

PORTWORKERS'

SPECIAL

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Supplement to The Newsletter

BLUE AND WHITE

UNITE FOR

A DOCKERS'

VICTORY!

The 7s.6d. is a sell-out

By WILLIAM HUNTER

THE acceptance of a paltry 7s. 6d. a week—7s. 4d. after reductions—by the trade union side of the NJIC is a sell-out that will cost portworkers dearly. Not only is this pittance way behind the increase in the cost of living—it is an admission that the trade union leaders do not want to fight on behalf of their members.

That this should happen at a time when the whole employing class is on the offensive is simply a cowardly retreat by the leaders. Yet Britain's portworkers have a long and proud history of service to trade unionism.

The traditional call of 'an injury to one is an injury to all' has long been

of the bus strike are a closed book. They refuse to mobilize the forces of the union for an all-out struggle against the em-

'Efficiency'? Here are our 5 conditions

In a statement to The Newsletter, Bert Aylward, national secretary of the docks section of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers, put forward five conditions for acceptance of the employers' demands for mechanization.

'I feel we should agree to these demands only on the following conditions,' he said.

'First, no reduction in the manning scales.

'Second, introduction of a pensions and sick scheme.

'Third, a fall-back guarantee equal to the full basic wage.

'Fourth, three weeks' holiday, paid at the national average minimum.

'Fifth, the granting of the full 35s. wage claim.'

ALL MUST BE IN THE SCHEME

—Fred Francis

'I AM all in favour of such a conference,' was the response of Fred Francis, a cold store worker at Blackfriars and one of the leaders in the Tooley Street sector during the last dispute, when asked to comment on the national rank-and-file conference called by The Newsletter for November 16.

Bro. Francis, who is a member of Dulwich Labour Party, declared: 'The conference will be a success if you are able to instil into the delegates the necessary enthusiasm for them, on their return, to propagate its aims and ideas throughout their own industries.'

Discussing conditions on the docks, Bro. Francis explained how about 1,900 dockers in London are non-registered men.

CAN BE SACKED

'There are 500 of us in the cold stores in this position,' he said. 'We are employed by individual employers and can be sacked by them.'

'Unlike the registered men we have no right of appeal to the Dock Labour Board.'

'I consider it necessary that all dock workers should be members of the Scheme. That would help to unify the men. To date the Transport and General Workers' Union has failed to declare this its official policy.'

**DOCKERS SUPPORT
THE NEWSLETTER**

with their families, lightened their belts for six weeks so that the marketmen would have a fighting chance in the struggle against unscrupulous employers?

All this is well known among the big moneyed interests that administer the giant monopoly concerns controlling port installations and shipping.

EMPLOYERS HATE US

Big business on the docks hates the militant portworker, because he is a man of principle who cannot be bought over and utilized against his fellow-men.

Above all else the employers hate the solidarity of the portworker and his capacity for rank-and-file organization.

They long for the day when they can bring him to his knees and return to the pre-war days of dog eat dog struggle which characterized the labour market in Dockland in the years before the war.

We are now on the threshold of big struggles in Britain. A slump is on the way and the bosses see this as a good opportunity to get back to 'the old days'.

READY FOR BATTLE

The port employers and shipowners are getting ready for battle. In the Tory Government they have a most reliable class ally, who can be trusted to co-operate with them in every possible way.

First item on the port employers' agenda is to get rid of the Dock Labour Scheme.

While it is perfectly true that from the workpeople's point of view there are many loop-holes in this scheme, the employers feel nevertheless that it will be much less costly to push the portworkers directly on the dole than pay them for bumping.

'SACK THE MILITANTS'

Second item on their agenda is to get rid of all active trade unionists, or 'agitators', as they are called.

In their report to the Devlin committee of inquiry (1955) the employers stressed that all those 'who incite unconstitutional action' should be liable for dismissal.

Third item on their agenda is to create a state of affairs where three men will be chasing two men's jobs—that is why they look forward to unemployment.

Plans are in hand for a bitter struggle. The Christmas trade is now being unloaded in several ports.

TRAINING THE TROOPS

It is rumoured that Harringay stadium has been taken over as a scab distribution centre for goods from Southampton and Southend, and that certain army units are being trained to do the work of dockers.

In the face of these preparations the unions do absolutely nothing to prepare their members for action. The biggest culprit in this respect is the Transport and General Workers' Union.

For the leaders of this union the lessons

Stevadoros and Dockers proposed a resolution at the Trades Union Congress that it should use its offices to encourage a united campaign between the two unions to eliminate non-trade-unionism on the docks.

The Congress decided to accept 'previous question' (which was moved by a well-known member of the Communist Party) and this motion was shelved.

Since then nothing has been done, and the only people who stand to gain are the employers.

Instead of a united campaign to get rid of non-trade-unionism we have the spectacle of TGWU officials in Liverpool organizing strikes, not against the employers, but to get 'blue union' men sacked from the docks.

KEY TO VICTORY

It is to the great credit of the TGWU rank and file that they united with 'blue union' men against such actions.

United action on the docks is the key to victory. Above all else this means unity on the job between 'blue' and 'white' union members.

This can and must be established by the setting up of liaison committees in each port which will include representatives of both unions.

These committees should set up a national liaison committee to organize the struggle against the employers.

MOBILIZE WIDEST SUPPORT

This committee must straight away forge unity with transport workers and market men and get ready to mobilize the widest support when the employers attack.

The National Liaison Committee should launch a monthly paper to provide news and leadership for portworkers everywhere.

The Tory Government and the employers work as one. It is impossible therefore to attack the employers without attacking the Government.

Every serious struggle on the docks today is essentially a political struggle. Preparations to fight the employers are preparations to fight the Government.

CANNOT WIN ALONE

This battle cannot be won by the portworkers alone. It can be won if the portworkers mobilize all the forces which the working class are capable of providing for battle.

The employers are trying it on—they can and will be defeated. The conference called by The Newsletter on November 16 will be an important step forward in this direction.



Don't forget to elect your delegate to the national rank-and-file conference on November 16. Applications for credentials should be sent to: Conference, The Newsletter, 180 Clapham High Street, London, S.W.4.



In this broadsheet, written by portworkers for portworkers and their brothers in other industries, prominent militants and ordinary rank-and-file dockers in the various ports give their views on the dockers' struggle, and some of them also say what they think about the necessity for a rank-and-file conference.

RANK AND FILE MUST ACT!

Newsletter Industrial Correspondent

WHAT do the rank and file dockers think about their wage claim? What are their opinions on the findings of the Court of Inquiry?

In a post-war council flat in Barnardo Street, just off Cable Street, Stepney, lives Teddy Jacks, a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union, who is generally employed at the Canary Wharf in the West India Dock.

This burly 30-year-old docker has some very definite ideas on the wages issue.

'Disgusting' was the way he described the suggested 7s. 6d. He used other words, too, but they were unprintable.

'We should push for the full amount,' he said, 'and if the employers are not prepared to grant it, then we must take whatever action is necessary.'

'Mind you, if we do take action, we don't intend being treated like the union leadership treated the busmen.'

'All the resources of the union must be

used to force the employers to come across. If our leaders are not prepared to do that, then the rank and file must use their initiative to get wider support.

'Your industrial conference is a good thing. It is necessary to get together with workers from other industries, so we can discuss common action to defeat the employers.'

Every Thursday at the West India Dock you can see Jimmy O'Connor, going round the men collecting for the lads who are off sick or injured.

'IT IS LOUSY!'

Jimmy, too, is a member of the 'white' union and is the treasurer of the unofficial Docks Joint Liaison Committee. He has been a docker for twelve years.

'What do I think of the recommendation?' echoed Jimmy. 'It's lousy!'

'We should go in for the full whack. Another thing, all unions, including the "blues", should be involved in this fight. I want to see the "blue" and "white" stand together on this.'

Like Teddy Jacks he too welcomed the Newsletter industrial conference: 'All workers are going to need help from each other in the next twelve months or so. Let's start getting together now so we can discuss way and means of doing that.'

A member of No. 16 Branch of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers, Jim Humphreys, works in the Millwall Dock.

A militant, Jim has served on the docks' executive of the union and has also participated in various unofficial committees over the past years.

He too was irate over the 'miserable award of 7s. 6d.'

'Now the thing is to go back to the employers and demand the full claim. Failing that we should take action. I hope the ranks of all the unions can be united on the wages struggle.'

LINKING THE WORKERS

When I called on Danny Connolly, a member of the London and St. Katharine Docks' Liaison Committee, at his home, which is just up the road from the dock, he introduced me to Joe Kavanagh, a workmate of his, who has been on the dock for three years.

Joe was in favour of pressing forward for the full claim 'by whatever action is necessary'.

A sentiment shared by Danny. He was enthusiastic about the rank-and-file conference.

'The conference should be able to make links among various groups of workers so that in future struggles even greater support can be mobilized.'

7s. 6d. CUTS NO ICE ON MERSEYSIDE

CORRESPONDENTS of The Newsletter interviewed Merseyside portworkers before the delegate conference accepted the 7s. 6d. The workers interviewed said the 7s. 6d. had made no difference to their opinions, which appear below.

GET RID OF THE TORIES

By FRANK O'BRIEN, member of Merseyside area committee, NASD

The scramble for work is growing. The docker's position is fluctuating day by day. He needs a substantial increase to give him an average wage he can live on.

The feeling on the docks is that we have a good case and that a substantial increase must mean much more than 3 or 4 per cent.

And with more and more men signing on we must have an increase in attendance money.

The present Government is out to stop wages rising while the cost of living goes up. We need not only a wage increase but a change of government.

Fall-back must be increased

By JOHN CASSIDY, member of Merseyside area committee, NASD

Together with increasing wages there is an urgent need to increase fall-back pay and attendance money.

My own case is typical of that of many dockers here. I lately moved to a new housing estate on the outskirts of town.

Thirty shillings rent and £1 fares every week take almost a third of the [pre 7s. 6d.] basic wage.

The much lauded fall-back gives a sum of £5 14s. after deduction for a stamp. Rent and fares out of that leaves £3 4s. to live on.

His basic wage is less than Assistance

By PETER KERRIGAN

Today a docker with four children who goes home at the end of the week with his basic wage has less in his pocket than he would receive from National Assistance.

Yet National Assistance scales are based on what are considered to be the absolute minimum nutrition needs.

Since 1939 National Assistance scales have been increased by nearly 300 per cent. But the docker's basic wage has only increased by 120 per cent.

Facts produced at the recent Court of Inquiry showed that the cost of living has gone up 84.5 per cent. since 1945. If wages had increased proportionately the docker would now be getting 35s. per day—an increase of 5s. 6d. per day on present rates.

With overtime falling off a great number of dockers need much more than that to keep body and soul together.

Unity of the ports created now in the fight for a living wage will not only win this fight but will help to create a barrier against the attempts of the employers to use mechanization and redundancy to lower the dockers' standards.

Hull Dockers Feel 'Let Down'

By LEN LUDDERS, secretary, and GEORGE TEAL, chairman, of Hull no. 2 branch, NASD, and of Alexandra Ward Labour Party

LORD CAMERON and his court of inquiry have given us a good answer to the employers' case on the question of wages.

Dockers in Hull feel that we should use the information in the report and the suggested figure of 7s. 6d. only as a basis for negotiations. But we feel that we have been let down by the workpeople's side on a number of points. Instead of using the Cameron report as a starting point they have used it as the limit.

We feel that the following points should serve as a basis for further negotiations.

First there should be an increase in the basic rate of pay to 35s.

Second, abolition of the fall-back rate and its replacement by the application of the basic rate of pay which is already guaranteed by employers to their weekly workers.

Third the introduction of the suggested schemes for sick pay and pensions which have been delayed by the workpeople's side for so long.

PROFITS GALORE

We know from reading the published reports that the docks industry has been making more and more profits. If the rank and file had only had a reasonable share of these then the amount due to them would have been far more than the figure offered.

But we do not base our case on profits alone. We wish to maintain and increase our standard of living even if the ship-owners' profits should tend to fall.

Since the war our industry has fewer men in it and the total amount of goods passing through our hands has increased.

This means that we are more productive, and therefore we should take our share of the greater wealth in the industry due to its greater efficiency.

This increase in productivity in the docks

industry has not led to a decrease in the cost of living. It has merely gone to increase the profits of the employer.

The dockworker finds under these conditions that his standard of living has been reduced in spite of his increased efforts in the industry.

This increased productivity leads us to our second point, that of the abolition of the fall-back rate.

FALL-BACK PRIORITY

By the mere fact of speeding up the turn-round of ships we increase the possibility of having to survive on the existing fall-back rate.

Therefore we think that it should have been a priority in the discussions and that it should have taken precedence over the basic rates which are received only when we are allowed to work.

Our third and last point is that of pensions and sick pay.

These in our opinion have been used solely as a bribe to accept an inadequate pay increase.

Ever since 1945 we have had similar promises of pensions schemes. But we think they should be prior considerations as they would give to the docks industry some of the stability and security that other workers have long enjoyed.

VAGUE TALK

The pensions scheme, we maintain, could be worked through the auspices of the National Dock Labour Board with very little cost to that organization.

To sum up, we think that the dockers' leaders when discussing our case should have forged ahead for a substantial increase in wages now, say 30s. a week; the fall-back rate of pay should be replaced by the daily basic minimum; and a pensions scheme should be introduced immediately.

Weakly to accept the suggested 7s. 6d. and then hedge off with vague talk about pensions and so forth is not the language we are used to in Dockland.

By **DUNN DOCKERS** **WILL HOOLEY**

I think that the Labour Party should take our side. It is obvious that the Tory Government is out to smash working-class living standards.

If Labour wants to win the next election it will have to come out clearly on our side and be in the forefront in our time of need.

We must fight or go hungry

By NASD branch secretary **NED HEENEY** (Liverpool)

Unless we fight we will go hungry.

Out of seven ships in our area last week, five were finishing at five o'clock every day and men were going home with £7 14s. in wages after deductions.

Dockers' Fingertip Facts

Tonnage handled since 1945 has gone up by 4½ per cent. Yet there are now 6,500 fewer men in the Scheme. Wages have risen by 55 per cent. since the end of the war—but the cost of living has risen by 84 per cent.

Total dock labour force is 75,000. In the first quarter of 1958, 10,000 of these were 'bumping' every day—i.e., were unemployed.

After the recent strike work became more plentiful. In early August there were 4,500 'bumping' every day. Now the initial rush has been cleared that figure is going up again.

Why we need a new leadership

Dockers were present, along with bricklayers, electricians, dredgers and miners, at a meeting in Liverpool last Sunday to discuss the rank-and-file conference called by The Newsletter for November 16.

'If the trade union leaders were doing the job they should be doing—organizing the working class around a militant strategy to meet the employers' offensive—then this conference would not be necessary,' said plumber John Connor.

One of the dredgers declared: 'We found the urgent need for a link-up between militant movements in industry during our strike last year. The Newsletter can play a part in building such links.'

A Newsletter Investigation

ATTITUDE of Tory MPs and Tory denizens of the House of Lords is not exactly a disinterested one when they discuss the dockers' wage claim.

Men like **Col. Sir Leonard Ropner**, MP for the Yorkshire constituency of Barkston Ash, with a directorship in Sir R. Ropner Ltd, have a personal interest in keeping dockers' wages at their present level.

The Ropner firm are the managing owners of the Ropner Shipping Co. and the Pool Shipping Co., which between them sail some 104,357 tons of shipping. The Colonel is also a director of the British Shipowners' Association.

Baron Rotherwick, till his death last July, was chairman of the mighty British Commonwealth Shipping combine, and was

Backs

the King Line.

Even though the Vestey family is not at this stage represented in the House of Lords—the present Lord is a minor—through uncle Arthur the family has fingers in the following pies: shipping, wholesale and retail meat trade and ice cream.

Ronald Arthur Vestey is a member, and quite a powerful one, of the board of directors of Union International.

This firm owns and controls the Blue Star Line, with its 32 refrigerated vessels (aggregate tonnage 306,401).

Through its ownership of Blackfriars Lighterage and Cartage, Western Cartage, Union Cold Stores, Weddells wholesale butchers, J. H. Dewhurst, retail butchers—to mention just a few of the firm's interests—it can carry the beef in its own ocean-going liners, transport it up the river in its own craft, store it in its own cold stores, deliver it in its own motor vans, wholesale it in its own shops, and then retail it in its own shops.

Through its ownership of Eldorado Ice Cream, it can even supply you with a sweet to follow the lamb chops.

NODDING ACQUAINTANCE

Mr Vestey also serves on the boards of the Lamport Holt Line and the Booth Steamship Co., direct controllers of the South End Stevedoring and Portage Co.

He is on at least nodding acquaintance with a number of Tory MPs. His daughter Florence married the youngest son of Lt-Col. Geoffrey Benedict Brown, former Tory MP.

One of the big concerns of British Shipping is the giant Peninsular and Oriental Line. This company, with a capital of £40 million, owns some 484,217 tons of shipping.

Ruler of the P. and O. empire is **Sir William Crawford Currie**, a director of 27 companies all told, among which are the Suez Canal Co. and the Suez Lighterage Co.

We can safely assume that Sir William is as enthusiastic about Nasser as he is about dockers' pay claims.

CAUSE FOR REJOICING

Even if Nasser did nationalize the Canal, all is not bleak for Sir Bill or his fellow directors. The tax concessions granted by the Tory Chancellor in 1957 will, it is estimated, save the P. and O. Line the sum of £10 million in the next few years.

Sir William has further cause for rejoicing. Last year, he was able to announce a gross profit increase of £1,700,000. After taxation, P. and O. netted a cool £6,200,000 profit, paying a dividend of 8 per cent.

Sitting on the Board of P. and O. is quite a galaxy of Upper Chamber boys. Men like **Viscount Bledisloe**, a Tory Peer who besides finding time for his duties in the Lords manages to be the director of twenty other companies.

Lord Leathers, another Tory peer, was in 1951 Secretary of State for the co-ordination of transport, fuel and power.

Two other Tory Lords on the Board are **Lord Geddes** and **Earl Inchcape**. A member of the present cabinet, **John MacLay**, was formerly a director of P. and O.

STILL BETTER 'EARNINGS'

On the boards of both P. and O. and the Moore Line is **Viscount Runciman**, a National Liberal, which is a fancy name for a Tory. He was able to declare to his shareholders in the Moore Line: 'The earnings of your fleet for 1957 proved, as we hoped, even better than those for 1956.'

The firm of Stephenson and Clarke has as a director **Col. Ralph Stephenson**, who sat as Tory MP for East Grinstead up to 1955. It is this company which manages the shipping interests of the North Thames Gas Board and the British Electricity Board.

Although the shipowners and their Tory friends are anxious to assure us that things are bad in the shipping world and they cannot afford a wage increase, this hardly squares with the latest company reports.

For example, the chairman of Butlers' Wharf, **Lt-Col. F. W. S. Roberts**, was able to announce to their annual meeting on July 24 an increase in dividend from 7½ to 10 per cent.

He added: 'The year's working has resulted in a much improved profit, in fact a record one.'

HE LEFT £160,000

Reardon Smith Line has made a profit of £1,133,686 for the year ending March 31, 1958. London and Edinburgh Shipping paid a dividend of 20 per cent. William Corey and Son, coal, oil and ship owners say their profits have advanced from £995,978 to £1,005,313 and they are paying a dividend of 12½ per cent.

When retired shipowner **Mr William Frederick H. Weaver** died the Financial Times of August 5 reported that he had left £167,281, after paying £93,062 duty.

When did a docker ever leave such an amount?