919 general strike there. In response to the gunning down of police, judges etc, the bosses hired, under the protection of a detested "free union" (sindicato libre), bands of assassins paid to plug troublesome workers. They were aided and abetted by particularly brutal police chiefs and ex-military men in high government office. It has been estimated that around 150 workers were killed or died from bullet wounds during the period of pistolerismo.

The OEPB: Estibadores Portuarios de Barcelona. The autonomous organization of Barcelona dockers.



**THE BACK COVER IS A PHOTO OF THE POSTER FOR THE DOCKERS INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
IN ARHUS DENMARK IN 1982.**

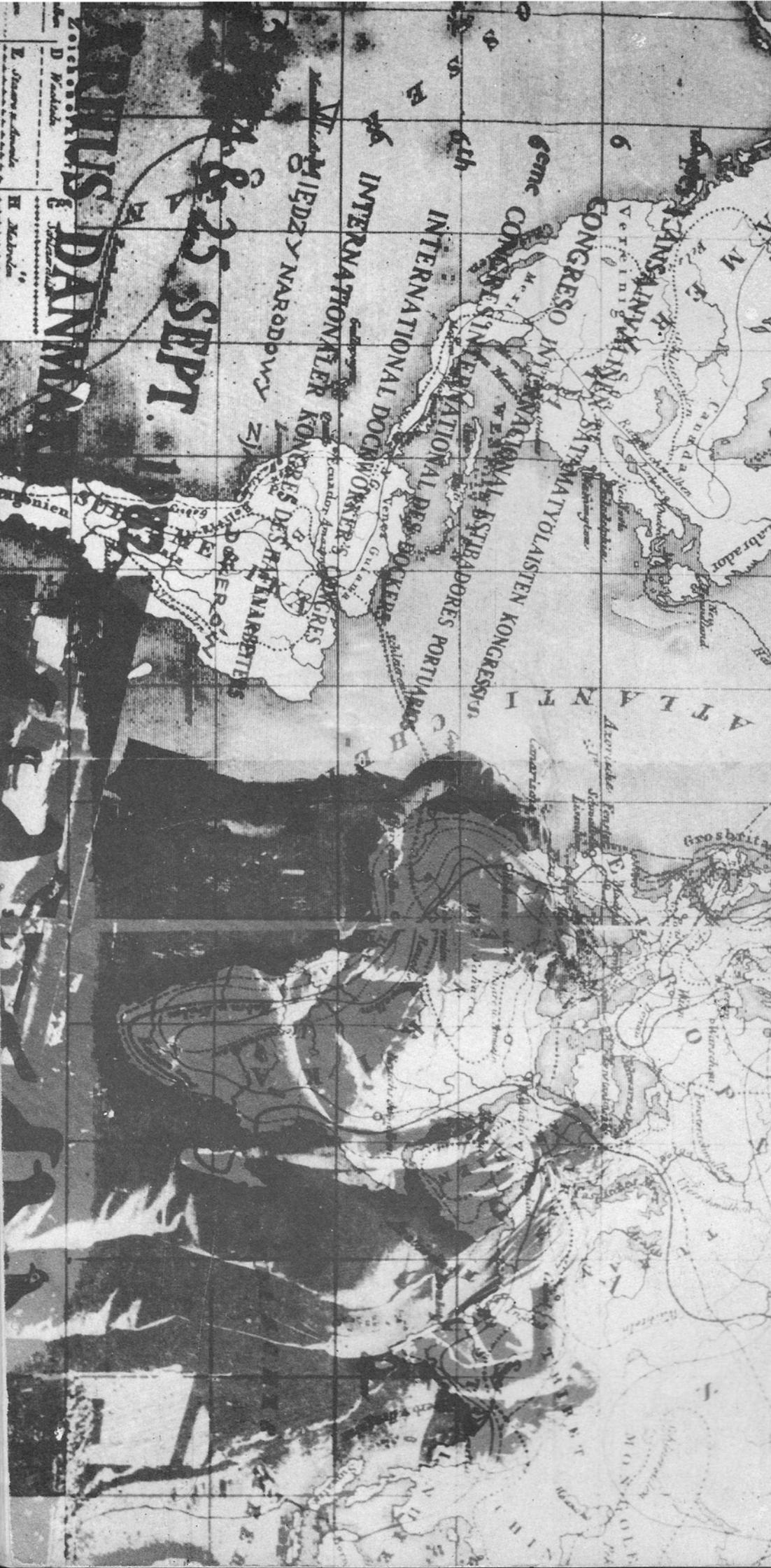
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INTERNATIONALE HÄRBEIDERS KONGRESS



25 SEPT

MUS DANNA

Zeteloni
D. Radich
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