

Mersey docks forced to talk with sacked workers' representatives

SOMETHING NEW

WORLDWIDE boycott actions against shipping lines using the port of Liverpool forced the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) to talks with representatives of the 500 sacked dockers last week.

And amazed Merseysiders opened their newspapers to find 'Tarzan' Heseltine visiting Heswell, saying that Liverpool's reputation 'could be undone unless picketing workers go back to their jobs!'

Well, what can we expect — he only represents a government that has the largest shareholding in the company that locked out the dockers.

During the last days of the International Conference of Dockworkers held in Liverpool from 17 to 23 February, the MDHC paid at least £10,000 a throw for a number of full-page advertisements in the Liverpool papers pouring scorn on the Mersey Port Shop Stewards' Committee.

Less than a week later they were appealing to this same committee to call off the international actions of dockers (turning their fire on the shipping companies which use the port) and they would agree to talk.

The shop stewards refused. But the now shaken and frightened MDHC agreed to get round the table with union representatives, including sacked dockers who are elected members of union committees.

Meanwhile:
■ Liverpool dockers and Women of the Waterfront are in Sweden, Germany and Portugal as well as all parts of Britain.

■ US East Coast longshoremen, confirmed their decision to respect Liverpool pickets and take boycott actions against giant shipping line Atlantic Containers Limited (ACL) if it continues to send its vessels to Liverpool.

■ In the week after the international conference dockers in the port of Le Havre, France, had a 24-hour strike. 'After such a conference we are inspired to say "enough is enough" to our own employers,' they told the Liverpool stewards.

Reported

■ Two days after they returned home the Danish delegation reported that their ports would be carrying out boycott actions.

■ Dockers in Sweden, Australia and Canada have a boycott of all shipping lines using the port of Liverpool.

■ Delegations from all other ports represented at the conference in Spain, Greece, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Ireland and New Zealand are all carrying out appropriate actions.

■ Nigerian dockers sent a message of solidarity. They

BY DOT GIBSON
live under the constant threat of imprisonment.

■ An ABC container vessel was 'arrested' in the port of Melbourne, Australia for non-payment of bills. The company owes \$1.8 million in Australia and \$14 million internationally.

ABC ships have been on the receiving end of boycott actions by members of the Maritime Union of Australia in solidarity with the sacked Liverpool dockers.

Actions

Following the international conference such actions are bound to increase. Dockers are determined to act together against privatisation, casualisation and anti-trade-union laws. And not just within their own industry.

They have decided to apply a 'hot cargo' edict on all Irving Oil Limited products upon request from the Canadian Labour Congress. This is in support of 150 oil-refinery workers locked out for 22 months.

They also sent solidarity greetings to imprisoned Mexican bus workers, fighting against privatisation, imprisoned Argentinian trade unionists and sacked garbage workers in Copenhagen.

Delegates from Drogheda, Ireland left the conference early to take part in a strike ballot over the sacking of 24 dockers. They took with them a letter assuring them and their families of total international support.

The New Zealand Waterfront Workers' Union asked for and got a decision to, if necessary, 'take whatever realistic action that they [the international dockworkers] can to disrupt fruit cargoes from New Zealand loaded by non-union labour'.

There is definitely something new in the air.

STOP PRESS

Negotiations are still in progress. Shop stewards said that no announcement would be made until they had reported back to a dockers' mass meeting.

IN THE AIR



Liverpool dockers' banner on Hillingdon cleaners' march, also sacked for demanding decent conditions

Dockers' picket injured

JOE SPRAY, Torside docker, spent a night in hospital after the scabs' bus from Medway swerved onto the pavement.

The incident happened on the Liverpool dockers' picket line on Tuesday 5 March but no arrests were made.

There is currently an investigation into the incident.

Workers Press

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Tel: 0171-387 0564 Fax: 0171-387 0569

To all socialist and working-class organisations and individuals and all fighting the Asylum and Immigration Bill

CRISIS IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT — THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIALIST PARTY

CONFERENCE:

Saturday 16 March, 11am-5pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

(Holborn tube) Entrance: £1 (50p concession)

We warmly invite all readers to the 'Crisis in the Labour movement conference next week. Together we will be able to discuss the burning issues facing the whole working class and the entire labour movement.

A new party can't be imposed by one or more political group or groups. The working class has to construct it itself.

Already our invitation has been accepted by those involved in the Socialist Alliances and by individual

members of the Socialist Labour Party.

Students, community groups and unemployed centres will also be represented. Trade unionists who have led or are leading important struggles will be there to relate their experience and knowledge, including the Liverpool dockers' shop stewards and Women of the Waterfront.

Comrades from France, Spain and Hungary will be coming, along with those from the universities who ally themselves with the

workers' struggle and defend socialist policies and a socialist programme.

Workers Press's editorial board will participate in and record the event. We see this as a continuation of the discussion at our tenth anniversary meeting a few weeks ago on the need for an independent voice and organisation for workers.

The conference will be fully reported in our 30 March issue. Order your copy now or, better, take up a subscription (see back page).

