

# **THE HOOK NATIONAL UNITY NEEDED TO BEAT THE POOL**

The one day national strike of Jan. 26th was a magnificent demonstration of unity in the face of the employers attack on registered dockworkers. Every port that was represented at the National Shop Stewards Committee came out, together with many smaller ports that were not represented.

The one day strike and the formation of the NSSC are the first steps towards rewinning the national unity that was once ours. Clearly the defence of the Dock Labour Scheme is an issue for every docker in the country. Port employers everywhere are talking about their 'surplus labour' problems and it as plain as day that if the employers succeed in putting large numbers of men on the Unattached Register in London and Hull, then no one will be safe.

Unity of ports and unity of unions is essential if we are to defend ourselves. The formation of the NSSC shows that the stewards realise this. The one day strike shows that the mass of dockworkers realise this. But it would be silly to pretend that everything is rosy. The NSSC met on Saturday 29th Jan. in Liverpool and if we are honest not much in the way of nationally united action came out of it.

In London the Dock Labour Board has approved the return of 123 men to the pool. At the time we go to print, it is not known when the appeal against this decision will

be heard, but a mass meeting of London dockers has decided to come out on the day of the appeal. Why did the NSSC make no plans for solidarity action with the London men? Apparently the L/pool stewards were saying that no action should be taken nationally until at least six weeks after the London men had been returned to the pool.

Apart from this, other bad omens are in the air. Southampton was not represented. It is rumoured that they will be dropping out of the NSSC. If this is true then it will be a blow to all dockworkers - not least those in Southampton. The Southampton stewards should make their position clear.

Also the old problem of the Blue union came up. The Blue union in Liverpool and Manchester are not allowed representation on the NSSC, because they are not officially recognised. At the insistence of a Manchester steward, this was put on the agenda for the next meeting of the NSSC on 19th. February in Manchester. The question of whether or not the Blue union is represented should not depend on whether or not the employers recognise it, but on whether the men recognise it and quite clearly in Manchester and Liverpool, a minority of dockers have chosen to join the Blue. They have every right to be represented on the NSSC.

The last NSSC meeting marked time. The next one must move forward. At a mass meeting of the London Royal group, Bernie Steers said that if one man was returned to the pool, then the London stewards would appeal to the NSSC for a national strike in solidarity. It is up to the NSSC and the nation's dockers to back up London's fight.

# Where We Stand

'THE HOOK' is produced by socialist dockworkers. We have a political outlook which says that the whole of society has to be reorganised on democratic socialist lines. That means that the factories, land and docks are taken out of the hands of the few people who own them and put into the hands of the vast majority who work in them. It means that those who produce the wealth of this country should own and control it.

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

The National Dock Labour Board falls far short of what we call "workers' control". Most dockers don't have any say in what their representatives on the NDLB do. However the NDLS is unique in British industry. It gives a first line of defence against redundancies. It must be defended against the employers who would dearly love to get rid of it. This means that all work on containers must come under the NDLB or before long there'll be no registered dockers left.

We stand for 100% unionism on the docks. Everyone should have the right to join a union of his choice but no one should be allowed to remain without a card, reaping the benefits while not contributing anything. We say that the Blue union should be recognised in all negotiations. The fact that in some ports the Blue union is not recognised only weakens and divides us.

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

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

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

Our columns are open to any docker, whether he agrees with us or disagrees.

Letters to: 26 Langton St.,  
Salford 6.

HAVEN'T I HEARD THAT SOMEWHERE  
BEFORE ?

At the annual general meeting of the Bristol Steamship Owners' Association Mr. Harry Freeth, the president said: "If the port were to remain competitive the problems surrounding manpower would have to be solved. All people obtaining their living from handling ships are likely to feel the pressure. New methods of handling cargo and the use of computers and other office machinery would bring pressure on manual trades." (Bristol Evening Post.)

## MANCHESTER NEWS

4½ old pence an hour was the rate for weighing bales of cotton on Manchester Docks and so had<sup>it</sup> been for years past. It's not one of the favourite jobs - lifting 50 lb. weights doesn't improve your posture any.

The Blue union wanted extra pay for men on the job and sent a representative to put the claim to the management. It was rejected out of hand. The Blue then called a mass meeting on the croft which decided to send another delegation, demanding half a crown an hour extra or a ban would be put on weighing cotton.

The delegation comprised of Blue and White members. To everyone's surprise they came back with an extra man or five bob an hour if there were no spare men available.

A small victory in one way, but nevertheless an important one. For long enough the employers have been reducing the manning scales throughout the country, which has now resulted with men being threatened by the prospect of being returned to the Unattached Register. Small actions of this type can help to turn the tide.

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Manchester Ship Canal Company, who own the port of Runcorn want to increase their register. They met the shop stewards to discuss this and told them that they wanted to recruit local labour. The Runcorn stewards, however, wouldn't accept this and demanded that as long as there were men stamping at Manchester they should have the opportunity to transfer to Runcorn.

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Manchester dockworkers were led to believe from a letter from the management after the series of one day strikes that there would be a new offer, on Phase II, forthcoming in March. The employers have now said that this deadline is not



sure to be met and if a recent visit of the shop stewards to the management is anything to go by, it's going to be such an inspiring event anyway. The Stewards were presented with a mass details about plans to cut the manning rates, but when they asked about money they were told that this could wait.

The stewards should hold a mass meeting, preferably in the British Legion Hall, to discuss the 'progress' with the Phase II negotiations and also to report back from the National Shop Stewards meeting.

## LIVERPOOL

Liverpool dockers, as you might expect, were 100% behind the national stoppage on January 26th. Many turned out to support a march organised by the Merseyside Trades Council in solidarity with the miners and workers occupying their factory at Fisher-Bendix. The march was specially called on the Wednesday, so as to coincide with the dock strike. It attracted 4000 workers from all industries.

(Below: the Merseyside Trades Council Banner leading the L/Pool march)



# PRESTON

Preston dockers have just learnt that their claim to the Industrial Tribunal that container work should be done by registered dockers has been rejected. This is a slap in the face for the Preston dockers and also for the 9-point programme of the National Shop Stewards Committee.

Preston has been one of the ports hardest hit by containerisation. In 1960 there were 500 dockers in Preston shifting 1½ million tons of cargo. Now there are 270 registered dockers shifting about 3 million tons. Alongside the growth of the containers has come the growth of the non-registered docker. There are now 1000 in Preston.

The decision of the Industrial Tribunal goes quite clearly against both the Bristow principle and a similar ruling in Manchester. The Bristow Committee stated that all container work within a ten mile corridor of the Thames was dockers' work. In Manchester a tribunal ruled that the Barton Road container stuffing base did not have to be manned by registered labour, because it was not on the dock site.

But in Preston the container base is right on the docks, which only goes to show what most dockers know already - that these 'impartial' courts are as weighted as hell against the dockworker.

Preston dockers have made approaches to the container men (who are T&G members) to get them to fight for the principle of registration, but with no avail. They say they are afraid of losing their jobs. But with the lower manning scales, that they are now working, and no control over hiring and firing, it will certainly be the container men who lose in the long run.

As for us, we can put no faith in the courts. The Tribunal's decision goes right against the National Shop Stewards Committee's 9 points, one of which is rigid enforcement of the Bristow principle. The fight against the spread of non-registered dock work is a national fight. Every docker must unite behind the NSSC to wage one struggle against this threat.

## BRISTOL

On January 18th a mass meeting of 700 Bristol dockers decided, with only 12 votes against, to black all coal in the City, Avonmouth and Portishead Docks. This move will stop coal from reaching the Portishead power station. Unfortunately the move came too late - a coal ship had finished unloading the day before.

# TO HULL AND BACK

The situation in Hull is reaching crisis point. At the moment there are something like 61 men on the Unattached Register, and this will be swelled to 320 on February 14th when Cargo Handling Ltd. will be closing down. The employers are currently claiming that 1,100 of the port's 2,600 dockers are "surplus to requirements".

In response to this situation, shop stewards in Hull are planning to take out a licence to become port employers. Walt Cunningham has said "In this way we hope to make a success of the port where the employers have failed." The stewards have elected a small sub-committee to run the firm and have appealed to the labour movement for £4,000 to float the scheme. Once the Transport Docks Board have ruled on the application for the licence, the scheme will be put to a mass meeting.

While anyone can understand the stewards' intentions, this is no way to solve the threat facing dockers in Hull. It is the counsel of despair - an act of desperation. For one, the £4,000, even if it were devoted entirely to wages, would at the basic rate last the 320 unattached men 3 days! That doesn't give the firm a very secure looking future! But, more likely the stewards plan to begin in a small way and build up. Even so, it is a scatter-brain scheme and one that totally misses the point about the present attack on the dock labour force.

The fundamental problem is not that the

## RUNCORN

January 26th will be remembered by the docks employers. In spite of a bad press the one day token strike was nearly 100%. The employers will have to think again of they are to throw thousands of dockers on the scrap heap.

Runcorn isn't a traditionally militant port. Far from it. Recently a local TV programme carried a feature on Runcorn as shining example of "good industrial relations". But last month the Runcorn dockers came out on the one day strike. It was grand to see the solidarity of dockers from Runcorn - standing shoulder to shoulder with their comrades from all over the country. Strike action is the only effective method we have of ramming home our message to the employers.

If they are successful in getting the National Dock Labour Scheme abolished, the

employers are inefficient. They're certainly that; under piece-work the docks were run by the dockers and even now the employers couldn't organise a farting contest in a pickle factory. But the fundamental fact is that the run down of Hull, as is the case with other ports, has been deliberately planned. Shipping is being diverted from Hull to Felixstowe and to inland container ports, because there fewer men are prepared to work longer hours for less pay.

It is the same problem that confronts every port in the country to differing degrees. It is a problem that can only be solved nationally. Even if the employers allow the stewards' firm to get off the ground, it will still be at the mercy of the big shipping companies. And, even if the firm is successful, it can only be so by taking work from other Stevedoring companies in Hull, who will then no doubt use this as an excuse to return men back to the pool.

The only solution to this would be if Hull, perhaps through the stewards firm, can become more competitive and attract trade back to Hull from other ports. Which will be used by the employers of the other ports to put men on the Unattached.

Yet at the same time - dockers in Hull have agreed to go on a one day strike a week in support of the National Shop Stewards' 9-point programme. That is the real way forward - united with all other dockers in the country in a common fight against the employers and their plans to get rid of the registered dockworker.

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whip would once more be in the hands of the employers. They would have the right to hire and fire as they wished. Casual labour could be reintroduced and with over a million unemployed, you know what that would mean. At the slightest whim of the employer you could be fired for answering back, for coming in late or even because he doesn't like your face.

Most dockers at Runcorn think that they earn decent wages. All of them know that they have to shift a hell of a lot of cargo to earn them. They also know that we have had to fight to get decent tonnage rates. It's been a long uphill fight with the employers to get a living wage and decent conditions. Are we going to throw all this away? Like hell we are!

The employers learnt that on Jan 26th. But if the fight is to continue Runcorn must be represented on the National Shop Stewards Committee. We must not be left in the dark - We want to be in the know. All dockers must stick together in this fight. Only then will we beat back the employers' offensive.



# SOLIDARITY WITH THE MINERS

OVER A QUARTER OF A MILLION MINERS are out on the first official strike since 1926. In 1926 the whole labour movement came out, in a general strike in solidarity with the miners. The issue then was could the employers force a wage cut on the miners? That is the issue now. With the cost of living rising the way it is, the Coal Board's offer of £2 amounts to a cut in wages. The £2 works out at an increase of 7% - the maximum that the Tory government is allowing any worker to get.

According to the official government figures, prices rose by 10.4% last year. If you take increased tax payments into account, the miners are facing a cut in wages of over £2.

But there is more to it than that. Prices rise at the same rate for every worker in the country, whether he be miner, docker or candlestickmaker. The Tory maximum of 7% applies to every worker in the country. It is therefore in the interests of every worker in the country that the miners win. It is essential for the whole working class that the Tory policy of slashing the standard of living of the mass of people in this country is defeated.

The government and the employers see the miners' strike as a test case - so must it be for us.

The miners will not win if they are isolated. At the beginning of last year the Tories defeated the postmen. Not because the postmen didn't fight hard - they stayed out for ten weeks without strike pay. They were defeated because there was no solidarity action from other unions, who only made token donations to the strike fund.

The miners are in the same position. They are receiving no strike pay. If they are to win then all trade unionists must organise in their support. If not then it will not just be the miners who are defeated.

On the docks this means that all coal and fuel oil for power stations must be blacked. The TUC has said only black out-of-the-ordinary movements of coal. This is a cowardly retreat. If any coal movements at all are allowed the strike will not begin to bite for another month.

Coal may not be a normal cargo at your port BUT WATCH OUT FOR IT. Dockers in Wales, Tilbury and Bristol have already blacked supplies, and there is every possibility that imported coal will be diverted to other ports.



Also we must demand that the TGWU puts a total ban on coal movements - not just on the docks but everywhere. It is mainly TGWU lorry drivers who shift the coal. Many power workers belong to the TGWU. The TGWU is the most important union as far as blacking is concerned. It is up to Jack Jones to give a lead and make sure that no TGWU member handles coal until the miners have won.

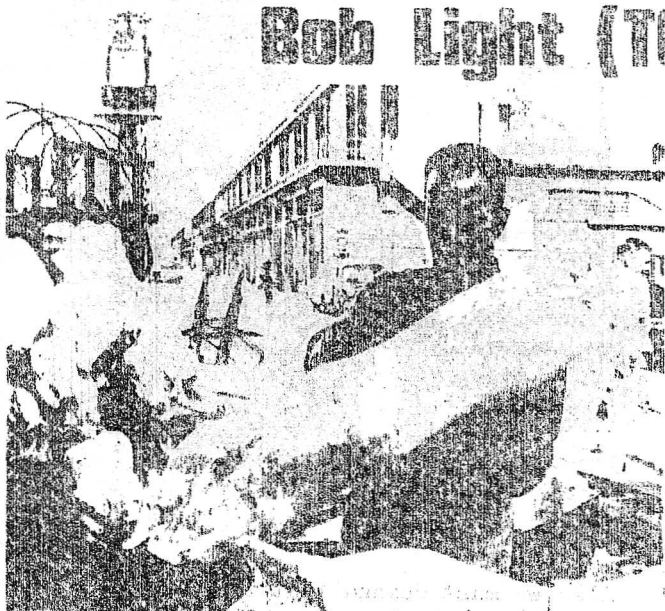
But more than blacking will be needed if the Tories are to be defeated. It is vital that the Tories are not allowed to take on the working class one industry at a time.

Other industries who have wage claims in the pipeline must bring forward action they are planning in order to create a united front, with the miners, against the Tories. This applies particularly to the power workers who were due to start their ban on overtime from 1st February, but have since postponed it.

But it also applies to dockworkers. Dockworkers and miners are in the same boat in one very important matter - in the mines the NCB's drive for more productivity has meant that the labour force has been cut by more than half in ten years. It is exactly the same story we know so well in the ports. The National Shop Stewards Committee must speed up action against the port employers' plans to put up to two thousand men on the unattached register in London. They should lead the nations dockworkers into an uncompromising struggle against the unattached register threat and join with the struggle of the miners.

# LETTER FROM LONDON

Bob Light (TGWU London Royal)



AFTER A YEAR OF COLD PEACE IN London's docks, the port is now gripped by a cold war. Last week, the London Dock Labour Board gave two firms the official go ahead to return 123 men to the Unattached Register. Southern Stevedores applied to return 241 men, but compromised on 50. Wallis-Smith Coggins demanded 73 sackings and got them all - but then, Tommy Wallis is a member of the Dock Labour Board. In the past only firms that closed altogether returned men to the Unattached. But these are firms which intend to stay open and who just want to lighten their licensing figure.

But this is just the opening bid. Last week the press reported that the Port of London Authority (PLA) intend to sack 2000 - half of them white collar workers. Letters have been circulating for weeks from other London employers making crystal clear their aim to drive 2000 more men out of the industry BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

On the top of the employers black list are the men on the B-register - the light labour men. These are the men who, in the main, have been injured working on the docks. They are men disabled, making a fortune for the employers. Having maimed them, the employers want to dispose them. In an industry as accident prone as the docks every dockworker is a potential 'B' man. Any docker could be an 'A' man in the morning and a 'B' man by evening. So this is an attack on every London docker.

As in any war, propaganda plays a crucial part. To justify these and future sacking, the employers have dreamt up a fairy tale called "The Crisis in the Port". They claim that the docks are unprofitable

and that outrageous demands by London dockers are driving cargo to other ports and inland depots. For this reason everybody, both employers and dockers, have got to "tighten their belts". This explanation suffers from one major drawback - it is a complete lie.

Last September, with tears in his eyes and a big lump in his throat, Mr. Oscar Hovey stood up at the West India Dock and told his men that their firm, Hovey-Antwerp, was being forced onto liquidation because they were near bankrupt. At the end of the meeting he broke down, so emotionally moved was he by the trick fate played on his loyal servants. But in the emotion of the moment, Oscar forgot to tell his men, that he and his brother John weren't entirely bankrupt; that in fact they had just bought out the Solway Container Terminal in Southampton, where they intend to work seven ships a week.

Southern Stevedores, in a letter to all their employees justified their application to return men to the Unattached on grounds that the Union Castle Line has been driven to use the port of Southampton. The truth is a little different. Southern Stevedores is owned by Furness Withy. Furness Withy own the Union Castle Line. And the Southampton Stevedoring Company is owned by (guess who?) - Furness Withy? In other words, trade hasn't been DRIVEN to Southampton. It's been TRANSFERED from one part of the Furness empire to another. What is just an exercise in book-keeping for the Furness accountants is used to 'justify' depriving men of their livelihoods.

All the London employers are just the same. All of them have extensive investments in all ports in the country, as well as in non-registered ports and inland container bases. Tommy Wallis, for example, has £250,000 invested in Felixstowe and £500,000 in the Stratford Container base.

As for profits? Take the case of Butler's Wharf, which is to close next week, putting 200 men in the pool. Butler's is 'unprofitable'. But Butler's is owned by the Hay's Wharf Consortium. This is a club of big business heavies led by Sir Max Rayne and his fun loving but ageing, ex-debutante wife, Lady Jane Rayne. Last year Hat's Wharf made a coll £2 million profit. To this add Sir Max's personal fortune of £10 million. Next year, the annual report says, the profit should be at least £4 million. Hay's Wharf is also behind the £330 million scheme to litter London's



waterfront with luxury hotels and office blocks, where there used to be registered wharfs. And when you hear this propaganda about 'unprofitability', just bear this in mind - last year Slater-Walker (the same Walker as in the Tory cabinet) bought Hay's Wharf. After six weeks, they sold it, making a profit of £1,500,000 in the process. £250,000 a week profit. Why should dockers and their jobs be sacrificed to these people and their lousy profit system?

The truth is that the employers are trying to do what the National Coal Board have done in the mines. That is using mechanisation to club the labour force. In 1952, 2.4% of the mines were mechanised. In 1967 the figure was 94.2%. The effects on the miners have been terrible. In 1954 there were 700,000 miners. Today there are just 280,000 left. Miners were then the highest paid workers in the country, whereas today they have to strike to win a decent wage. At the same time productivity in the mines has shot up. This is the dream of the docks employers.

No one can deny that there have been fantastic advances in technology over the last ten years. Palletization, containerisation, LASH ro-ro side-loaders could all be used to cut hours, reduce the hard man handling, to improve benefits and to guarantee dockers security in jobs and wages. But the employers are trying to make the dockworkers the VICTIMS of technology.

For this reason, this is a problem that goes way beyond London. The 123 sackings is the thin end of a long, long wedge. Ports throughout the country have been declaring the extent of their 'surplus labour'. Nationally they put the surplus at 6690, but the National Ports Council is talking of a cut in the labour force of 10,000 by 1973. George Cattell (pig-farmer and Chairman of the Ports Modernisation Council) thinks that even 10,000 is an underestimation. It is a problem that either does or will face every docker in every port in the country. And if the employers are to get away with returning men to the pool in London, how much longer will the Dock Labour Scheme survive?

You don't need a crystal ball to know that the employers have been itching to scrap the scheme since 1947. And in this, as in all things, the Tory government and the employers are two cheeks of the same bum. Already the scheme is under attack. Not, as yet a full frontal attack, but little skirmishes. For instance, the London Riverside Wharves have applied to be excluded from the scheme. The new Southampton Container Port has already been ruled to be outside the scheme, because it is 1¼ miles from the main docks. To accept the principle of a permanent Unattached Register is to sign the death warrant of the scheme.

With 57¼ men on the unattached in London, the NDLB levy is at 17%. If these sackings are allowed there will be a total of 800 men living in the no-man's land between redundancy and employment. And remember that once the levy rises above 25%, the Minister of Labour, Robert Carr, is legally bound to set up an inquiry into the scheme. There will be a stooge inquiry (they might even try and resurrect Lord Devlin from the House of Lords bar) and the scheme will be effectively legislated out of existence.

And if registered dockers in this country are in danger of being crucified, then productivity dealing is the cross we're being nailed to. The timing of this onslaught is no accident - it comes exactly one year after the major ports signed Phase II. It is phase II which gave the employers the chance to manipulate the daily figures to build up 'evidence' of the 'surplus of labour'. Many is the time when ships have been working two hatches or less, even while full of cargo, while hundreds of men are stamping.

Under piece-work, we looked after our own. Now the older men and the disabled men have been thrown back on the good faith of the employers and NO employer has any good faith. Just as bad, Phase II has split up and isolated each separate port, making it only too easy for the employers to set dockers in one port at the throat of dockers in the next. While dockers compete with each other, the employers are running down the industry.

Up till now the main London union, the T&G has done nothing to combat this threat. Anyone who attended the meeting at Transport House on the day of the one day national strike must have serious doubts as to whether the T&G will do anything. Jack Jones and silver-tongued Tim O'Leary listened to the danger of the threat being outlined and ideas on how it could be overcome. And what did our two brothers themselves come up with? Nothing. Leary said openly that there was very little because the Board was the arbiter in these questions. In other words redundancies in our industry are OK - as long as they have been signed sealed and delivered by the Dock Labour Board.

What O'Leary didn't mention was that the decision of the Board with regard to the 123 men was UNANIMOUS. In other words the union representatives voted with the employers to deprive our brothers of their jobs! It cuts no odds whether or not a redundancy is signed by the Dock Labour Board or the Ladies of the Bedchamber - that man is still being driven out of the industry; that man is still redundant.

The employers have thrown down the gauntlet, and at this stage only the national shop stewards committee is capable

of meeting the challenge. The 9-point programme (for all its shortcomings) and the one day national strike shows the way forward. The employers in London are absolutely determined. Joe Payne, chairman of the London Enclosed Dock Employers is already talking openly about "the showdown that cannot be avoided" and a "bloodbath". This time the employers are going for the big one. They are serving for game, set and match. In London we haven't got the time any more to take our time. The 123 condemned men will appeal next week (and the London Docks will stop on that day), but we can expect nothing from the "independent" appeal. Without exception these have always come out in favour of the employers - it's a bit like rowing with the wife and asking the mother in law to be referee. The results aren't too hopeful. No. The employers must be answered in the only language they understand. The cold war is on the edge of boiling over....

Dockers in London are four square determined. We will make a fight of it come what may. But this is just the tip of a national iceberg. This is an issue which affects every dockworker in the country - and that no one can afford to lose. The success at Plessey and Fisher-Bendix is proof of what can be achieved if we make it a national fight. And this much is certain; if dockworkers close ranks nationally and unite behind the national shop stewards programme, then it will not be the dockworkers but the employers and their government that will face a future of redundancy.

## FRED'S FANCIES

Saturday RABBLE ROUSER - Newbury 2.10

Friday SALVIAGI - Newbury 2.30

We have been informed by a highly unreliable source that Mr. John Hovey, owner of Hovey-Antwerp has offered the Southampton shop stewards a free trip to Hamburg to witness the launching of the new Ben Container Ship, which will soon be frequenting the Solvent Container Terminal in Southampton. We are quite sure that this story is not true. Anyway, even if it were true, we are sure that the Southampton shop stewards will demand to know why, if Mr. Hovey has money for joy rides to Hamburg, his firm was recently pleading poverty to its employees in London.

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The last issue of the Sunday Mirror carries a headline "JOBLESS ARE BLESSING IN DISGUISE, SAYS CARR". This sort of communist-inspired propaganda should be banned from the press. Everyone knows that Mr. Robert Carr, Minister of Employment, is shocked, appalled, sickened by the number of workers unemployed. Hasn't he told us so many times?

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Meanwhile local worthies in Kirkby have found a novel way of solving the unemployment problem. It's called slavery. Young lads who are on the dole are signed up to go to the Lake District where they mend roads and suchlike. They get no pay - only board and lodging. You can't blame the lads. Youth unemployment in Kirkby is chronic. Many of those who signed up hadn't had a job since leaving school and hanging around Kirkby with empty pockets can't be anyone's idea of a good time. But it must be stopped or else it won't be a case of being driven back to the 30's but back to the middle ages!

