Solidarity, Global Restructuring and Deregulation: The Liverpool Dockers' Dispute 1995-98

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PhD

Abstract

The Liverpool dockers' dispute 1995-98 exemplifies the type of environment many workers' faced during the 1990s. The British experience provides a particularly relevant paradigm due to the specific interactions that developed between economic restructuring, political deregulatory processes and trade union responses after the 1979 election which saw Thatcher's government embark upon a complete overhaul of this relationship. The Liverpool case brings together all those issues. The thesis draws on a wide range of materials, both oral and archival, which have been previously unstudied, presenting the first full-length academic study of the dispute and its background. The focus of the thesis examines how workers articulate solidarity in the new environment marked by economic restructuring and political deregulation. It does so by proposing three analytical categories: (1) economic restructuring and political regulatory processes, (2) trade union strategies and (3) workplace and community experience and popular historical memories. The thesis argues that the interaction between these three categories is what shaped the different political articulations of solidarity and their successes and failures, during the 1990s. The analysis of this interaction suggests that the organisational dynamics that developed during the dispute, exemplify a tension between centralising processes of trade unionism and searches for organisational autonomy by particular groups of workers. These dynamics are not necessarily specific to that period, but rather rooted in their remembered historical experience. Thus, a conceptualisation of the political articulation of solidarity as a contested arena can provide an indication of workers' organisational capabilities in particular periods.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ABP	Associated British Ports
ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
ACL	Atlantic Container Line
ACTSS	Association of Clerical Technical and Supervisory Staffs
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
AUEW	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
BDC	Biennial Delegate Conference (TGWU)
BTB	Belgische TransportbeidersBond
CAST	Belgian container line
CCOO	Comisiones Obreras
CGT	Confédération Général du Travail
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DPDS	Drake Ports Distribution Services
DWNC	Docks and Waterways National Committee
FNV	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging
FOCs	Flags of convenience
FPC	Fair Practices Committee
GEC	General Executive Council of the TGWU
GMB	Britain's General Union
ICP	International Communist Party
IDC	International Dockworkers Council
ILA	International Longshoremen's Association
ILWU	International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
KPMG	Klynveld Main Goerdeler Peat Maverick
LSO	Labour Supply Organisation
MDHB	Mersey Docks and Harbour Board
MDHC	Mersey Docks and Harbour Company

MPSS	Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee
MRC	Modern Records Centre
MUA	Maritime Union of Australia
NAPE	National Association of Port Employers
NASD	National Association of Stevedores and Dockers
NDLB	National Dock Labour Board
NDLS	National Dock Labour Scheme
NUDL	National Union of Dock Labourers
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
PLA	Port of London Authority
POWs	Port Operations Workers
RDW	Registered Dock Workers
TEU	Twenty-foot Equivalent Units
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TUR	Temporary Unattached Register
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WoW	Women of the Waterfront

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Author's declaration

Except where otherwise stated, this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted previously as such at the University of York or any other University.

In the course of writing this thesis, conference papers were presented. In particular, a paper based on chapters four and six was presented at the Political Studies Association (PSA) Annual Conference in Edinburgh, April 2010. Another paper based on chapter seven was presented at the Annual Historical Materialism Conference in London, November 2009.

Chapter 1. Introduction – workers' organisational capacities in the 1990s

The close of the 1970s signalled the end of a specific relationship between the state, the economy and trade unions that had developed during the period after the Second World War in some advanced democracies. The way in which this relationship developed in Britain, and subsequently contracted, is of particular interest, since "nowhere in western Europe were trade unions confronted by such a concerted neo-liberal assault as in the United Kingdom between 1979 and 1997" (Betcherman 1996, p. 214). By the 1990s, British trade unions had gone from Jack Jones, the leader of the TGWU in the 1970s, being lauded as the most powerful man in Britain (Gallup, January 1977), to suffering rapid decline in density and membership, especially in key economic sectors such as mining, ports and manufacturing.

There are two themes running through the literature which attempt to understand the organisational capabilities of workers in the new hostile environment. First, there is a pessimistic interpretation represented by those who argue that workers' organisational fortunes are in terminal decline. The pessimistic accounts are well represented by those (such as Tilly 1995) that consider labour movements have entered an unstoppable downward spiral; a race to the bottom. Secondly, contrary to the pessimistic analysis, Kelly (1998), using Tilly's own mobilisation theoretical framework (Tilly 1978), and Moody (1997) suggest an imminent resurgence of trade union power. For the optimists, the resurgence of trade union power can be realised in different arenas, with a juxtaposition of the national versus the international as spheres of action, in terms of which may be the more desirable for the development of effective organisational strategies. Some scholars argue that the resurgence should be based around national frameworks (e. g. Fairbrother 2000; Fairbrother and Yates 2003a; Frege and Kelly 2004). This view is contested by those who argue that capital is global and, therefore, workers' organisations must become somewhat global, international or transnational (e. g. Munck and Waterman 1999; Waterman 2001).

In order to consider the challenges labour movements faced during this crucial period, the 1990s, this thesis poses the question: ***how do workers articulate solidarity in the new environment marked by economic restructuring and political deregulation?*** The question will be dissected into different aspects, in order to be able to consider the different theoretical propositions discussed in this chapter. The question will be explored through the use of the Liverpool dockers' dispute of 1995-1998 as a case study. The dispute exhibits a considerable number of features characteristic of the 1990s and, as such, can shed light on debates over the way in which workers' organisational capabilities took shape in the 1990s.

Setting out the problem

Rapid economic restructuring, aided by increased political deregulation and a direct attack on the traditional sources of power held by trade unions, has led to a decline in the power, density and membership of unions. This has been further reinforced by the restructuring of labour markets which has led to "uncertainty, short-term arrangements, insecurity and fragmentation" (Martínez Lucio 2006, p. 3). The situation has been considered extensively in the literature, leading to irreconcilable debates over the role of the state in this process (Strange 1996; Burnham 1999; Hirst and Thompson 1999). The importance of such debates for this thesis lies in the way workers' fates have been linked to the future of the state. In a rather depressing way, Kapstein provides a good example of this link:

> "The Global economy is leaving millions of disaffected workers in its train. Inequality, unemployment, and endemic poverty have become its handmaidens. Rapid technological change and heightening international competition are fraying the job markets of the major industrialized countries. At the same time systemic pressures are curtailing every government's ability to respond with new spending. Just when working people most need the nation-state as a buffer from the world economy, it is abandoning them" (Kapstein 1996, p. 16).

This is because political alternatives, and in particular social democracy, have been defeated. Or so John Gray tells us. John Gray in his apocalyptic bestseller *False Dawn: the delusions of global capitalism* (Gray 2002) exposes how the development of a global free market has deepened social and economic inequalities as well as removing political alternatives. Yet Gray's account, although concerned with inequality, remains worker-less. A quick glance through the book's index shows no entry for 'workers', 'work', or 'trade unions', or even the less politically loaded terms of 'employee' or 'employment', even though some scattered comments are made about those who work for a living. However, they are only mentioned in regard to their loss of economic power, rather than in relation to their political capacity or passivity. More importantly, the book relates to them as faceless victims of *laissez-faire* capitalism, as "the global economy deskills people and organizations" (Gray 2002, p. 76). This is due to a change in corporate culture as, according to Gray, "there has been a hollowing out of the business corporation as a social institution" (Gray 2002, p. 72). Inasmuch as corporations were employing their entire workforce they became social institutions, Gray argues, yet this has been reversed with the growth of sub-contracting and an alternative employment relationship, as there has been a "further commodification of work. Labour has become something that is sold in pieces to corporations. Businesses have shed many of the responsibilities that rendered the world of work humanly tolerable in the past" (Gray 2002, p. 72).

In other words, public policy is no longer changeable in response to democratic demands and businesses are only concerned with profit making. This is due to the economy (or the accumulation process as Drache 1996 puts it) escaping the state. The explanation is that "with corporations more footloose than ever, states have less power to manage their own economic affairs. With the accumulation process no longer state-centred, the global economy leads more and more and the national (…) economy follows" (Drache 1996, p. 40-41). This is made worse as "union representation has also suffered a dramatic reversal of fortune everywhere" (Drache 1996, p. 45). In turn, this leaves workers unprotected as "historically, workers have looked to governments and unions to protect their interests and to redress any power imbalances between labour and

capital" (Betcherman 1996, p. 256). The distancing of the state, whether orchestrated by the state, or by the economy, has led to what Peter Burnham has termed a process of *depoliticisation*. This process affects workers in a very direct way as it involves the removal of direct political regulation of labour relations. Whilst this shields the state from future labour demands it also blames international competitive pressures for these political actions. In other words, global pressures "are translated directly into apparently automatic and inevitable constraints upon individual employers and workforces" (Elger and Burnham 2001, p. 251).

A combination of political and economic pressures led to a radically changed pattern of employment relations in Britain during the 1980s and 1990s. Three developments worked in parallel. Firstly, traditionally unionised industries (such as manufacturing and nationalised industries) were restructured in a way that led to large scale closures and a considerable reduction in the total number of people employed in them. For example, according to Census data (ONS), there was a return to pre-1930s levels of employment in manufacturing after the peak in the 1960s and 1970s when a quarter of the working population in Britain was engaged in manufacturing related employment. However, it was not just employment in manufacturing that suffered a decline. Nationalised industries were largely privatised by Thatcher's government. This had a deep effect on the sources of trade union membership since "by 1979 union density was typically above 90 per cent in these organizations compared with around 55 per cent for British industry as a whole" (Pendleton and Winterton 1993, p. 3).

Second, four key areas of employment regulation were overhauled by Thatcherism, and resulted in: (1) compulsory involvement of collective institutions in wage determination; (2) abolition of wage councils; (3) reduction in social insurance provisions for the unemployed and the retired; and (4) restrictions on employment protection (Deakin and Reed 2000, p. 116). As the table below shows, these four areas were dealt with by using a regressive legislative strategy over a period of nearly twenty years. A crucial aspect of these changes was the involvement of the state in the payment of redundancy money in the restructured industries, whether in the form of statutory redundancy pay until

the late 1980s, or corporation tax relief on payments above the statutory levels (Deakin and Reed 2000, p. 123). In certain industries, such as ports, the government heavily subsidised large redundancy payments, as chapter two will consider in more detail.

Table 1.1. Legislative developments affecting labour market flexibility in Britain 1963-1998

Legislative change	Year	Protective	Deregulatory
Pre-1979			
Regulation of notice of termination	1963	✓	
Statutory redundancy compensation	1965	✓	
Extension of earnings-related unemployment benefit	1965	✓	
Equal pay for men and women	1970	✓	
Unfair dismissal protection	1971	✓	
Regulation of agency work	1973	✓	
Prohibition of sex discrimination	1975	✓	
Strengthening of employment protection laws	1975	✓	
Consultation over collective dismissals	1975	✓	
State earnings-related pension scheme	1975	✓	
Prohibition of race discrimination	1976	✓	
Post-1979			
Extension of qualifying periods for unemployment protection	1979		✓
Restriction of industrial action	1980		✓
Abolition of extension legislation	1980		✓
Abolition of earnings-related supplement to unemployment benefit	1980		✓
Widening of derogations for fixed-term employment	1980		✓
Protection of employment on transfers of undertakings	1981	✓	
Further restriction of industrial action	1982		✓
Rescission of fair wages resolution	1982		✓
Restriction of closed shops	1982		✓
Extension of equal pay for men and women	1983	✓	
Industrial action ballots	1984		✓
Further extension of qualifying periods	1985		✓
Limitation of powers to set minimum wages	1986		✓
Restriction of state earnings-related pension scheme	1986		✓
Increase in qualifying period for unemployment benefit	1986		✓

Legislative change	Year	Protective	Deregulatory
Tightening of contribution conditions for unemployment benefit	1988		✓
Compulsory competitive tendering in local government	1988		✓
Further restriction of post-entry closed shop	1988		✓
Repeal of working time controls	1989		✓
Enlargement of disqualifications for unemployment benefit	1989		✓
'Actively seeking work' requirement for unemployment benefit	1989		✓
Restriction of pre-entry closed shop	1990		✓
Abolition of powers to set minimum wages	1993		✓
Strengthening of rights to consultation	1993	✓	
Further restrictions on industrial action	1993		✓
Abolition of restrictions on Sunday trading	1994		✓
Job-seekers allowance replaces unemployment benefit	1995		✓
Extension of rights of part-time workers	1995	✓	
Prohibition of disability discrimination	1995	✓	
Implementation of EC Working Time Directive	1998	✓	
Statutory minimum wage	1998	✓	

(Source: Deakin and Reed 2000, p. 117)

Third, restructuring was accompanied by a series of legislative measures designed to restrain the power of trade unions. These involved changes in the way union elections and internal affairs were conducted, as well as limits on trade union action, particularly the lawfulness of strike action which was seriously curtailed. Chapter two offers a specific breakdown of the legislation introduced during this period relating to trade unions and employment relations.

Thus, the global restructuring of manufacturing and employment relations, in particular the way in which corporations engaged in manufacturing have used their possible geographical mobility as a way to counteract trade union power, has been the key informant of some approaches to the relationship between workers' organisational capacities and neoliberalism (for a particularly sophisticated example of this type of analysis see Silver 2003). In a sense, the approaches reviewed in the remainder of this chapter place different emphases on how footloose capital actually is.

Although the changes sketched here were to be found in all advanced industrial democracies, it was in Britain, where the changes took a more rapid and radical turn. Following the rise in trade union membership, the number of nationalised industries and employment in manufacturing in the post-war period (peaking in all three cases during the late 1960s and early 1970s), the election of a Conservative government under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 led to an unprecedented reversal of the situation. The extent to which this reversal, at least for trade unions, can be equated with complete defeat has been considered at length in the literature. What follows is a review of how the literature argues this situation can not only be understood, but possibly reversed.

The race to the bottom – pessimistic accounts

Charles Tilly published a controversial article in 1995 in the journal *International Labor and Working Class History* entitled "Globalization Threatens Labor's Rights". The article capitalised on an emerging concern within the globalisation literature of the 1990s which considered the relationship between rapid global restructuring of capitalism and changes in national states. In a nutshell, Tilly argues that "globalization threatens established rights of labor through its undermining of state capacity to guarantee those rights" (Tilly 1995, p. 4). Tilly bases his essay on seventeen ideas which help him develop his argument. Three of them are particularly important as they provide the key tenets in the article. Firstly, there is the issue of rights. "Rights are publicly enforceable claims" (Tilly 1995, p. 6), which means that rights are only acquired as rights "when authorities agree to act in reinforcement of their claims" (Tilly 1995, p. 7). This is of paramount importance for Tilly's argument, as rights are at least enforced by states and, with states losing power, the ability to enforce rights may be jeopardised. In Tilly's words "rights (publicly enforceable claims) come into being as a result of negotiations that produce contracts, to which authorities, especially governments, are always parties – sometimes principals, sometimes

enforcers, sometimes both. Without authorities, no rights exist. The relevant authorities, however, are by no means always sovereign states" (Tilly 1995).

Secondly, a *social contract* arises between the state and its citizens once the state accepts some of the citizens' claims as enforceable rights, perhaps in a similar progressive model to that proposed by Marshall (1991), where civil, political and social rights follow a linear evolution which leads towards the establishment of citizenship. As Tilly maintains: "Citizenship and democracy came to depend on the maintenance of those rights" (Tilly 1995, p. 5). Citizenship was understood as consisting "of a set of mutual rights and obligations binding agents of a state to a category of people defined exclusively by their legal relations to that state" (Tilly 1995, p. 10). Citizenship, therefore, is the embodiment of the social contract.

Finally, what is happening is that this *social contract*, and at least, certain aspects of citizenship, is subject to erosion as "both globalization of many economic activities and creation of powerful supranational organizations are now undermining the capacity of states to monitor and control such stocks and flows – hence, undermining their capacity to pursue effective social policies, including the enforcement of workers' rights" (Tilly 1995, p. 5). This process will have damaging consequences for the idea of citizenship as a whole, not just for labour rights, as "the organized power of labor both signals and fosters democratic politics. Its decay therefore threatens democracy" (Tilly 1995, p. 22).

Therefore, it appears labour rights are the first victims in this wider process. The wearing down of the social democratic state has a specific effect as the state had been seen "as an instrument to achieve labor's goals" (Cox 1971, p. 208). More importantly, "historically, the geographically based power of the state has been the only power capable of counterbalancing unequal forces in the interests of welfare" (Cox 1971, p. 234). It is precisely this idea, that the state has been able to protect workers' interests in the past, and yet it is no longer able to do so, which underlines some of the more pessimistic views on the future of labour movements.

Tilly however offers a tentative way out. The way out is international action, or in other words the framing of claims at the international level, "if workers are to enjoy collective rights in the new world order, they will have to invent new strategies at the scale of international capital" (Tilly 1995, p. 21). This is simply because "no individual state will have the power to enforce workers' rights in the fluid world that is emerging" (Tilly 1995, p. 21). Therefore, the up-scaling of labour action internationally is not just desirable, but rather absolutely necessary, because "if labour does not find ways of organizing effectively at the scale of international capital, one of our era's great achievements – incomplete (but still often substantial) democratization – runs the risk of trampling by capital's new oligarchies" (Tilly 1995, p. 22).

In a particularly sophisticated way, Silver (2003) offers an account that moves away from the state and considers the conflict between capital and labour a global one. Silver's (2003) magisterial work *Forces of Labor* has provided a long-term view across time and space of the relationship between labour unrest and capital mobility. Silver abstracts capital from the everyday, geographically bound reality of life, as well as abstracting labour from such reality. By doing so, the picture that emerges is one where capital mobility arises from its need to escape labour unrest, yet it encounters such unrest everywhere it goes. This is particularly acute in the automobile industry as "it appears that corporations in the automobile industry have been chasing the mirage of cheap and disciplined labour around the world, only to find themselves continuously recreating militant labor movements in the new locations" (Silver 2003, p. 64).

Silver provides a framework which is well suited to ideas of resurgence, as she argues that what we are witnessing is systemic. In the case of the automobile industry, Silver identifies a return to older production locations in countries from where production had previously moved away. This return, however, is to locations where particular industries had not been based, where there would be no historical experience of trade unionism in that industry within the local popular memory. For example, relocation to places such as the south of the United States, has brought about a "reconcentration in the core [which] has been accompanied by major transformations in the organization of production

and labor process over the past two decades that raise questions about whether we are witnessing a repeat of the cycle of relocation and militancy" (Silver 2003, p. 66).

However, the use of spatial relocation to discipline labour is not always a possibility. Instead, Silver finds there are other types of 'fixes'[1] such as financial, product or technological fixes. The case of the transport industry is a suitable example, as spatial fixes are more difficult to complete due to the nature of these industries, "thus, the disincentives to geographical relocation facing the transportation industries are on average significantly higher than the deterrents facing even the most capital-intensive manufacturing industries" (Silver 2003, p. 100). Instead, capital has searched for other ways to keep labour under control in these geographically-bounded industries. Capital does that in two ways, either by "technological fixes" (Silver 2003, p. 101) such as the development of containerisation in the second half of the twentieth century, which was able to reduce dramatically the number of dockworkers (a process which is explained in detail in chapter two of this thesis), or as "product fixes" (Silver 2003) in the case of "railroads and railroad workers [who] have come under increasing competitive pressure from new alternatives: trucking and aviation for cargo and the automobile and aviation for passengers" (Silver 2003). These industries were also central when it came to state regulation (which is also covered in detail in chapter two with reference to the port transport industry in Britain), because of two key reasons: "the importance of smoothly functioning transportation systems to capital accumulation – combined with the strong workplace bargaining power of transportation workers and the limited scope for spatial fixes" (Silver 2003, p. 101).

Silver agrees with Tilly, in that there has been a weakening of labour movements which became sharply apparent by the 1990s. However, for Silver the culprit is not footloose capital, as it fails to "explain a *general* weakening of

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[1] The concept of 'fixes' that Silver elaborates on is developed from David Harvey's concept of spatial fixes. A fix is a continuation of a product cycle by other means. So, for example a financial fix is explained by Silver: "As competition becomes intense, rather than invest in new manufactured products, capital is pulled out of trade and production entirely and reinvested in financial deals and speculation" (footnote 28, p. 106). Silver, B. J. (2003). *Forces of labor: workers' movements and globalization since 1870.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

labor movements" not just in places where capital flies from but also in those places where capital goes to, where "new movements would be created and strengthened in the new site (…). Rather, a central part of the explanation for the severity and spread of the crisis of labor movements appears to be rooted in the enormous ballooning of the financial fix in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as a shift in its character" (Silver 2003, p. 165-166). Therefore, capital mobility, *per se*, is unable to explain the weakening of labour movements.

Silver's abstraction of labour and capital means that her work provides a long term view which demonstrates that capital and labour will constantly be chasing each other under a capitalist system of production. However, this analysis does not imply that labour organising will be progressive (whether social democratic, communist or syndicalist), or even forthcoming. Silver grounds her abstract reality in quite stark terms when comparing the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century period of globalisation with the late twentieth/early twenty-first:

> "In both periods national-protectionism with racist and xenophobic overtones
> has been an important part of the reaction by workers (and others) to the
> dislocations provoked by an unregulated global labor market. (…) there is no
> reason to expect that just because capital finds it profitable to treat all workers
> as interchangeable equivalents, workers would themselves find it in their
> interests to accept this. Rather, insecure human beings (including workers), have
> good reason to insist on the salience of nonclass boundaries and borders (e.g.,
> race, citizenship, gender) as a way of making claims for privileged protection
> from the maelstrom. The de-socialization of the state thus does not in itself
> supply fertile ground for labor internationalism to take root" (Silver 2003, p.
> 177-178).

The pessimists reviewed here, Charles Tilly and Beverly Silver, leave us almost at a dead-end. Tilly offers a way only if a new, but unlikely, international social contract could be built, Silver reminds us of the boundary-creating power of culturally specific groups of workers and localities and the ways in which certain states may still be able to protect certain rights for certain workers, thereby accentuating division, rather than internationalism, amongst trade unions.

The resurfacing power of unions – optimistic accounts

Following from Tilly's pessimistic account in 1995, two important works were published in 1997 and 1998 respectively, which provided a very different outlook on the possibilities for labour movements. John Kelly published in 1998 *Rethinking industrial relations: mobilization, collectivism, and long waves* where he sets out the idea that the decline of the labour movement is not terminal, but rather part of a cycle. Therefore, "by drawing on long wave theory it can be shown that the fluctuating fortunes of national labour movements follow predictable patterns that are closely synchronised with the rhythms of the capitalist economy. Contrary to postmodernist claims that the classical labour movement is in terminal decline, long wave theory suggests that it is more likely to be on the threshold of resurgence" (Kelly 1998, p. 8). Interestingly, John Kelly uses Tilly's own mobilisation theory (Tilly 1978) in order to build the idea of resurgence. This enables Kelly to develop a view of collectivism over-time which is compelled to follow a cycle, rather than a linear decline.

Moody (1997), on the other hand, in a more politically loaded work, advocates a view of trade unionism that is rooted in rank-and-file organisation. Moody poses a strong critique of the model of business unionism prevalent in the United States, as it has shown the "complacency and routinism that contributed to their own decline and loss of influence" (Moody 1997, p. 195). Moody's evidence for this argument is based around the experience of the AFL-CIO. This criticism, that trade union decline cannot be blamed simply on structural changes at the economic and political levels, is echoed, in a more sophisticated manner, by Bronfenbrenner (2003), which traces trade union decline in a broader context than that of anti-trade union legislative measures. For example "the decline in US union density and organizing success began decades before the Reagan era" (Bronfenbrenner 2003, p. 36).

Moody's criticism of business unionism as a model and in particular, the short-sightedness of American trade union leaders, is matched by his optimism over the power of the rank-and-file. This idea was developed in his 1997 work in the form of a *social movement unionism*, based around loosely related networks

of community based workers' centres and the news organisation behind *Labor Notes*. Although there is little evidence of such links having moved beyond the local communities, Moody published a further work 10 years later (2007) which continues to juxtapose the idea of failure by the union leadership, with the impetus from workers to achieve a rank-and-file model of unionism. Moody envisions a union movement in which "neither the unions nor their members are passive in any sense" (Moody 1997, p. 276). The extent to which this is indeed the case remains untested empirically, and could be considered naïve.

Moody's *social movement unionism* remains an unclear and contested concept. Initially, popularised by the South African trade union confederation (COSATU), it was concerned with unions being not just *agents* in the workplace but social agents, involved in their communities, their political life and their workplaces. This had particular implications for South Africa, due to a lack of citizenship for large sections of workers. The concept has since been criticised by Peter Waterman as "a number of writers on trade unionism in the third world (mis)understood social movement unionism to mean an alliance between unions and 'communities'. The latter were understood to be local and/or national-popular communities, and to exist primarily in the third world" (Waterman 1999, p. 247). Instead, Waterman proposes a *new social unionism* which would collaborate with new social movements (such as feminism, antimilitarism, etc…). This plural model views labour as one interest amongst many, rather than as the revolutionary subject in Moody's Trotskyism.

It is important to consider the concept in more detail. COSATU intrigues Moody as "South Africa's unions, and COSATU in particular, are far from facing the sort of decline many unions in the North have experienced" (1997, p. 211). In fact, COSATU has managed to grow steadily even in an environment of economic restructuring. For Moody "COSATU provides living proof that unions with an aggressive organizing policy, a militant bargaining record, and strong ties to working-class communities can grow in a period of relative instability" (Moody 1997, p. 211). Of course, COSATU faces a situation which is rather difficult to replicate, and which is not dissimilar to that of Brazilian or Spanish unions after their respective transitions to democracy. Additionally, COSATU's

success, as perceived by Moody, suffers from a premature assessment. Moody published this work in 1997, only three years after the ANC came to power (1994). COSATU's success or failure require a deeper assessment. However, Moody does not attribute COSATU's effectiveness to their role as actors in democratisation, but rather to the organisational structures of COSATU, which, he argues, are more open to "debates on tough issues" (Moody 1997, p. 277).

The problem with both Kelly's and Moody's approach is that their optimism brings them close to an over-deterministic view of working class solidarity. It is often unclear if their theoretical models are meant to fit empirical realities or rather empirical realities are analysed in a way that ensures they fit within their theoretical models. Over-determinism, or the belief in a cyclical pattern of decline and resurgence, removes the capacity of workers to act, to determine their own future. That future, however, is not necessarily a revolutionary one. After all, there is the possibility of "the recrudescence of currently less influential left-wing fables such as the inevitability, despite everything that has happened, of the revival of labour's progress or the essential, if presently invisible, revolutionary instincts of the rank and file trade unionist" (McIlroy, Campbell et al. 1999, p. 2). As the remainder of the chapter will consider, the revolutionary instincts of the rank and file trade unionist remain as a ghost in the background.

National optimists – national trade union renewal thesis

The idea of national trade union renewal follows John Kelly's resurgence model based around business cycles. It is primarily informed by two influential theoretical models in political economy. First, new institutionalism, as represented by the work of Hall and Soskice (2001) which focuses its attention on what they term *Varieties of Capitalism*. The argument attempts to model different types of capitalism according to their relationship to the internal institutions of a national state. It contrasts sharply with some Marxist and hyper-globalists arguments which focus on the global character of capitalism.

Secondly, others in the Marxist tradition, following Cox's (1987) attempt to use Gramscian concepts such as hegemony to understand the nature of capitalism, have argued (for example, Morton and Bieler 2001; Bieler 2006; Bieler 2007) that in fact the *domestic* structures of capital do matter, inasmuch as they provide the frameworks from within which *material capabilities* are negotiated, contested or changed. The main argument is that "despite the common problem of declining memberships and converging labour market conditions, national industrial relations institutions and morphologies of national labour movements play a decisive role in how organizing is understood and strategically pursued. In essence, the particular strategic response by unions and labour federations across five continents continues to be path dependent, arising from the historical legacy of each union movement" (Fairbrother and Yates 2003b, p. 16).

The countries which provide the basis for Fairbrother and Yates' conclusions are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and the USA. Two inter-related issues mark the way in which their renewal is path dependent. On the one hand, the reason why unions in these countries were attacked so fiercely was due to their "inability (…) to secure an institutionalised and privileged role in policy-making and the increasing emphasis on a neo-liberal agenda of labour market reform in the late 1970s and early 1980s [which] set the stage for unions to become prime targets of restructuring by employers and governments" (Fairbrother and Yates 2003b, p. 11). On the other, this apparent weakness is also their strength, as:

> "The decentralization of labour movements in these three[USA, UK and Canada] countries, in part a consequence of the enterprise-based industrial relations system, left open more political space for local divisions of unions and clusters of activists to initiate change in unions. For this reason it is often at the local or branch level that new organizing initiatives are spearheaded and most successful" (Fairbrother and Yates 2003b, p. 9).

What the approaches reviewed have in common, is the way in which they argue that workers' organisational capacities are best realised domestically (Regini 1992; Frege, Heery et al. 2004; Frege and Kelly 2004) as opposed to internationally. Peter Fairbrother offers a well reasoned argument towards trade

union *renewal* in Britain (Fairbrother 2000; Fairbrother and Yates 2003a). The renewal is not just based on a cyclical idea of trade union resurgence as Kelly and Moody would argue, but rather on the way in which unions are organised; it is driven by them, to a certain extent. Hence, certain "forms of unionism in the 1980s" which "served to underwrite bureaucratisation, incorporation and economism" were able to provide the foundations "for forms of independent and autonomous workplace unionism in the 1990s. After a decade of restructuring in manufacturing, utilities and the state services, there may now be a prospect of union renewal" (Fairbrother 2000, p. ix). Restructuring in such sectors was marked by a restructuring of employment. As figure 1.1 demonstrates, there was a general decline (from 8,879,000 to 6,529,000) in total employment in production, construction, transport and utilities between 1982 and 2002. More importantly, the majority of the decline in these sectors came from public sector employment which reduced from 1,888,000 in 1982 to 426,000 in 2002. This would suggest obstacles to Fairbrother's argument, which places a huge importance on trade union renewal based around public sector workers.

Figure 1.1. UK employment in production, construction, transport and utilities, 1982-2002
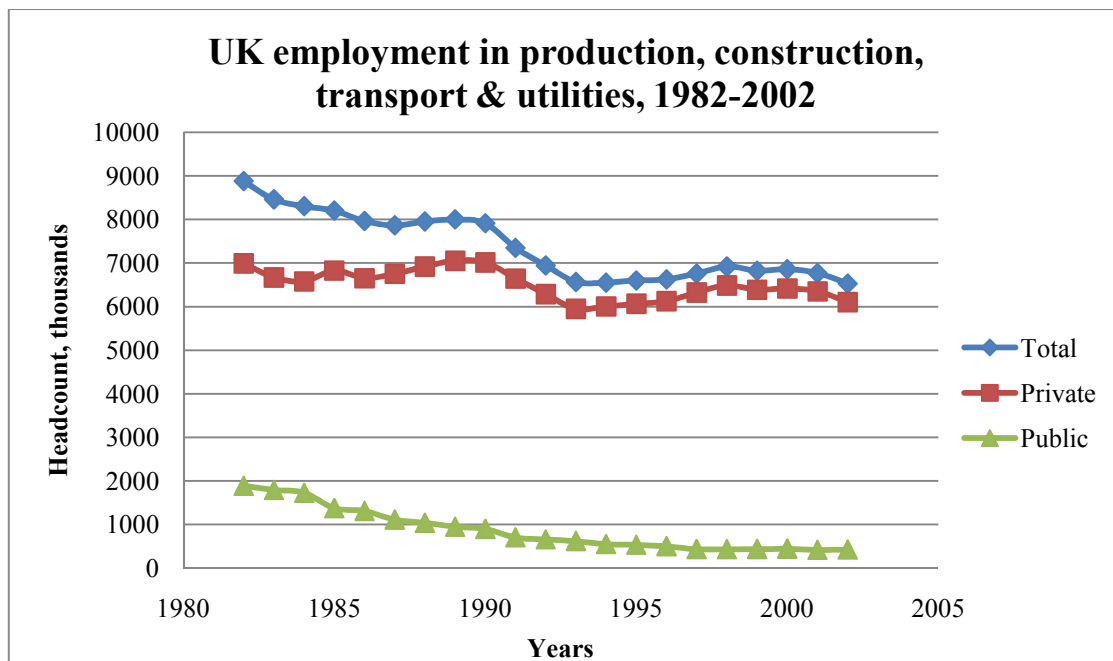
Office of National Statistics (Black, Richardson et al. 2003)

However, Fairbrother considers that the strength of unions in these sectors during their heyday (in the 1970s) is somewhat of a myth. "The apparent strength of many unions in the 1970s was revealed to be rather hollow and insubstantial at a local level, at the workplace" (Fairbrother 2000, p. 7). In Britain, the voluntarist character of industrial relations led to a decentralisation of collective bargaining. In order to operate effectively in this system, unions developed networks of shop stewards which became "essential in sustaining power in a voluntarist system. This structure reinforced close ties between union activists, local branches and workers, ties that were not, however, always translated to national union structures or leaders" (Fairbrother and Yates 2003b, p. 7).

The argument for national trade union renewal, then, is based around two pillars. On the one hand, the British experience of workplace unionism was seldom in unison with national leaderships and therefore, it was unable to counteract the neoliberal offensive. Instead, it is argued that what is needed is an organisational model, as the latter part of this chapter explores further (Frege, Heery et al. 2004, p. 148). This requires that "members are active participants in the way unions organize and operate, thereby contributing to the collective focus and practice of the union" (Fairbrother and Yates 2003b, p. 19). On the other hand, the seeds for trade union renewal are to be found in the public sector, partly because it has maintained higher levels of union density than other sectors, but also because since the mid-1990s the sector is reversing the decline in the number of people employed by it (even if this may be in decline after the May 2010 election), as figure 1.2 shows.

Figure 1.2. UK total employment in public corporations, 1962-2002

UK total employment in public corporations, 1962-2002
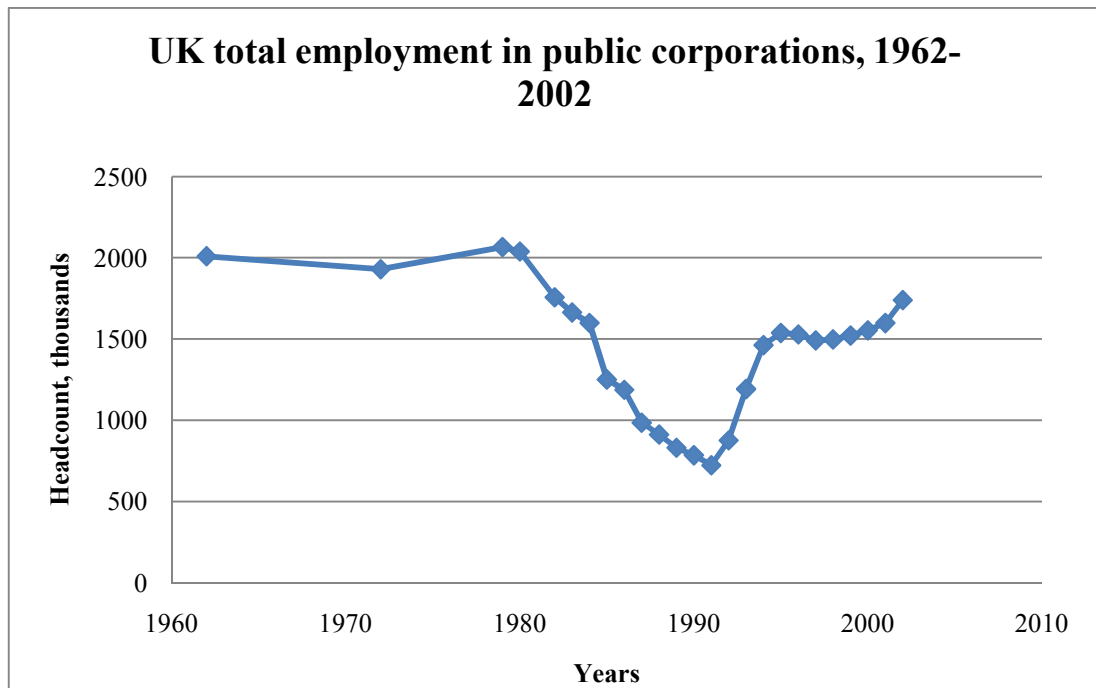
Office of National Statistics (Black, Richardson et al. 2003)

The argument for national trade union renewal is based around the idea that "variation in union identity and institutional context" (Frege, Heery et al. 2004, p. 155) is constituted around national patterns. Importantly, however, approaches which focus on national institutional arrangements also consider that international trade union organisation is desirable. Bieler presents a hypothesis which follows the logic offered by these approaches: "transnational social forces are likely to support regional integration and, by extension, more cooperation at the regional level. Since the production of their sectors is organized across borders, any kind of border barriers are unwelcome. National social forces on the other hand, where production may still depend on subsidies and protection by the state, are probably unlikely to support regional integration, because it undermines national autonomy and sovereignty" (Bieler 2006, p. 465). Yet the place social forces occupy in the production process is not a sufficient explanation, as "class-consciousness emerges out of particular historical contexts of struggle rather than mechanically deriving from objective determinations that have an automatic place in production relations" (Bieler 2006, p. 35). In other words, it is not just the industry in which a worker is employed that will

determine his/her outlook in struggle, but rather a much more complicated set of factors, such as the historical contexts of struggle that Bieler mentions. In Bieler's view, these historical contexts of struggle include the institutional arrangements embedded in the state.

Internationalism, therefore, does not have to be the automatic choice. Instead, the relationship between production sectors, in particular their level of internationalisation and the national institutional arrangements, are the key factors in deciding whether a national or an international union strategy should be pursued. This is the key distinction between the approaches analysed in this section and the ones that will be considered next, which do not place such an emphasis on the specific national relationships between the state, capital and labour.

International optimists – internationalism as the way to counteract global capital

The views analysed in this section are chiefly associated with the work of Peter Waterman (Munck and Waterman 1999; Waterman 2001; Waterman and Wills 2001; Waterman 2005), scholar and labour activist. The main assumption, which contrasts sharply with the previous approaches, is that "where capitalism was once industrial and national, it is now social and global" (Waterman 2001, p. 53). This, in a sense, agrees with the pessimistic approaches presented in this review, in particular that of Charles Tilly. Waterman also appears to agree that the terrain has shifted, from a geographically bounded arena to a global one. However, where Waterman differs is that in his view labour is not ruled out from the arena, rather it needs to upscale.

Waterman is quite openly concerned with a normative exercise. In other words, Waterman's work attempts to turn "general philosophical statements into political statements" (Waterman 2001, p. 238), or at least into prescriptive statements for political action. These approaches follow a Marxist logic, but one which is constantly seeking a non-deterministic path. For example, Waterman

argues that, "there are no natural, spontaneous, economically determined subjects or vanguards of internationalism. (…). In the face of internationalization processes, options other than internationalism are clearly available" (2001, p. 53).

This means that internationalism is not **the** natural stage towards which workers are being propelled to, but rather that "internationalization 'leads to' internationalism only through the self-creation of popular non-territorial identities and their combination into self-conscious, democratic and self-activating internationalist subjects" (Waterman 2001, p. 48). Nothing is assumed or determined, rather it must be built, "unity [peasants, labour, etc.] must be constructed politically and cannot be assumed" (Munck 2007, p. 135).

The argument towards internationalism is a deep critique of Tilly's argument as Munck reminds us: "if you argue, as Tilly does, that 'as states decline, so do workers' rights' (Tilly 1995), then the logical slogan would be 'build the state'[2], not a new labour internationalism based on a social movement unionism" (Munck 2002, p. 144). And this is a crucial difference between this approach and those reviewed earlier. All the approaches consider that something has been eroded (the state, democracy, the left, trade unions…) but not all approaches agree on what needs rebuilding, or in what order. The internationalist approach, as theorised by Waterman and Munck, attempts to move away from rebuilding the state, or democracy, or left wing political parties and trade unions. Instead, the focus is on building a movement that considers the new situation, and works from there. The old formulas are no longer viable and there is no better place to start than in building new communication methods across social and labour movements: "The new global solidarity movements are, in large part, 'communication internationalisms'. Communication is here increasingly understood not simply as a technical means to be used but as an ethical end to be valued" (Waterman 2001, p. 215). This is not simply an opening up of possibilities, but rather it provides a new emancipatory arena as:

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[2] This presents the problem of whether it is possible to rebuild the state at all, as earlier parts of this chapter have considered.

"the idea, value and practice of networking opens wide perspectives to emancipatory global movements, previously (self-) condemned to reproduce the pyramidical and hierarchical structure of the corporation, factory, state, army, prison, church or university" (Waterman 2001, p. 219).

Therefore, the internationalism espoused by Waterman and Munck offers an opening up of some Marxist approaches that are focused on cyclical determinations and single revolutionary subjectivities. It also provides a refreshing alternative to the "methodological nationalism" (Radice 2000; Radice 2007) that is characteristic of some of the analyses related to the national trade union renewal thesis. Whilst Munck and Waterman open the door towards new ways of analysing workers' organisational capacities, they still rely on a systemic view of workers, which removes subjectivity and, therefore, the creative capacity to act and organise themselves autonomously. Actors still appear to lack initiative and creativity and are apparently enslaved by structures. Political action is somewhat removed from their repertoire. The next section will deal with this in more detail.

Old ghosts

In this section, a critique of the assumptions found in both the pessimists and the optimists reviewed earlier, will follow. Firstly, Tilly's argument (1995) has been best contested from within. In an excellent article, Antonina Gentile and Sidney Tarrow (2009) use a selection of international campaigns organised by dockworkers during the 1990s and early 2000s (including campaigns which were part of the dispute analysed in this thesis) to discuss Tilly's argument that globalisation threatens labour rights. Although Gentile and Tarrow accept that labour rights have been threatened, they use Tilly's idea of *repertoires* to show that workers, and in this case, dockworkers, are able to use other repertoires besides labour rights. They argue that the cases show that when dockworkers use a repertoire based around the idea of citizens' rights, their campaigns are far

more successful, in terms of achieving their stated aims, than when they are framed around labour rights.

However, Gentile and Tarrow's critique of Tilly still views labour campaigns as being concerned with the state. In other words, the site of contention remains the state, which does not remove the core of Tilly's argument; the fate of the state will inevitably determine the fate of workers (even if they frame their demands as citizens). In a sense, it mirrors the 'globalisation debate' that became so popular in the 1990s and which has been briefly mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Gentile and Tarrow's framing of their analysis around successful and unsuccessful repertoires of contention misses a key component, which has to do with the different shapes labour mobilisation/disputes/unrest can take. The problem was not that the Liverpool dockers framed their struggle around labour rights rather than citizens' rights, as the article argues (in fact, this thesis shows that they compiled a rather mixed *repertoire*), but rather, the way in which the construction of historical experience in their popular memory interacted with their political capabilities.

It is now time to bring the other pessimist back. Silver (2003) reminds us that labour unrest can take two forms. Labour unrest may target the employer directly or it may target the state. This implies that switching repertoires between labour and citizen rights would only be appropriate if workers changed sites of contention accordingly. In other words, if there are two separate sites of contention (the employer and the state), then workers/citizens will have two different types of struggle. Yet, it remains uncertain if that conceptual distinction is appropriate to the way struggles are framed in the modern period. Instead, the modern period appears marked by a blurring of these two concepts.

Furthermore, there is a rather more basic problem with the literature reviewed so far. This is not unique to this literature, and in fact, Tilly (2001) argues that the same problem can be found in the democratisation literature, that is "where competing practical proposals lie close at hand; ostensibly competing *explanations of* democratisation link to competing *programs for* democratization" (Tilly 2001, p. 27). ***It is precisely the way in which the literature uses explanation and wishful thinking interchangeably, that makes***

the process of creating understanding almost impossible. This is what makes building a robust conceptual and theoretical framework to analyse labour movements in the neoliberal period almost impossible. Programmatic approaches muddy the water, rather than provide the tools for analysing the struggles that have developed.

However, there is a strong theme throughout the literature. It is an old ghost which many thought had long been buried, particularly after Hyman's (1979) critique. This was the dichotomy between bureaucratic trade unionism or a trade unionism based on rank-and-file organisation. In other words, a dichotomy that contrasts capitalist collaboration with revolutionary action. Shorter and Tilly used the dichotomy to try and explain French strikes in the post Second World War period:

> "The Popular Front and the post-World War II period emerge, therefore, as the crucial period in the modernization of the French strike, waged by workers more militant and politically-oriented than ever before. What the meaning of this new militancy is, however – whether it aims at the class war of a social revolution or at the fatter pocketbooks of business unionism – is another matter" (Shorter and Tilly 1971, p. 85).

This politicisation of workers, and what it may mean, is crucial for the way in which trade union organisational dichotomies are understood. The debates have now become far more sophisticated, yet the constraining dichotomy between a bureaucratic model of unionism, which appears to follow an "iron law of oligarchy", against a rank-and-file model of unionism, has not gone away. The terms have changed, and the literature now conceptualises these two 'ideal' models as "service model" versus "organising model".

Table 1.2. Models of trade union renewal: the service model vs. the organising model

The service model	The organizing model
1. Union leaders solve problems for members.	1. Stimulates and involves members in problem solving in group process or collective actions.
2. The union relies on the grievance and arbitration procedures.	2. Is not limited to the bargaining process.
3. Membership is passive or limited to leader requests for cooperation.	3. Is committed to education, communications, and member participation in the union.
4. Members rely on specialists, experts and union staff.	4. Develops and depends on members' skills and abilities.
5. The union develops secretive and closed communication channels.	5. Shares information and develops open communication channels.
6. Union structures are centralized and top heavy.	6. Has a decentralized organizational structure.
7. The union grows dependent on and is reactive to management.	7. Operates independently of management, and is proactive.
8. Distinctions are made between internal and external organizing activities.	8. Makes no distinction between internal and external organizing activities.

(Schenk 2003, p. 246-247)

The dichotomy can be, and often is, brought into different levels of sophistication and includes a distinction, for example, between "social partnership" (Fairbrother and Stewart 2003) and "social movement unionism". One problematic issue is that "the dichotomous conception of power in trade unions misrepresents the problem and thus obstructs analysis and ultimately confuses strategy. Between 'trade union bureaucracy' and 'rank and file' there exist many forms and processes of mediation" (Hyman 1979, p. 61).

The approaches reviewed here share the rather gloomy view that "globalization often invokes the image of an increasingly homogeneous world economy dominated by footloose capital, and workers are often portrayed as being powerless in the face of capital mobility unless they can themselves develop a global strategy in response" (Turnbull 2000, p. 383). It is evident that each approach differs on how such a strategy will or should develop. The problem, however, is that "international labor cooperation is in no way 'inevitable' and is unlikely to follow simply from a realization of economic

interdependence. In fact, globalization is arguably more likely to produce economic nationalism rather than international cooperation. This is also true on the waterfront, but on numerous occasions dockers have been able to transcend their immediate economic interests and their dependence on national opportunity structures to mount successful campaigns of international solidarity" (Turnbull 2000). It is precisely the type of conjuncture that Turnbull points towards that provides a more appropriate way of analysing workers' organisational capabilities.

This argument points in a different direction, one which moves away from theories of trade union organisation which were inspired either by readings of Michels (Michels 1966) or by readings of Marx, where either any organisation will inevitably lead towards oligarchy, or where the proletariat will inevitably fight capital. The first question that needs addressing is in relation to what type of organisations unions are and their internal contradictions. These arise from unions' institutional aims which are "1) the social construction of worker identity and autonomy according to their occupational involvement in the productive system (the job); and 2) to contribute – on the basis of this differentiation from and even confrontation with employers – to workers' integration into the capitalist system" (Catalano 1999, p. 28).

However, unions, as organisations, do not present dichotomies. Rather they offer a multiplicity of organisational features as they are carriers of "multiple contradictions and ambiguities, (…).Their roots in individual social and occupational identity constitutes their strength, in terms of a capacity for workers to create autonomous identity-forms" (Catalano 1999, p. 34). Yet, in apparent contradiction, it is precisely these internal divisions that can be the springboard for autonomous organisation. Dockworkers, as the thesis will show, appear well suited to this contradiction.

It is precisely the agency of workers, their capacity to create "autonomous identity-forms", that should provide the theoretical thread. Therefore, rather than a dichotomy, the theoretical debate can be moved forward by investigating workers' searches for autonomy. Autonomy, when it refers to organisation, involves a collectivity and the self-organisation of that collectivity

(Thwaites Rey 2004). In the context of this thesis, what matters is the tension that exists between political articulations of solidarity that aim towards a unified set of politics, in order to overcome divisions that arise from contradictory class experiences workers can have, and workers' searches for autonomy which develop within the course of certain struggles and experiences. It is precisely the ways in which the search for autonomy arises and the political struggles that it creates, that is the focus of the thesis.

A conceptual and theoretical framework

It has become evident that there appears to be *a relationship between the theoretical outlook of both the pessimists and the optimists and the types of industries that the writer has in mind*. This is due to each industry following different patterns and practices. If this proposition was to be pursued, there would be at least two theoretical standpoints that could be followed. Considering the dockers' internationalist strategy and organisational creativity and ability to innovate, the framework could follow in Waterman[3]'s footsteps. Alternatively, the fact that the dockers' dispute ultimately ended in defeat, as the dockers did not achieve reinstatement, could be considered to reinforce Tilly's pessimistic view. Yet, neither the pessimists nor the optimists are able to grasp the richness of the case study. Instead, it is a study of the political dynamics, understood as the arena that goes beyond direct 'bread and butter' issues, from the arena related to the struggle towards workers' organisational autonomy, which can open the door towards conceptualising the kind of organisational capacities workers had during the 1990s.

One of the key issues to consider when exploring workers' organisational capacities is the contrast offered in the literature between a service and an organising model of trade unionism, which has been a common thread throughout the approaches reviewed here. A service model of trade unionism appears as the direct descendant of bureaucratic models of trade unionism, whilst

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[3] Waterman has in the past completed research on dockworkers, as chapter 4 of his most comprehensive work shows: Waterman, P. (2001). *Globalization, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms*. London, Continuum.

an organising model works within a framework that imagines active trade union members who become agents in their own organisations, rather than the receivers of 'services'.

However, the return to dichotomies offers little help when trying to analyse labour movements. It reinforces the piecemeal approach evident in much of the literature, which views workers' organisational capacities to be either in a political vacuum or as being forever linked to the fate of the state. Instead, this thesis offers a conceptual framework based around the development of struggle, of tensions, in the political articulation of solidarity within workers' movements. This political articulation of solidarity is neither predetermined nor it is static. On the contrary, it is the outcome of three interrelated factors and, especially, of *how these factors relate to each other within different historical periods and in different institutional contexts*. The three proposed analytical categories are:

- *Economic restructuring and political regulatory processes*. In agreement with the approaches considered under the 'national optimists', the thesis considers the type of economic restructuring and political processes characteristic of the British port industry, as the direct institutional context in which the Liverpool dockworkers were placed.

- *Trade union strategies*. Rather than a dichotomous approach to trade union organisational strategies, the thesis considers trade union strategies as the temporal resolution of tensions between unifying tendencies within the labour movement and autonomy-searching tendencies. In other words, certain labour movements, and the British case is exemplary in that sense, have placed crucial importance on the development of a strong and united labour movement. This, it can be argued, may help overcome divisive tendencies which arise from contradictory working class experiences. However, these contradictory working class experiences, at times, find themselves constrained by heavy bureaucratic machines, and their quest for autonomy may lead to different types of strategies being pursued.

- *Workplace and community experience and popular historical memories*. Both the previous two factors operate at a further level, that of

individual and collective experience. It is argued in the thesis, that workplace and community experience, and the popular historical memories produced and maintained, are crucial analytical tools to understand the struggles over the political articulations of solidarity in different local contexts.

Research strategy and methodology[4]

In order to analyse the research question "how do workers articulate solidarity in the new environment marked by economic restructuring and political deregulation?" the thesis uses a case study. The case study chosen is the Liverpool dockers' dispute 1995-1998. The choice of case study research appears as natural when considering that "case studies are the preferred method when (a) 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context" (Yin 2009, p. 2). In that sense, the search for how solidarity was articulated and why the dispute arose and developed in the way it did, would fulfil the first requirement. Secondly, I, as a researcher, have very little control over events as they happened fifteen years before the research was conducted. Finally, the thesis argues that the dispute has many contemporary characteristics, and as such is able "to elucidate features specific to a particular case" (Seawright and Gerring 2008, p. 296) as well as contribute to the debates surveyed in this introductory chapter. Methodologically, the research conducted has relied on qualitative methods of research. In particular, the thesis has relied on archival documents, semi-structured interviews and observation of the port and dockworkers' meetings.

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[4] Appendix 3 consists of a detailed methodological discussion and reflection.

Chapter two focuses on the economic restructuring of the port industry and the political processes behind the regulation and deregulation of labour relations in British ports. First, it considers the economic restructuring of ports, particularly in relation to the technological changes brought about after the 1960s with the development of containerisation. The biggest change in this area was the way in which the industry moved, globally, from being labour-intensive to becoming capital-intensive in a very short space of time (about a decade). This had huge consequences for dockside employment and communities, with many port operations actually moving away from no longer suitable locations.

The following two sections consider the regulatory and deregulatory processes that characterised employment relations in many British ports after 1945. First, the period between 1945 and 1979, and the efforts by successive governments to regulate employment in the industry under the National Dock Labour Scheme (NDLS) are analysed. Secondly, the period from 1979 to 1989, which saw the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme with the resulting major overhaul of employment relations in ports, is considered. The chapter pays particular attention to the nuances in the regulatory and deregulatory processes that affected employment in British ports in order to understand their contribution to institutional processes in which the Liverpool dockers had been involved.

Chapter three explores the development of Liverpool's political culture during the twentieth century. This chapter, together with chapter five, contributes to the third variable proposed before, in relation to community and popular historical memory. The chapter focuses on the characteristics of Liverpool's distinctiveness. The chapter considers local politics and the development of trade union identities in the city during the twentieth century. Furthermore, two main explanations have been provided to account for Liverpool's exceptionalism, religious sectarianism and Liverpool's over-reliance on a maritime economy. The chapter argues that it is the timing of the emergence of these two factors that it important.

Chapters two and three together provide the necessary historical background for the case, both providing a sense of the institutional context in which the port industry operated *and* the city of Liverpool. Chapter four widens the background, by focusing on the Transport and General Workers' Union, one of the largest in Britain at the time and the union of the dockers. This chapter contributes directly to the second variable identified in this introductory chapter, trade union strategies. The chapter analyses the historical development of the TGWU as a large union with a heterogeneous membership. It particularly focuses on Bill Morris' leadership in the 1990s and his efforts to manage the rapid decline the union suffered during the 1980s.

Chapter five, using Phillips' (2009) conceptualisation of workplace conflict, analyses the nature of workplace relations in the Port of Liverpool after the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme until the start of the dispute in September 1995. Specifically, the chapter considers the type of relationships that developed between workers, shop stewards, the union and management in the period leading up to the dispute.

The following two chapters, six and seven, examine the dynamics of the dispute. Chapter six focuses on the local and national dynamics. The chapter develops a chronological account of the dispute, focusing on the relationship between the dockers' shop stewards committee and the TGWU's regional and national leadership as well as the networks the dockers developed outside the formal structures of the union, with other unions, with groups within the British left and with varied other groups such as 'Reclaim the Streets'. This chapter also analyses the negotiations between the dockers, the union and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC), with a particular focus on the different offers the dockers received throughout the 28-month dispute.

Chapter seven explores the international dynamics of the solidarity campaign that the dockers organised. Specifically, the chapter considers two interrelated questions. First, what were the factors which prompted the need for international action? Secondly, what were the characteristics of the internationalism that developed from the Liverpool dockers' dispute? The chapter offers a contribution to issues of trade union strategy, specifically the

issue of competing trade union politics and action at the international level, which offers some leverage to the literature reviewed in this chapter. Finally, chapter eight assesses the three variables proposed in this chapter and, in the process, returns to the debates considered in the literature.

Chapter 2. Economic restructuring and political deregulation in British ports in historical perspective

This chapter traces the historical development of British ports relevant to an understanding of the Liverpool dockers' dispute 1995-98. The chapter is divided into three sections. First, economic restructuring of ports, in terms of their development from a labour-intensive towards a capital-intensive industry, is considered, paying particular attention to the effects these changes had on employment. Secondly, the efforts of successive governments from 1945 to 1979, to regulate employment relations in British ports are analysed. Finally, the deregulation of employment law and employment relations on the docks, culminating with the abolition of National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989 is elucidated.

Economic restructuring in ports

Ports were slow in developing technology. They had been a traditionally low-cost labour-intensive industry which was characterised by fragmentation. Aside from some early technological innovations (electric cranes and grain elevators) introduced between 1896 and 1907 in some of the largest ports, such as Rotterdam (Marges 1999), followed by palletisation – organising cargo on pallets to reduce the time spent loading and unloading– ports did not radically change the way they worked until the 1960s when containerisation was first introduced. Crucially, this change would have a direct impact on employment. Previously, "technological change had had a minimal effect on employment in the industry, which fluctuated largely in response to the trade and business cycles" (Turnbull 1993, p. 194). Although the numbers of dockers had already begun to decline, prior to containerisation, it was technological change rather than the various attempts at registration and decasualisation of employment that brought about the largest change to employment levels.

However, it was not just the number of dockers required to work that would change; the appearance and location of ports was also radically altered, as the old locations and dockside equipment were no longer suitable for the loading and unloading of large container ships. This changed the appearance and location of the dockers' work environment, as "the 'clutter' of a conventional berth with narrow quays and tall warehouses, seething with men and equipment," was replaced by "the container terminal [which] is like a giant car park, or more precisely container park, with a long straight quay and massive cranes" (Turnbull 1993, p. 195).

Therefore, ports and the work carried out within them were moving away from the traditional quayside. For dockers across the world, this meant a sea change in the way they lived and worked. Due to the casual nature of dock work, dockers, and other port workers, lived around the dock area, in order to be close by when work became available. With the advent of containerisation, fewer dockers were required to load and unload cargoes and ports moved to areas that were purpose built in order to operate larger machinery and to accommodate vessels requiring deep water berths. This rapid period of change, when a labour-intensive industry moved towards becoming a capital-intensive industry, had contradictory consequences for dockers. On the one hand, dock work became less physically strenuous, and a different set of skills, based around the operation of large machinery, rather than the artisan skill of stevedoring, became the norm for the majority of the work. On the other hand, dockers were increasingly worried about the effects technological advances would have for jobs. Although it may be considered that dockers adopted a Luddite attitude to change, the reality was far more complicated and included a range of concerns, such as the effects of large scale redundancies in already deprived areas, or retraining in order to be able to operate new technology, all often considered under the umbrella term 'social consequences' (WFTU 1969).

Furthermore, the geographical relocation of the workplace had implications for dockworkers which were two-fold. On the one hand, as mentioned before, dockers had traditionally lived close by the docks where they worked. Container terminals were often built a considerable distance away from

these docks. In Liverpool, older working docks such as Albert Dock gave way to the Royal Seaforth Container Terminal, inaugurated in 1972, and Birkenhead docks, with smaller docks such as Garston being maintained or refurbished. On the other hand, large spaces of land on the waterfront were left empty, as wasteland. This increasingly gave way to the idea of waterfront redevelopment (Breen and Rigby 1996), a new way of creating profit from ports which did not require dock work, based instead on urban speculation.

The benefits for capital of reducing the number of required dock workers were not grasped by ports and employers until fairly late in most British ports. Possibly due to the fragmentation of capital in ports (with several different companies carrying out different types of work), investment in technology was slow. As Mankelow notes when considering the changes in the port of London: "the dock employers were slow to introduce capital equipment to improve efficiency, preferring to operate a low-wage low-technology system" (Mankelow 2000, p. 370). Employers found little incentive for change, as this system allowed them to continue working without having to invest in technology. British ports offered a particularly stark example as the industry was characterised by extreme fragmentation and an unwillingness to invest. Dock employers had become habituated to making money out of limited responsibility with little or no investment. In fact, minimal start up capital was required to become a dock employer, and even less investment was required in order to stay in business.

Fragmentation has characterised British ports to this day. The next section will consider in more detail the implications of this system for the development (or underdevelopment) of a consistent port transport policy in Britain. For the time being, however, it is important to consider how this fragmentation was expressed both in the diverse number of employers within ports as well as in the diverse patterns of ownership of ports. These two factors coupled with a separation between the British port industry and the shipping industry led to patterns of uneven technological development and often inefficiency within port operations.

The port industry is characterised by a wide range of port ownership and administration models. There are different ownership patterns, which involve different configurations of private and public ownership. Baird (1995) identifies four different models of port administration, as table 2.1 shows. Baird's framework is based around the idea that there are three key areas of ownership and administration in ports. First, there is the area related to *ownership of land*, of ports as landlords. Secondly, there is the area of *regulation*, in other words, whether the making and enforcing of rules is made by the public or by the private sector. Finally, there is the function of utility *cargo-handling* in the port.

Table 2.1. Models of port administration

Models	Port functions		
	Landowner	Regulator	Utility
Pure public sector	Public sector	Public sector	Public sector
PUBLIC/private	Public sector	Public sector	Private sector
PRIVATE/public	Private sector	Public sector	Private sector
Pure private sector	Private sector	Private sector	Private sector

(Baird 1995, p. 136)

Most European[5] ports operate within the first three models, with the second model being the most popular. In Britain, the third and, increasingly, the fourth model are the most common. In fact, the fourth model appears as being particularly British, with only rare examples of the fourth model outside Britain. Importantly, both the "Mersey Docks & Harbour Company, and the ports portfolio of Associated British Ports (privatised in 1983) conform to this model" (Baird 1995, p. 135). This way of considering port administration is useful in so far as it points towards a balance, or imbalance, of power between the public and

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[5] Phillips and Whiteside (1985, p. 282-283) identify three key differences between British and other European port employers. First, the tidal nature of major British ports meant that work was unpredictable, unlike work in European ports such as Rotterdam, where regular shift patterns were the norm. Secondly, European ports were far less fragmented than British ports, making coordination and the pursuit of common goals easier. Thirdly, in Britain "waterside firms encountered union organization a generation before it emerged in the leading continental ports, and encountered it in a form which evoked a discordant and insular response" (p. 283).

private sectors. There is, however, a more sophisticated way of considering variants of port administration and ownership. Ports have been characterised as being either comprehensive or functional ports, service ports or landlord ports (Chlomoudis and Pallis 2002, p. 23) . This way of analysing ports moves away from ownership and administration patterns and considers in more detail the types of services that port owners can offer. In other words, it specifically assesses the extent to which port owners are involved in cargo-handling operations, and therefore the employment of dock workers. Table 2.2 offers a summary of the major characteristics of the different forms of port organisation:

Table 2.2. Models of port organisation

| | Organisational model | | | |
	Comprehensive	Service	Providing the tools	Landlord
Infrastructure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (basic)
Superstructure	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Provision of general services	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Provision of public welfare services	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Cargo handling onboard	No	Yes	No	No
Cargo handling at the docks	Yes	Yes	No	No

(Chlomoudis and Pallis 2002, p. 23)

The most common types of port organisation around the developed world are the comprehensive and the landlord models. They both incorporate a mixture of private and public involvement, yet "both types involve the existence of a public authority, while their differences lie in the room for manoeuvring they allow to private companies"(Chlomoudis and Pallis 2002, p. 22). In Britain, the lack of a public authority in most cases has led to more complicated models of port ownership, administration and organisation. Particularly, the fragmentation within the British port industry mentioned earlier can be attributed to two main factors. On the one hand, the multiplicity of models within the port industry (trust ports, Associated British Ports, private port authorities, etc) has led to

different and, more often than not, disjointed patterns of development and, more recently, of distinct types of privatisation. On the other hand, public involvement in British ports, and the political regulation of them, have been characterised by a piecemeal approach, rather than a unified strategy.

The consequences of a disjointed approach towards port privatisation are best explained by the use of an example, which is particularly relevant to the focus of the thesis. Medway Ports was privatised in a very peculiar fashion. Medports MEBO Ltd placed a bid of £29.7 million, which was accepted as there were no further bidders. The way trust ports had been encouraged to privatise by the Conservative government was paradoxical. The bidder would get half of their bid back, after expenses, from the government. So, for Medports MEBO Ltd, a handy £13.2 million went back to them. The privatisation process, however, was seen as a positive step as workers were allowed, and encouraged to buy shares. "However, further analysis revealed that while five directors had acquired 250,000 shares between them (giving an average management holding of 50,000 shares), 250 employees were allowed to buy only 307,000 shares in total (resulting in an average employee holding of 1228 shares)" (Baird 1995, p. 138). No matter how unfair this may seem, it was not to be the worst part of the story. "In November 1992, 269 dockers were dismissed[6] because they refused to accept new conditions of work. Furthermore, the successor company's articles obliged the sacked dockers to sell back their shares […] to the company at £2.50, a price set by accountants KPMG Peat Marwick" (Baird 1995, p. 138).

If this sounds like a poor deal, it, in fact, got worse. Medway was to be taken over by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC). By then "because of the capital structure of Medway, shares bought for £1 at privatisation were now worth £37.25 each in the takeover" (Baird 1995, p. 138). The deal was certainly detrimental to both the government and the sacked workers, "with the government also holding 20% of MDHC, it was evident that while they (the government) had sold public assets (Medway) for £13.2 million, they had then, eighteen months later, helped to buy the book back (through their holding in MDHC) for £104 million […]. A strange commercial transaction indeed!" (Baird

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[6] The sacked dockers were awarded £10,000 compensation for unfair dismissal.

1995, p. 138). The relevance of this episode, besides providing an understanding of the incoherence of government policy, will become clear when analysing the negotiations (in chapter 6) regarding a labour supply company in Liverpool during the 1995-98 dispute, where KPMG were involved.

Government regulation in British ports has focused on labour relations. Both Conservative and Labour governments, not always openly, have concentrated on regulating, deregulating or investigating labour relations in the ports. It has long been assumed, by both parties, that these relations are the main constraint on the productivity of British ports. Although this approach towards regulating labour relations in an otherwise unregulated and fragmented industry will be considered in more detail in the next section of the chapter, for the time being it is important to highlight how the fragmentation of the British port industry is perhaps a factor long forgotten by British policy-makers. As the Greek experts in the European port industry Chlomoudis and Pallis have expressed: "Port productivity partially depends on the improvement of the total transport chain, consequently the competitiveness of a port and of port planning relate to the relevant characteristics of the other parts of the transport network" (2002, p. 18). Yet, in Britain, port competitiveness has traditionally been seen as an issue of cost-cutting and geographical location in relation to trade routes, rather than as part of a British transport network (perhaps with the exception of the ports operated by British Rail before privatisation).

Containerisation can be considered one of the main technological advances which have facilitated the globalisation of the world economy, as "transport services are not simply the object of globalization; they are also the fundamental cause of this process" (Turnbull 2000, p. 368). This view is echoed by some economists who argue that "while attributing the vast changes in the world economy to a single cause would be foolhardy, we should not dismiss out of hand the possibility that the extremely sharp drop in freight costs played a major role in increasing the integration of the global economy" (Levinson 2006, p. 11). This sharp drop in cost is due to a reduction in the labour needed to load and unload vessels. Therefore, as a crucially influential report on containerisation argued, dockworkers were a key problem in achieving 'rationalisation' of the

industry as "the rapid adoption of container technology will necessitate the redeployment of large numbers of workers in this currently labour-intensive industry" (McKinsey 1967). This was not just going to affect dockworkers; all industries related to ports would face a deep restructuring. For example, "ships and hence crews required on the North Atlantic could ultimately be reduced by more than 70 per cent" (McKinsey 1967). As tables 2.3 and 2.4 show, overall transport activity in key European ports did not change massively in the twenty-nine years between 1970 and 1999, yet container traffic continued to grow year on year.

Table 2.3. Transport activity in selected ports, millions of tones:

Port	Country	1970	1980	1990	1997	1998	1999
Rotterdam	NL	226.0	276.0	288.0	303.3	306.6	299.1
Antwerp	B	78.0	82.0	102.0	111.9	119.8	115.7
London	UK	64.0	48.0	58.0	55.7	56.4	52.4
Liverpool	UK	31.0	13.0	23.0	30.8	30.3	28.9

Source: Institute of Shipping Economics and Logistics, Bremen, quoted in (Chlomoudis and Pallis 2002, p. 6)

Table 2.4. Container traffic in selected ports[7], (1,000 TEU[8])

Port	Country	1990	1995	1997	1998	1999	Change 99/98 (%)
Rotterdam	NL	3,667	4,787	5,495	6,011	6,343	+5.5
Antwerp	B	1,549	2,329	2,969	266	3,614	+10.7
Felixstowe	UK	1,436	1,924	2,237	500	2,697	+7.9
Liverpool	UK	239	406	461	487	515	+5.7

Source: Institute of Shipping Economics and Logistics, Bremen (Chlomoudis and Pallis 2002, p. 9)

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[7] Please note that London is not in the top 20 container ports in Europe, instead Felixstowe is the top UK container port, only 3 British ports are in the list: Felixstowe (4th), Southampton (13th) and Liverpool (18th).

[8] TEUs Twenty-foot equivalent units, a standardised maritime industry measurement used when counting cargo containers of different lengths.

Containerisation could also provide the key towards a more integrated transport network. The story of how the container was invented was well narrated by Ian Lloyd when he was MP for Havant and Waterloo in 1975. He had been chairman of the United Kingdom Committee of the International Cargo Association and had been associated with British shipping for a long time. His narration originates in the Port of Newark, New York in 1957:

> "C. S. McLean […] invented this device. He was what is known in the United States as a trucker. In the United Kingdom he would be known as a lorry operator. He found that his lorries were being delayed for 10, 15, 24, 48 or 68 hours in Port Newark. The idea occurred to him that it was technologically unnecessary for large lorries to be driven either to warehouses or to the dockside and, piece by piece, physically unloaded or, piece by piece, physically loaded into ships. He thought 'Why not lift the back of a lorry straight off and put it straight into a specially designed ship?'" (Lloyd 1975)

The changes brought about by containerisation required a complete overhaul of how the industry was regulated. The commitment towards regulation shown by the 1945 Labour Government's creation of the National Dock Labour Scheme, soon after taking power, was quickly proving to be insufficient. If the capital investment needed to develop container terminals was to be put forward, there had to be a system which ensured workers would be available to work such containers. This meant that workers had to be in the dock ready to load/unload containers, and that they had to be sufficiently skilled to be able to operate the new machinery.

The political regulation of dock labour

Regulation came in as the creation of a national register of dockworkers. Earlier attempts at registration, such as the 1912 Liverpool scheme, had proved successful in securing an adequate level of labour power within ports. Liverpool had created the first version of a somewhat rudimentary register as early as 1912.

During the Second World War, the docks were seen as an indispensable industry, required to maintain the necessary traffic of commodities in and out of Britain. Several schemes were created at the time and managed by the Ministry of War; the two most important ones were the ones covering the Mersey and the Clyde, on the one hand, and the scheme covering the East Coast ports. Before considering the implications of containerisation for the regulation of employment in the docks, the creation of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1947 needs to be briefly explained.

Ernest Bevin, the man behind the amalgamation of several unions to form the Transport and General Workers Union in 1922 (Coates and Topham 1994), joined Churchill's war-time coalition government as Minister of Labour and National Service in 1940. Bevin was concerned to secure the smooth operation of his previous industry during the war. He is seen as the forefather of the Scheme created in 1947 (by which time he was no longer Minister of Labour, but he was a member of the post-war Labour Cabinet as Foreign Secretary). The Schemes created during the Second World War were conceived by Bevin, and he worked to ensure that, after the War, rather than abolishing them, they were to be introduced in other ports. The Second World War in this case acted as a catalyst towards the regularisation of employment in British ports (Jackson 1973, p. 25).

The Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act 1946 was vague. It was created to regulate local dock labour schemes which would be coordinated by the National Dock Labour Board. Both the local and the national boards would be characterised by joint control. This would involve the equal representation of employers and workers. The scheme was, originally, a voluntary arrangement but it was introduced as a statutory scheme on 28 June 1947. For the first time, the 1946 Act defined some of the key terms, in a rather open fashion. The definitions were as follows:

> "'cargo' includes anything carried or to be carried in a ship;
>
> 'dockworker' means a person employed or to be employed in, or in the vicinity of, any port on work in connection with the loading, unloading, movement or storage of cargoes, or work in connection with the preparation of ships for the receipt or discharge of cargoes or for leaving the port;

‘employer’, in relation to a dockworker, means the person by whom he is employed or to be employed as aforesaid;

‘port’ includes any place at which ships are loaded or unloaded” (1945, p. 4).

The definitions’ vagueness was to prove a challenge as technological advances, and particularly containerisation, made some of the definitions less clear-cut than perhaps policy-makers thought in 1946. Beyond matters of definition, of delimitation of what was dock work and who was involved in it, which would become key areas of contention in years to come, the Scheme contained the following points at its core:

(i)   “The establishment of a national administering board with local boards at the ports.

(ii)   The registration of employers and workers who thereupon are deemed to have accepted the obligations of the scheme.

(iii)   A prohibition on registered employers from engaging dock labour other than registered workers.

(iv)   That registered daily workers, where not employed in pursuance of the scheme by any other employer are in the employment of the National Board and if they are available for work, they are then in the reserve pool.

(v)   A prohibition on registered workers from engaging for work with a registered employer except as weekly workers or being selected by a registered employer or allocated to him in accordance with the scheme.

(vi)   A corresponding obligation on the employers to accept the daily workers so allocated and on the workers to accept the employment.

(vii)   The control of wages paid by the employers and entitlement of workers in the reserve pool to payment from the National Board (remuneration due from employers in respect of daily workers being paid to the National Board).

(viii) Disciplinary powers (including provisions for disentitlement of workers to payment for non-compliance with certain provisions of the scheme) and provisions for the termination of employment of daily workers, for appeals by persons aggrieved to appeal tribunals, and for the cost of the operation of the scheme” (Jackson 1973, p. 36).

Furthermore, the Scheme did not abolish casualism. Instead, it almost institutionalised it. Registered dockworkers would have to attend a 'free call' in the morning in order to be picked by a foreman or allocated to a gang[9]. If they were left with no work, they would come back to the afternoon call. If they were again unsuccessful, they would get paid attendance money. This was, in a sense, the main benefit of the Scheme for dockworkers, as before the Scheme, they would have gone home with nothing. The new system, however, maintained favouritism. In Liverpool, many older dockworkers recall how they and their fathers would be often picked by an employer of the same religion, or who supported the same football team. If, on that day, the employer was of the opposite side, they might have gone home with no work, or left with the work nobody else wanted.

Casualism was inhuman, as Eddie Loyden, MP for Garston who had worked for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company for 28 years, maintained. In his participation in a House of Commons Debate into Dock Work and Port Reorganisation, Loyden described the casual hiring system as a "cattle market":

> "Such a system had the effect of squeezing several hundred men into a pen where they were driven to holding up their books to the hirer to show him that they wanted work. If there was no work, home they would go" (Loyden 1975).

The Scheme soon ran into its own problems. By 1950 a Commission of Inquiry under the Chairmanship of Sir Frederick W. Legget was asked by the government to investigate the unofficial disputes which had affected the Port of London since the introduction of the Scheme. Legget's report found that one of the main problems in London was that "the Dock Labour Scheme has brought little change from the habits and practices of casual employment and it is to be hoped that it will be only a stage towards a form of organisation which will provide more direct and stable relations between employers and workers" (Leggett 1950, p. 12). There is little reason to believe that the same situation was not happening in other ports. Furthermore, no welfare or health and safety

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[9] Being picked by a foreman was always the preferred option, as the alternative of being allocated to a gang meant that the docker ended up either with a gang of dockers they did not like or working a cargo no one else wanted (this was particularly the case with 'dirty' or dangerous cargoes).

facilities were provided: "We could not find evidence of any provision of washing facilities for men working on dirty cargoes beyond the crude provision of buckets for which hot water could be obtained only from a ship. We were told in evidence that, after working on cargoes of wet hides or even lamp black, a dock worker may often have to travel home in public transport in his dirty clothes without any proper opportunity of washing. This is embarrassing to the man and an annoyance to other travellers" (Leggett 1950, p. 32). Again, this was also common elsewhere: in Liverpool John Jenkins, an ex-registered dockworker, recalled how they were treated like the rats of society (interview data).

Lord Devlin was first asked to inquire into dockwork by the Conservative government in 1955. The reason for setting up the inquiry was the growing labour unrest in the docks, which rose from an annual average of man-days lost of 39,800 between 1930/38 to 344,400 from the introduction of the 1947 Scheme to the setting up of the 1955 Devlin inquiry (Devlin 1955, p. 9). By 1955, the scheme was running with 81,000 registered dockworkers and 1,248 registered employers (Devlin 1955, p. 2). Devlin's growing concern with the large number of employers in the industry was fundamental to the decasualisation attempt he embarked upon ten years later.

However, before moving on to the later inquiry, there are a few points worth highlighting about this earlier report. One of the worries of the Conservative government, and the Transport and General Workers Union, was the strength of the unofficial workers' movement within the docks. There was a sense that the unofficial strike-committees were led by Communists[10] who were considered to be agitators who utilised any grievance to further their own revolutionary ends. This coupled with the inter-union rivalry existing at the time between the TGWU and the National Association of Stevedores and Dockers (NASD, the 'Blue union') meant that most strikes were difficult to understand for those outside the industry.

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[10] Chapter four deals in more detail with some of the issues pointed out here. In particular, it considers the Canadian Seamen Strike.

Nevertheless, Devlin found that Communism within the docks was not necessarily prevalent, rather that certain Communists were quite able to articulate workers' demands: "While the dockers as a whole do not care about Communism, they do not regard a vigorous leader as disqualified from expressing their grievances because he is a Communist and prefer to ignore the fact that his motives are not necessarily the same as theirs" (Devlin 1955, p. 16). The influence of Commuism, or of Communist unofficial leaders, was not the only reason for unrest. Devlin identified eight reasons as outlined by previous inquiries into unrest in the docks:

1. "Past history
2. Solidarity
3. Large ports
4. Communist influence
5. Trade union organisation
6. Inter-union rivalry
7. Resistance to obligations under the Scheme
8. Impersonality and remoteness" (Devlin 1955, p. 15-17).

Interestingly, most of the causes in the list appear to blame dockworkers for the unrest, or some kind of impersonal force. Yet dockers saw things differently. If the Scheme was a tool for achieving joint management of employment in the industry, how come it was always they who suffered disciplinary procedures? "To dock workers it seemed that punishments were often inequitably administered and, worse, that offences were arbitrarily defined and invented. It appeared unfair, in the first place, that penalties should be imposed with such frequency upon workmen, but scarcely ever upon their employers" (Phillips and Whiteside 1985, p. 247).

This inequality in a system that was to provide a jointly managed structured was exemplified by the fact that whilst an unsuitable "gang could be returned […]; the docker who left his employer before the job was finished broke continuity and ran the risk of official reprisals" (Phillips and Whiteside 1985, p. 248). The issue of disciplinary matters was of crucial importance, and it affected a large number of dockworkers. In the early 1950s around 18 per cent of the

workforce had been appearing annually in front of a disciplinary committee (Phillips and Whiteside 1985, p. 246-247).

Yet, for Devlin the key was in the dockworker, and how his attitudes, if turned around, could be decisive in ensuring a thriving industry:

"The docker has two qualities, which, if they can be captured and used, will prove decisive. The first – it is one with which we have all been struck in the course of this Inquiry – is his sense of pride in the industry which he serves. It would be natural to think that an industry built up on casual labour amd which in the past attracted those who could not find work elsewhere, would be one from which men would in better times want to escape; or they should at least wish that their sons should escape it. It is not so. The docker has immense pride in his skills. The tendency is not towards a flight of labour from the docks but much more that the offer of employment there should be governed by the hereditary principle. If the docker can look upon his place in the industry as an estate in which his son will share and his grandson perhaps inherit, he can surely also be made to see that it must be cared for and maintained; that as a business it needs customers; that no customer will come indefinitely to a place where he cannot rely on his orders being executed; that international trade is got in competition and can more easily be lost than won. The docker well understands what competition means; he knows the effect on his earnings if he is five minutes late, whether he has good reason for it or not, and misses the job; if he could enlarge that understanding to take in the thought of what may happen to the larger earnings on which he is dependent if the port misses trade, he would be less likely to stop work, whether or not he thought he had good reason for the stoppage. The other great quality of the docker is his sense of loyalty. Everyone agrees that his readiness to strike is largely due to a sense of loyalty to his fellow workers. But that means that at least that virtue is there. The power that now explodes and disrupts is there to be used, it if can be brought under control, to drive the wheel of order and contentment. If the Employers demand loyalty as partners and not as benefactors, they may get it" (Devlin 1955, p. 47).

It is worth highlighting some points of the above quote: pride, property and loyalty. Devlin was quick to identify these three characteristics of dockers in a way which he felt could be used for the benefit of the industry, rather than for the benefit of the unofficial workers' movement. Pride in the job, and the identity

the job confers, means a strong sense of occupational boundaries. Not just in regard to what a docker does but also in relation to what should not be part of the job. The issue of property is very important, and will recur repeatedly throughout the thesis. Dockers had fought hard to achieve the kind of job they had: the reward was that when it did become a good job, their children would be able to inherit it. Loyalty, or perhaps solidarity, was another quality which Devlin considered should have been used differently. Loyalty to an employer became impossible in a situation where employer-employee relationships were highly unstable. Dockworkers could find themselves working for many different employers at any given time.

The next inquiry to follow the Devlin Inquiry 1955 was very different in character. It was forever disregarded as no Act of Parliament followed its recommendations. The committee of inquiry was asked "to carry out a comprehensive survey of the major ports of Great Britain" (Rochdale 1961, p. 4). Surprisingly, it was not the Ministry of Labour, which usually commissioned reports regarding ports, but the Ministry of Transport which requested it. The main thrust of the inquiry was not to blame the problems of the port industry on its workers:

> "Our first point is that it is fruitless to attempt to lay the blame for labour troubles in any one quarter. Strikes in the docks naturally make national headlines, for they clearly have an adverse effect on the country's economy. However, persistent under-utilisation of existing facilities of labour and equipment are in themselves more damaging to the country's economy than periodic localised strikes. In our view dock strikes are at least as much a symptom as a cause of the malfunctioning of the port industry" (Rochdale 1961, p. 128).

This malfunctioning was blamed on the fragmentation within the industry which, unsurprisingly, led to under-investment or bad investment decisions. "It is noteworthy that capital expenditure at British ports since World War II has been devoted mainly to minor projects. *No single additional deep water berth for general cargo has been started since the 1930's, apart from those now nearing completion at Teesport*. We believe too that wasteful competition has been responsible for some duplication of facilities and that this goes some way

towards explaining the financial difficulties in which many ports find themselves" (Rochdale 1961, p. 22). It leads to the conclusion that "a fundamental defect in the organisation of ports in this country is the lack of any central planning" (Rochdale 1961, p. 53).

The second Devlin inquiry in the mid-1960s, which led to decasualisation measures introduced in 1967, needs to be understood against the backdrop of the 1950s inquiries and the Rochdale report. The changes brought about by Devlin were designed to ensure a cooperative workforce. If the large amounts of capital investment needed for containerisation were to create a worthwhile return, the workforce had to cooperate. In a sense, "the employers now believed that only a secure workforce with permanent status would accept the changes demanded by the new technology coming into use in the port transport industry" (Mankelow 2000, p. 379). More importantly, the industry needed workers willing to work the machinery who would cooperate to do the work, but who would also obtain the necessary skills to operate the machinery. The main problems still plaguing the industry were identified as follows (without being in order of importance):

(1) "the dockers' lack of security,

(2) the preferential treatment given to 'blue-eyed boys',

(3) the dockers' lack of responsibility,

(4) defects in management,

(5) time-wasting practices,

(6) piecework,

(7) overtime,

(8) welfare amenities and working conditions, and

(9) trade union organisational difficulties" (Devlin 1965, p. 2).

There are, however, for Devlin three factors which appear as particularly problematic. First, the role played by solidarity. For Devlin, there is an exaggerated sense of solidarity or loyalty. As casual labourers in constant fear of underemployment, dockers learned that solidarity was even more vital to them than it was to the ordinary worker; and as a tight community, originally living in a close neighbourhood round the docks, they learnt the importance of loyalty and the fear of ostracism. The loyal acceptance of a majority decision may often be due to a sense of solidarity. But in the docks solidarity – 'one out, all out' – often

follows on a minority decision accepted on the principle that the man who wants to strike is always right" (Devlin 1965, p. 8). This may be overcome, according to the report, via a better system of workers' representation. As it stood then, either the foreman, who should be part of the supervisory structure, or the most vociferous man would bring grievances to management, and often the outcome would be a dispute. If dockworkers were to have a system of representation based around shop stewards, then grievances could be brought up via appropriate procedures, rather than walking out on a job.

The second challenge was what Devlin termed 'casual management' (Devlin 1965, p. 10). The point made earlier that the port transport industry had developed as a labour-intensive industry before the development of containerisation is directly linked to the casual management that Devlin found. "The only qualification for entry on the register of employers is a wish to employ dock labour. In July 1964 there were 1,514 employers on the register. Many do practically no work at all and many are casual employers who do an occasional job. These latter could not carry on without a supply of casual labour available when they want it" (Devlin 1965, p. 10). The 1967 Scheme also tackled this issue. Following the Scheme, a rationalisation of employers within the industry occurred (Devlin anticipated that Liverpool would go from having 114 registered employers to a much reduced figure of 10 (Devlin 1965, p. 104)). Many went out of business. Each dockworker was from then on to be attached to a particular employer who had a set of responsibilities towards him. Many of the employers were unable to meet such obligations. In order to counteract the negative effects this would have had on dockworkers, the Scheme included a provision, whereby the port authority would act as 'employer of last resort'. This meant that the authority had to absorb the dockworkers who would have otherwise lost their jobs when their employers went bust. The main consequence of this was that, for example, in Liverpool, the MDHC went from not employing dockworkers before the 1960s to being the main employer of dockworkers from the end of the 1970s.

Devlin's recommendations highlight the paradox that as containerisation approached; Britain initiated the strongest effort to politically regulate labour relations on the docks. Following Lord Devlin's Committee of Inquiry between

1964-65 the introduction of the Dock and Harbours Act 1966 and the Dock Labour Order 1967, commonly known as the 1967 Scheme, introduced safeguards in the National Dock Labour Scheme aimed at the achievement of decasualisation. The new system was designed to ensure that dockworkers had a guaranteed working week. However, as the new economic and technological changes were quickly spreading, many dock workers were quickly becoming redundant. In Liverpool, a new container terminal was opened in 1972[11], the Royal Seaforth Container Terminal, which led to a series of voluntary redundancies and the closure of many stevedoring companies. This was the start of large scale voluntary redundancies, which at this stage worked to remove many ageing dockworkers. However, decasualisation had introduced a safeguard for dockworkers which became crucial during this period. Many stevedoring companies were unable to move towards a capital intensive industry and they went bust, but the new changes to the NDLS meant that dockworkers employed by them would not lose their jobs. Instead, the local dock board would then become the employer. In places such as Liverpool, it led to the removal of fragmentation, and, between 1972 and 1982 most Liverpool dock workers were transferred from being employed by smaller stevedoring companies to working directly for the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

Nevertheless, Devlin's recommendations, in the form of a wide ranging decasualisation scheme, did not solve the employment situation in the port industry. By 1972, the Temporary Unattached Register (TUR) was causing widespread resentment amongst registered dockers. Lord Aldington and Jack Jones, by then General Secretary of the TGWU, were asked by the Conservative government of the time to jointly chair a committee to look into the situation. Following on from that, the Temporary Unattached Register was abolished as it was seen as a remnant of casualism. This, however, did not stop disputes from occurring in the three main British ports: London, Liverpool and Hull.

In fact by then a larger problem had appeared, as containerisation brought with it a new challenge for dockworkers besides the reduced manning levels

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[11] 1972 saw the last intake of dockworkers in Liverpool until the creation of Torside Ltd: 500 new jobs were created. Carden, M. (1993). *Union Democracy and Incorporation: A Case Study of the Transport and General Workers Union Merseyside division with particular reference to the dock industry*. Liverpool, University of Liverpool. **Doctor of Philosophy:** 469.

required for loading and unloading ships. The new challenge came in the form of 'groupage' work. Groupage work is the loading and unloading of containers in warehouses outside the docks and where the work is done by non-registered dockworkers. Usually, the work is done at a much lower rate and with considerably worse conditions. This is why the Labour government in 1969 set up the Bristow committee. Its recommendations included that the protection for dockworkers should be extended to five miles, and even perhaps 10 miles from the port. However, even though it took until 1975 for such recommendations to be debated in the House of Commons, they were never approved.

The issue of 'groupage' however was not going away. In a sense, there was an issue over the exclusive right to do specific jobs by a specific group of workers, regardless of location, or within a specified radius. The issue centred on the question of definition that the NDLS had attempted in 1947 but the old terms had become obsolete. Issues over *ownership* of jobs became food for the Right, and were used to divide workers. As the Conservative MP Kenneth Baker pointed out, there were some key difficulties when considering the extension and reform of the scheme proposed by the Labour government in the late 1970s:

> "which is trying to give one section of the Transport and General Workers' Union, the dockers' section, the right to claim the jobs of other workers — not those of non-unionised workers, but those of members of other unions" (Baker 1978).

Political deregulation

The 1960s and 1970s attempts to pacify labour relations on the docks via decasualisation were not completely successful: strike levels peaked between 1967 and 1973 (Turnbull 2000, p. 375). Together with many other industries, labour relations were proving difficult to manage. The combination of this pattern with the electoral victory of Margaret Thatcher led to a thorough reform of trade union regulation from 1979 onwards. To what extent this reform was a carefully considered incremental policy is debatable. The aim of the legislation

was to reduce the bargaining power that trade unions had in workplaces. Deregulation was accompanied, in many cases, with the restructuring of several industries such as coal mining, leaving communities without their traditional sources of work, and many trade unions without their sources of power, as the previous chapter has discussed in more detail in relation to the literature.

However, Britain's legislative tradition in regard to workers' rights did lend itself to such level of restructuring. As opposed to other European national systems of labour relations, characterised often by a social partnership embedded in the state structures (see for example Regini 1992), Britain had developed a "tradition of non-involvement of the state" (Visser and Van Ruysseveldt 1996, p. 44). Instead, "in Britain there is no legal system of positive rights with regard to trade union representation, collective bargaining or strikes. Union law has developed in the form of exemptions to the common law" (Visser and Van Ruysseveldt 1996, p. 50). ***The way in which employment and trade union legislation was developed since 1979 reinforced such characteristics.*** Table 2.5 offers a summary of the relevant legislation developed by the successive Conservative governments:

Table 2.5. Conservative employment legislation since 1979

1980 Employment Act	• Restriction of the closed shop; legal remedies are provided for workers if they are excluded or expelled from a company for refusing to join a closed shop; new closed shops are lawful only if a majority is in favour in a secret ballot in which 80% of those entitled vote; • Restriction of picketing; limited to strikers in lawful strikes at their own place of work; ***secondary picketing*** is restricted to the first supplier or customer; • Removal of all provisions for compulsory arbitration in the case of unions seeking recognition from employers, provided for under the 1975 Employment Protection Act; • Reduction of employee rights in the case of unfair dismissal provisions; burden of proof is removed from employer; maternity rights to reinstatement are reduced.
1982 Employment Act	• Restriction of lawful union action; ***removal of immunity*** of trade unions against action in tort, as defined under the 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, thereby enabling, for the first time since 1906, a trade union to be ***sued for damages in the case of an unlawful strike***; restriction of definition of trade dispute to make solidarity action, sympathy strikes or inter-union disputes unlawful; • Further restrictions on closed shop (ballot required on existing closed shop and 85% majority vote needed for lawful continuation); union-only commercial contracts are outlawed.
1984 Trade Union Act	• Members of principal executive bodies of trade unions must be ***elected by secret ballot every five years***; unions lose immunity unless a ***secret ballot is conducted and won before strike action***; unions which operate political funds must ballot their members every 10 years.
1986 Wages Act	• Restriction of minimum wage provisions; removal of workers under the age of 21 from the jurisdiction of the Wages Councils.
1988 Employment Act	• Post-entry closed shop is made illegal and unenforceable; no strike seeking to enforce post-entry closed shop is lawful; • During a lawful strike, ***union members who cross a picket-line cannot be disciplined*** even if the majority of workers involved supported the strike in a secret ballot; • Extension of secret balloting in union elections; new Commissioner for union member rights.
1989 Employment Act	• Various provisions which extend labour market regulation to the small firm sector are withdrawn; repeal of discriminatory provisions restricting hours of work for women and young people above school age; abolition of Training Commission – previously Manpower Services Commission – its functions being taken over by the Department of Employment; unions no longer represented on industrial training boards, which are

	downgraded to non-statutory status.
1990 Employment Act	• Abolition of all legal protection for the pre-entry closed shop; refusal of employment to non-union members made unlawful; • ***Employers are given greater freedom to dismiss persons taking part in unlawful strike action; immunity removed from union officials, including shop stewards, who organise support for persons dismissed for taking part in an unlawful strike; all remaining forms of secondary action made unlawful.***
1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act	• Check-off arrangements unlawful unless there is a written agreement every three years; workers have the right to join the union of their choice; employers are allowed to offer workers monetary inducements to leave the union; • Employer must be given ***seven days warning in advance before official industrial action***; all ***pre-strike ballots must be postal*** and are subject to independent scrutiny; users of public services have the right to seek an injunction against unlawful strike action; • Withdrawal of support for collective bargaining (removal of requirement for Arbitration Commission to encourage collective bargaining); • Removal of all remaining minimum wage fixing (abolition of Wage Councils); • Requirement for employers to give a written statement of terms and conditions to full-time employees under regular contract; extension of jurisdiction of industrial tribunals to cover breaches of employment contract; extension of maternity leave for women and protection of pregnant women against unfair dismissal; protection of workers victimised over health and safety at work issues.

(emphases added, Visser and Van Ruysseveldt 1996, p. 53-54)

There are two main themes which emerge from table 2.5. First, the issue of secondary action was restricted with the 1980 Employment Act, and it was constrained further by the 1990 Employment Act. This was particularly important in a labour market which was moving towards restructuring and where the fragmentation of employment contracts was becoming increasingly commonplace. Second, on the legislation directly aimed at reducing the power of industrial action. Increased restrictions were placed on how industrial action could take place, in the restriction of picketing (1980 Employment Act); the possibility of suing a union if unlawful action takes place (1982 Employment Act); the stipulation that secret postal ballots must take place before industrial

action can take place (1984 Trade Union Act); and the provision that there has to be a notification period of seven days before industrial action can be carried out (1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act).

As has become evident in this chapter, ports in Britain went through a slightly different process of political regulation and deregulation. They had traditionally been autonomously managed, even though the state had sometimes been a stakeholder in them. Patterns of employment had been traditionally casual, dependent on the requirements of shipping companies. The regulation drives which characterised labour relations in British ports in the 1960s and 1970s were to be reversed in the 1980s. However, it was one of the later industries to be deregulated. Figure 2.1 shows how from the 1970s peak, levels of industrial action in British ports had already been decreasing in the 1980s, prior to the deregulation of labour relations.

Figure 2.1. Dock strikes in Britain, 1947 to 1989
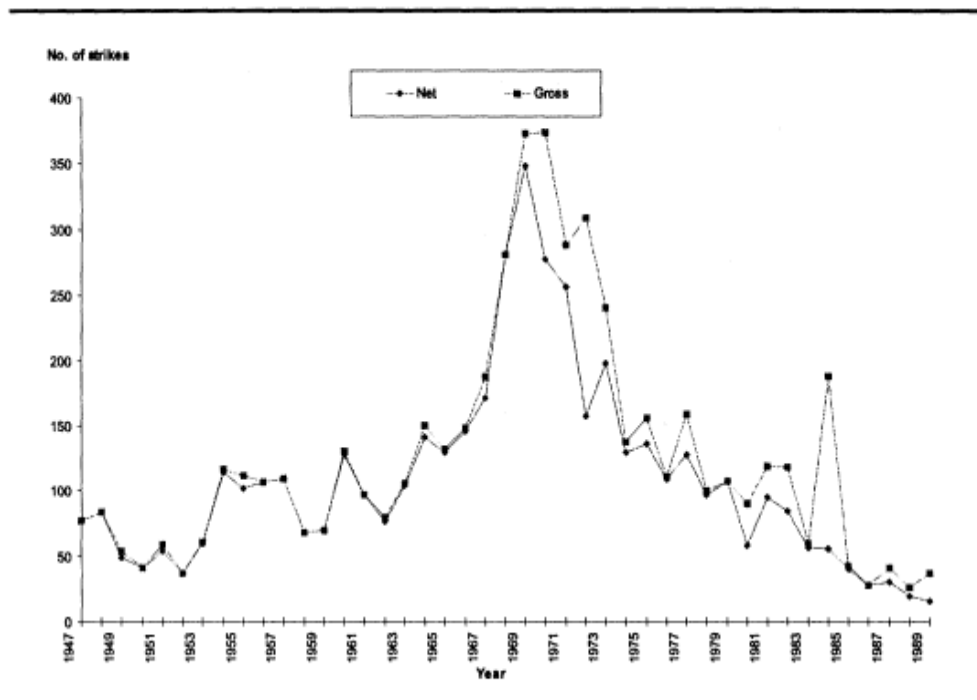
Figure 2. Dock strikes in Britain, 1947 to 1989.
Source: National Dock Labour Board
Note: "Gross" disputes represent the sum of *each* stoppage in *each* port. "Net" disputes count multiport disputes as a *single* stoppage (i.e., disputes that, having the same cause or object, occur simultaneously in a number of ports despite the eventual duration of each strike at the individual port).

(Turnbull 2000, p. 375)

In 1989, the NDLS was abolished rapidly and without much consultation, offering dockworkers severance payments of up to £35,000. Many dock workers took this payment. The workforce in British docks was reduced dramatically, from several thousands in each port to just a few hundred, as more than 80 per cent of the formerly registered dock workers took severance pay (Turnbull 2000, p. 367). It was clear that the Conservative government used redundancy payments as a strategy to remove dockworkers from British ports. Those few dock workers left were no longer registered dock workers and therefore lacked the employment protection offered by the previous scheme. Additionally, new employment agencies were created in many ports, such as Torside in Liverpool. Some were workers' cooperatives; others were created in agreements between the TGWU and the employer, such as Torside. By October 1992, Associated British Ports (APB) no longer recognised "unions for the purpose of representation or collective bargaining, with the exception of marine pilots" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 1 October 1992 Circular No. 920745). Liverpool[12], then, remained one of the few exceptions in recognising trade union representation for the purposes of collective bargaining.

The abolition of the NDLS had a clear objective in mind: destroying unions on the British waterfront. In a confidential report on the Dock Labour Scheme produced by the National Association of Port Employers (NAPE) in 1986/7 the following argument was made:

> "the power which the Scheme provides to the RDWs [Registered Dock Workers] is vested in the Union through appointments to the local boards and the National Board. The institutional power which the Union is thus able to command through the NDLB adds substantially to its industrial strength, which is already considerable due to the strategic nature of the industry. The Scheme also provides a common cause which binds all RDWs together and increases the Union's ability to mount unified national industrial action. It is significant that

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[12] The ports of London and Liverpool had never been part of the Associated British Ports group. (In Turnbull, P. (1993). "Docks". A. Pendleton and J. Winterton *Public enterprise in transition. Industrial Relations in state and privatized corporations.* London, Routledge.)

the two national dock strikes which occurred in 1984 were called by national union officers not in support of the NUM but in defense [*sic*] of the Scheme against alleged breaches by employers. If the Scheme was removed the potential for national dock strikes would greatly diminish, because RDWs from different ports actually have very few material interests in common outside the Scheme" (NAPE 1988).

In a sense, what NAPE argued was that dockworkers were not united in class terms with other workers outside the industry, such as the miners. Even during the Miners' Strike, dock strikes were not in solidarity with the miners but rather as a way of defending the Scheme, which for NAPE was the reason why dockers across the country joined the picket line. What this quote appears to miss was the fact that the TGWU could not call a strike in solidarity with the miners, so these two national dock strikes in 1984 *had to* be called in relation to something that was directly related to the dockers' employment, or it would have been an illegal strike. However, NAPE was right in saying that national dock strikes would diminish if the Scheme was abolished. The reason was not that dockers in different ports had different material interests, *but* that unionised dockers were physically removed from ports, whether by buying them out or by sacking them as in the Port of Tilbury.

The abolition of the Scheme deserves some further consideration. For the Conservative government drastic reform was justified as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Transport, Lord Brabazon of Tara put it:

> "Management is unable to manage its own workforce effectively, and restrictive practices add to the costs of the ports. The public have to pay for the costs of the scheme, both as customers for goods that come through the ports and also as taxpayers. Since the early 1970s, the taxpayer has contributed over £420 million in today's prices in payments for voluntary severance, the only means of reducing any surpluses of registered dock workers. A further £350 million of public money has gone to help certain scheme ports survive." (Brabazon 1989)

The justification made regarding the financial cost for the taxpayer was interesting. Particularly when the sale of Medway port, explained earlier in the

chapter, is considered. Additionally, the under-calculation that the Conservative government made, meant that abolishing the Scheme ended up costing an estimate of over £250m with all costs included (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 233).

More importantly, however, is how quickly the bill to abolish the scheme was to be introduced. The day after the announcement of a White Paper (the paper however was embargoed), there was a debate in the House of Lords (6 April 1989), and the Scheme was finally abolished in July 1989. This would mean that by the summer of 1989 the Scheme would be a thing of the past. The reasons for acting in such rapid manner and without consultation were given unequivocally:

> "I am afraid that the views of the Transport and General Workers Union are so clear-cut as to make consultation unnecessary. I can quote from Mr. John Connolly, the national secretary of the docks, waterways and fishing group of the Transport and General Workers Union, on a number of occasions. As recently as 24th February 1987, he said that the policy of the docks and waterways group has not changed, and that there will be opposition to the amendment or revision of the scheme and that opposition will take the form of a national dock strike. On Saturday 1st April he was quoted as saying in *The Times* that any move to abolish the scheme which effectively prevents the dismissal of registered dock workers would be met with a national strike. I am therefore afraid that there is no reason to consult on this issue. The views of all concerned are well known and it is therefore time that the Government acted" (Brabazon 1989).

The abolition of the Scheme was carried out without consultation. A strike of all Scheme ports followed, and Liverpool was the last port to go back to work after a six-week strike. In Liverpool, as in other ports, things were never going to be the same[13]. The lure of redundancy payments against an antagonistic return to work proved quite attractive for a large number of British dockers.

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[13] Chapter five will pick up from here, as it will focus on employment relations in the Port of Liverpool between 1989 and 1995.

Conclusion

This chapter has emphasised the importance of economic restructuring and political regulatory and deregulatory processes in understanding the type of employment relations that developed in British ports throughout the twentieth century. Firstly, the chapter has outlined the economic restructuring of ports, with attention to technological development. Ports underwent a vast transformation with the introduction of containerisation. This transformation involved a move from being a labour-intensive industry to becoming a capital-intensive one. Additionally, traditional docks were no longer suitable for large container ships, and therefore a physical relocation of ports occurred throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Secondly, the chapter has analysed the attempts to regulate employment in the industry between 1945 and 1979. Three concerns have been shown to be crucial for understanding regulatory attempts during this period. First, there was a concern with the inhumane and insecure conditions that dockworkers had to work in, which stood in stark contrast with new ideas on social welfare that became popular in post-1945 Britain. Second, unofficial trade union action often led to what were often considered unwelcome influences within the docks. Third, technological development required a more disciplined workforce and it was becoming evident that such discipline was difficult to achieve within such a casual labour market.

The last section of the chapter has considered the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989. This ended the regulatory circle initiated in 1945, and brought British ports back to a bygone era, at a particularly high cost to the taxpayer. The changes introduced after 1989 are considered in more detail in chapter five, which will focus on workplace conflict in the port of Liverpool in the period between 1989 and September 1995. Before that, the following chapter will assess the development of Liverpool's political culture during the twentieth century in light of claims that Liverpool is characterised by exceptionalism.

Chapter 3. Political culture in Liverpool

This chapter analyses the development of Liverpool's political culture during the twentieth century. It does so in order to understand to what extent Liverpool is politically exceptional as compared with other British cities with which it shares some key characteristics, such as Glasgow or London. For example, whilst Liverpool and Glasgow shared sectarian characteristics, sectarianism turned out to be not as prevalent in Liverpool after the Second World War. London also had a large number of Irish immigrants working in their docks, but that did not translate into the influence of Irish nationalism in the city's politics. In fact, Liverpool sent an Irish Nationalist MP to Westminster, T.P. O'Connor MP (1885-1929), leading many to joke whether Liverpool could be considered the thirty third county of Ireland.

Although the existence of sectarianism, and the large proportion of Irish immigrants in Liverpool, will be considered in this chapter, it is important first to identify what is distinctive about Liverpool; what makes Liverpool's exceptionalism. Liverpool's distinctiveness has been characterised in this way:

> "People who know Liverpool know that 'scousers' are different. A conglomeration of Celts around a busy seaport has produced more 'characters' per square yard than anywhere else in the country" (Beynon 1975, p. 68).

It is precisely the production of these 'characters' that this chapter is concerned with. But, before considering how they are produced, it is important to find out what makes them 'characters'. This chapter explores Liverpool's distinctiveness across two specific aspects. On the one hand, the development of local politics, which includes electoral politics, has followed a distinctive path. On the other hand, the way in which trade union identities have been shaped in Liverpool also offers a rather exceptional picture, particularly in terms of the relationship between trade unionism and community based politics and identities. Overall, however, the chapter argues that what is more striking about Liverpool's exceptionalism is not necessarily the development of local politics or how trade union identities have been shaped, but rather the timing of when these developments happen; their chronology.

Hence, Liverpool's exceptionalism is not ahistorical. In fact, attempts to 'normalise' Liverpool show the way in which different social and community forces have been configured during different times and spaces. For example, urban restructuring of the city since the end of the Second World War has attempted to 'modernise' the city and its communities. The results have been mixed though, as the removal of certain 'exceptionalisms' led to the creation of new ones, by the 1980s such initiatives had been largely unsuccessful. Old communities around the docks were broken down together with a weakening of their associational bases (often organised around religious grounds). Yet the new communities that formed, such as Kirkby, created their own organisational bases. However, these new communities did not manage to eradicate the poverty and deprivation that had been so prevalent in Liverpool. In fact, parts of Merseyside have remained some of the poorest areas in Europe into the twenty-first century and, as such, they have been the beneficiaries of *European Union Objective I Programmes* (Boland 1999).

Returning to the two characteristics of Liverpool's exceptionalism that this chapter focuses on, local politics and trade union identities have both been shaped by the seemingly endemic prevalence of poverty and deprivation in the city. The relationship between poverty and the way the city was organised was noted by Waller (1981), when he described the urban division that occurred between social classes which was further accentuated by the existence of poor transport systems, urban geography (such as the river Mersey) and a marked indifference towards the poor by the wealthier members of society (Waller 1981, p. 15). Liverpool city was not unique in terms of poverty. Bootle, a separate borough from 1868 until 1974, where some of the docks were and where many dockers lived was, and still is, also well known for the prevalence of its poverty. In fact, Liverpudlians would see Bootle as the poor relation, the one beyond redemption:

> "Bootle was a nadir vital to Liverpool's *amour propre*. If Liverpool's officials were imperfect, at least they were above the Bootle Town Clerk who embezzled £24,000. If Liverpool was rough, at least its violence paled by 'Brutal Bootle' – 'where the bugs wear clogs'. […], though its slums were shocking, Liverpool contained some handsome districts. Bootle displayed only 'dirty streets,

deserted mansions, public-houses, brickfields, and waste-land'" (Waller 1981, p. 94).

The shocking Liverpool slums were protagonists of more studies than Bootle. For example the relationship between poverty and identity was considered by Kerr's study of a Liverpool slum, originally published in 1958, which exemplifies the fascination with the way in which poverty appears to translate into pride: "the rather astonishing persistence of the past when conditions are favourable for its retention. Roles are rigid and simple, and the rate of change, whether of habitat or ideas, is slow in Ship Street. The past persists, therefore, in this group to a much greater extent than is generally realised" (Kerr 1998, p. 189). The persistence of the past is something this chapter, and to an extent this thesis, will revisit.

Liverpool's local politics

Liverpool, compared to other British cities, has been considered to have very distinctive local politics, which have often been translated into peculiar electoral politics. The distinctiveness of politics in Liverpool was to be found in two areas. First, the type of parties that developed and that were successful in Liverpool appeared to follow very different patterns, and timings of success and failure, than in the rest of Britain. Secondly, the way in which political parties organised in the city was also atypical. Tony Lane's characterisation of "boss politics" (Lane 1997) or Baxter's (1972) article on the relationship between the working class and the Labour Party in Liverpool offer a sense of this distinctiveness in the nature of politics in the city. Each of these two aspects needs to be elaborated further.

In terms of the development of political parties in Liverpool, and specifically their patterns of development as well as the timings of their successes and failures, "Liverpool's politics have never been less than puzzling and exasperating to outsiders and insiders alike" (Lane 1997, p. 99). The distinctiveness, for Lane, lies in the way in which local politics in Liverpool do not appear to conform to preconceived ideas of politics, or even to whatever may

be the norm, or the political mood, elsewhere. This is what makes its politics puzzling and exasperating, its inability to conform to the norm.

It took about a hundred years for Liverpool's politics to become 'normalised'. In a sense for much of the early part of the twentieth century, "the 'commonsenses' available were of Tory Democracy and Irish nationalism" (Smith 1980, p. 297). And both 'commonsenses' were to have their very own peculiarities. In terms of the Tory party in Liverpool, it was a party that attempted not to take sides in the conflict between capital and labour. The working class nature of the Liverpool Conservative Party became another contradictory characteristic of Liverpool's politics. As Howell maintains: "for decades economic insecurity and religious sectarianism combined to maintain a significant working-class Conservatism" (Howell 1996, p. 132). In fact, the Tory party in Liverpool made efforts to separate itself from being on the side of the bourgeoisie (Ingram 1987, p. 273-274). For example, it soon became the party of the Protestant working class in Liverpool.

Similarly, in a detailed analysis of the way in which political parties were organised in the city, Baxter (1972) argued that it is precisely the high degree of involvement of the working class in local party leaderships that helps explain local politics in Liverpool. Firstly, Baxter asserted that "Liverpool is in fact the most atypical of British cities imaginable" (1972, p. 97). For Baxter, this unusual situation was exemplified in what he termed "a peculiar power structure in both the Conservative and Labour Parties" (1972, p. 97). Specifically, Baxter was concerned with what he thought were the effects of a high rate of leadership positions achieved by the working class in local Labour politics. And the effects were not necessarily positive. The idea is that whilst the middle classes may enter politics they will not be doing so in order to achieve status or prestige, as they already have it. On the contrary, working class politicians will be more likely to enter politics as a way of improving *their* own personal status. In other words, "these people are not necessarily motivated by policy objectives but may adhere to a leadership to obtain position rather than power, and in doing so will give the leadership more power than is normal or perhaps acceptable in a liberal democratic system" (Baxter 1972, p. 100).

For Baxter, this explains the development of patronage politics in the city. However, it was not just working class participation that led to a political culture marked by political favours. It was also the legacy of Irish nationalist politics. The Irish Nationalist Party in Liverpool had been, according to Baxter, a socially working class party with no class consciousness. Therefore, when the Irish Nationalist Party was absorbed into the Labour Party in Liverpool in 1928 "it handed over to the Labour Party a substantial body of politically active working-class people who were not socialist; who indeed were not in politics for class reasons at all, but were involved for nationalist and religious reasons – motives that were basically irrelevant to the Labour Party" (Baxter 1972, p. 106).

This is important. It impacted on the role that sectarianism was to have in the Liverpool Labour Party. The absorption of the Irish Nationalist Party into the Labour Party meant that "when Labour was at last adopted in the Catholic districts it only meant putting a different label on old machinery" (Lane 1997, p. 110). This made the Labour Party much larger in Liverpool, yet more divided as "it was in practice two parties and the Catholic section, organised as a caucus, was dominant" (Lane 1997, p. 111). However, the contribution that sectarianism made to the weakness of Liverpool's Labour Party may have been over-emphasised. Davies (1993; 1996a) points towards another issue that may have impacted the Liverpool Labour Party more directly: distortions in the electoral system, particularly at the municipal level. This will be considered in more detail in the next few paragraphs. In the meantime, it is important to highlight that whilst there may have been other reasons why the Labour Party was weak in the city, the existence of sectarianism proved a useful scapegoat. It can be argued that "religious sectarianism was always the first excuse that Labour leaders turned to when faced with electoral disappointment, to the extent that they seemed blinded to any other possible reason" (Davies 1996a, p. 158).

Therefore, Davies' argument points towards a move beyond Baxter's argument which views the type of participation in working class politics in Liverpool to be marked by sectarianism and patronage. He points out that there were severe exclusions from the municipal franchise during the inter-war period (Davies 1996a, p. 119-129). This had a crucial impact on the level of working

class participation in electoral politics as the franchise was given according to whether someone was a rate payer or not. In Liverpool, with a high level of casualism in the labour market, and high levels of immigration, the amount of rate payers was low. As such, "the casual nature of much employment in the city, the poor housing stock, the existence of a large and rich middle class, the huge domestic-service sector, with particularly large numbers of young women employed, all meant that if the exclusions from the franchise disadvantaged Labour, then they may have been more marked in Liverpool than in some other parts of the country" (Davies 1996a, p. 130).

Table 3.1 shows the differences between the municipal electorate and the estimated population for each ward in Liverpool. Whilst the impact of exclusions from franchise can be seen on some wards (such as Castle St or Exchange, which were almost exclusively business wards), generalising in this case would be dangerous: "there are too many unquantifiable variables to make definite conclusions" (Davies 1996a, p. 129).

Table 3.1. Municipal electorate as a proportion of estimated population, aged 21 or over, living in wards, 1931 (in descending order)

Ward	Municipal electorate (1)	Estimated population 21+ (2)	(1) as a % of (2)
Castle St.	2,360	254	930
Exchange	2,492	1,879	133
St Peter's	2,979	3,429	87
Croxteth	10,851	13,050	83
Aigburth	8,493	10,771	79
Vauxhall	3,783	4,843	78
Fazakerley	10,866	13,923	78
Allerton	4,379	5,682	77
Netherfield	12,090	15,779	77
West Derby	18,498	24,437	76
Walton	16,395	21,692	76
St Domingo	11,734	15,600	75
Dingle	15,469	20,580	75
Garston	7,131	9,501	75
Wavertree	14,575	19,491	75
Breckfield	10,369	13,892	75
Childwall	3,105	4,163	75
Old Swan	15,881	21,302	75
Scotland N	8,758	11,762	74
Wavertree W	8,906	12,037	74
Sefton Park W	6,438	8,776	73
Edge Hill	13,274	18,183	73
Kensington	11,351	15,605	73
Sandhills	9,499	13,101	73
Scotland S	8,712	12,025	72
Much Woolton	2,299	3,182	72
Kirkdale	17,017	23,738	72
Prince's Park	9,913	13,878	71
Anfield	10,869	15,360	71
Fairfield	10,220	14,472	71
Brunswick	9,088	12,897	70
St Anne's	9,253	13,360	69
Low Hill	11,271	16,293	69
Warbreck	12,376	17,966	69
Sefton Park E	8,969	13,155	68
Granby	9,918	14,854	67
Everton	13,501	20,346	66
Little Woolton	592	935	63
Gt George	5,043	8,139	62
Abercromby	9,493	16,270	58
Total	378,287	516,619	73

Source: 1931 census; *Liverpool Official Red Book* (1993), p.100. (Davies 1996a, p. 128)

Therefore, the disenfranchisement at the municipal level was considerable in Liverpool, because of the size of the business wards as well as because of exclusions from the franchise as the table above shows. The effect of such disenfranchisement becomes clear when it is seen against the number of parliamentary voters, as table 3.2 demonstrates.

Table 3.2. Parliamentary and municipal voters in Liverpool, 1919-1938[14]

Year	Parliamentary voters	Municipal voters	Difference (%)
1919	352,407	275,320	21.9
1920	355,755	283,762	20.2
1921	357,034	289,817	18.8
1922	362,208	297,164	18.0
1923	373,283	307,514	17.6
1924	381,527	315,859	17.2
1925	389,569	321,660	17.4
1926	392,640	324,913	17.2
1927	396,960	330,345	16.8
1928	396,271	331,015	16.5
1929[15]	510,410	365,208	28.4
1930	513,099	364,781	28.9
1931	518,468	367,436	29.1
1932	520,102	368,768	29.1
1933	520,316	369,320	29.0
1934	519,718	368,545	29.1
1935	519,634	370,568	28.7
1936	517,695	370,933	28.3
1937	509,466	368,942	27.6
1938	504,041	366,980	27.2

(Davies 1996a, p. 121)

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[14] Sam Davies notes "The municipal electorate for Croxteth ward, incorporated from 1928, has not been included in this table, as, for parliamentary elections, this ward remained in the Ormskirk division, rather than being brought in to one of the Liverpool divisions. The total figure for municipal electors given here, then, is slightly lower than the full municipal electorate from 1928." (Davies, 1996: 121)

[15] After the 1928 Act suffrage was extended to women under the age of 30, hence the sudden rise in parliamentary voters (note that this barely affected the number of municipal voters, increasing the gap between the two by over 10%).

The picture was alarming. However, to put it into perspective, this was not unique to Liverpool. In fact, the exclusion rate for England and Wales was 24.2% for the 1938-1939 period, compared to 27.2% for Liverpool (Davies 1996a, p. 122). Only London and nearby Preston had higher exclusion rates than Liverpool in 1938, with 28.4% and 28.5% respectively (Davies 1996a, p. 122). Whilst these exclusion rates are an important issue, which is likely to have affected poorer voters to a much higher degree than any other voters, it must be treated with caution, as further research would be needed. It is crucial to remember that "because a ward was more working class did not automatically mean that it should be a Labour ward, or vice versa. In Liverpool, especially, that was a dangerous assumption. Nevertheless, any exclusion from the franchise that particularly affected the working class was more likely to disadvantage Labour than any other party" (Davies 1996a, p. 125-126).

Davies' sophisticated insights and evidence shows that the sectarian nature of Liverpool's politics is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation on its own. Instead, a combination of electoral franchise, aldermen and ward boundaries go further in providing an argument for the weakness of the Labour Party in Liverpool before the 1950s. But there was a further factor, the labour market structure of Liverpool as a port city, and the politics that developed from the persistence of casualism amongst maritime workers also impacted on the chances of the party. In fact, the

> "distrust of authority and leaders, whether industrial or political, was a consequence of their everyday experience of insecurity of work and life. The explosive nature of their industrial relations pointed them towards direct and decentralised action. The 'inevitability of gradualness'", the long-term goal of evolutionary reform, struck a discordant note in communities used to surviving from one day to the next. In Britain, and elsewhere, the dominant political strand in the *national* labour movement was not the intuitive home of waterfront workers. The significance of syndicalism, and later communism, to maritime workers, even in countries where those tendencies were relatively weak, is striking evidence of their potentially radical *politics*" (Davies 1993, p. 300).

The effect of a syndicalist mode of trade union action cannot be underestimated in Liverpool. During the 1911 Liverpool general transport strike,

it became evident that it had proven an attractive option for transport workers in the city. Holton, insightfully, highlights how "over the course of the Liverpool strikes the impact of syndicalism was certainly significant. For much of the time however, the *proto-syndicalist* mood of direct action and violent social confrontation with the legitimate civil power was more evident than any tangible syndicalist leadership from above" (emphases added, Holton 1976, p. 101). Proto-syndicalism is an apt concept when exploring Liverpool's trade union identities.

Liverpool's trade union identities

Liverpool's main source of employment until at least the 1960s was the port. The 1901 census reported nearly 40,000 people employed around the port: 19,594 'dock and wharf labourers' and 17,400 clerks (Waller 1981, p. 4-5). Clerks would be primarily employed around port related activities or banking and insurance. Both banking and insurance were important financial sectors with strong links to the shipping industry. It was, therefore, logical that trade unionism in Liverpool was initially marked by the waterfront experience. This, however, was not always a united experience. Mass trade unionism was not very successful in Liverpool until the creation of the National Union of Dock Labourers in Great Britain and Ireland (NUDL) in 1889. Up until then, sectarianism had impacted on the development of trade union identities in Liverpool, as "the baleful influence of casualism and sectionalism" had acted as an inhibitor of "the development of working-class consciousness" and therefore encouraged "collective apathy" (Taplin 2000, p. 461).

Eric Taplin's work (Taplin 1974; Taplin 1986; Taplin 2000) has extensively researched the initial development of trade unionism amongst dockworkers in Liverpool. In his argument two issues appear as crucial in the development of trade union identities amongst Liverpool dockworkers. First, the prevalence of casualism, which was not just linked to the particular organisation

of the local labour market, but also to characteristics that were not set by employers' strategies. Second, the seasonal character of trade and the impact it had on labour demand. This depended on trade cycles which could be known in advance (for example raw cotton used to reach Liverpool in the autumn), or, it could depend on "local factors such as bad weather" (Taplin 2000, p. 445) which would hold up ships in an unpredictable manner.

Nevertheless, even though the requirements of the industry were favourable towards the development of casualism, Liverpool developed the first register for dockworkers in Britain in 1912. Such a development was important as it was the first step towards the decasualisation of dock labour that was going to be advanced further by the creation of the 1945 National Dock Labour Board and the 1967 Devlin recommendations. Taplin's explanation as to why Liverpool's dockworkers acquired their type of trade union identity, and the effectiveness of their actions, emphasised the role of the port in their local economy: "The absence of manufacturing industry, the involvement of most of the business community with the docks in some form or other made the Liverpudlian acutely conscious of the importance of the waterfront worker" (Taplin 2000, p. 447).

A further factor needs to be considered: Phillips and Whiteside's (1985) study on casualism in the British port transport industry points towards the type of relationship developed between dockworkers and their employers in Liverpool coupled with their impact on trade union organisation. The 1912 registration scheme, for example, was possible, they argue, "because of the new-found friendship of employers and union leaders there, and secondly because the measures adopted manifestly served to strengthen union organization" (Phillips and Whiteside 1985, p. 96).

This last point is of crucial importance. Both capital and labour in Liverpool docks were suspicious of state interference. Rather than looking to the state as an arbiter, Liverpudlians saw the state as an outsider with interests that were different from theirs. Partly, this was shown during the 1911 Liverpool

General Transport Strike led by the syndicalist Tom Mann[16], but also this reinforced some of the contradictions to be found within the Liverpool labour movement throughout the twentieth century. Syndicalism suited the Liverpool dockworkers at times not because of any particular political ideology but because of its emphasis on action. In a sense, "the radicalism of dock workers was confined to short-term protests against employer exploitation" (Taplin 2000, p. 465). This led to "a radical mobilisation which articulated anger but which never seriously questioned the established order" (Howell 1996, p. 133). It is crucial not to over-estimate the impact of syndicalism as a doctrine within the Liverpool working class, particularly amongst dockworkers.

Although some syndicalist leaders, such as Jim Larkin, are held in more esteem in Liverpool's popular historical memory than the Dockers Union leader and later MP James Sexton, the appreciation is not necessarily due to ideological affinity. Instead, syndicalism appeared, at times, more suited for a workplace which required immediate action rather than bureaucratic organisation. Yet, it was precisely an awkward combination of Sexton's autocratic leadership style and Larkin's action-oriented character that would characterise much of Liverpool's waterfront trade unionism throughout the twentieth century.

This needs to be elaborated further. The role that memory plays in the shaping of trade union identity is crucial. Memory is the current and future understanding of past experience in the workplace and the community. Key to memory is the fact that, for it to be a powerful factor in the creation of identities, it does not need to be based on real events but on constructed experiences. The power that the memory of Larkin holds for the 500 Liverpool dockworkers that were sacked in September 1995 illustrates this point well. The social centre created by the sacked dockers in Liverpool's Hope Street, 'The Casa', contains large amounts of memorabilia related to the NUDL, as it could be expected. What is perhaps more surprising is that most of that memorabilia pays homage to Larkin rather than Sexton. Larkin appears as the dockers' local historical hero. His appeal is due to him having been a man of action who understood the docks and had a strong connection with Ireland.

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[16] Tom Mann was chairman of the strike committee and his syndicalist politics meant that he often clashed with James Sexton (the leader of the Dockers Union, who actually became an MP).

It is not just a matter of choice over memorabilia. During the interviews conducted for this research, James Larkin was mentioned many times, whilst Sexton was never mentioned at all. This shows two crucial aspects of memory. On the one hand, memory may be constructed, and this construction would be the outcome of a selection process, which must be analytically separated from myths and inventions. The selection is made from events and issues which actually existed, but the emphasis that these events may be given in the formation of memory is what makes them constructed. On the other, there is the creation of memories of events that never actually happened. James Larkin was not the leader of the NUDL, even if his radical and transgressive leadership would make him a more interesting historical character than Sexton, with his pragmatic and anti-heroic leadership. Yet these invented memories act as important moments of historical experience in so far as they influence future historical choices.

Whilst it is important to remember that radical mobilisation and syndicalism were only present at certain historical moments, such as the 1911 transport strike in the city, religious sectarianism was an important characteristic in shaping identities in Liverpool (Smith 1980; Smith 1984). Trade union identities grew as the contradictory outcomes of radical mobilisation and sectarianism, in contradictory similarity with Liverpool's local politics. Two key explanations attempt to account for these contradictions. First, there are explanations which place the existence of ethnic divisions and sectarianism as the key to understanding Liverpool's political culture. Secondly, there are explanations which place supremacy on the existence of a strong maritime economy and the employment patterns it generated. However, it will become evident in the next two sections that these two explanations are not dichotomies but rather they acquire particular significance at different historical times, and they also co-exist in tension at other times. Hence, as the chapter argues, it is the timing, the chronology of when these explanations become relevant that matters.

John Belchem has written extensively about the role of Irish migrants in Liverpool (for example, Belchem 2000; Belchem and MacRaild 2006). In his essay, *Micks on the make on the Mersey* (Belchem 2000), Belchem focuses particularly on the development of the Irish middle class within Liverpool, rather than focusing on an image of the Irish in Liverpool, as famine- escaping poor migrants. This Irish middle class was instrumental in shaping associations and politics in Liverpool, particularly the development of Irish nationalism in Liverpool. For Belchem, there were some similarities between the character of Irish immigrants in Liverpool and in the US, since both communities attempted to build an aura of respectability by excluding certain ideologies, such as socialist radicalism, and encouraging respectability amongst the poor (Belchem 2000, p. 151).

However, the key differences between Irish Americans and the Liverpool Irish were in the pattern of their migration. Firstly, "Liverpool was generally perceived as a stepwise entrepôt, not as place of destination." (Belchem 2000, p. 135). This created very different attitudes, both towards the place but also towards the immigrants themselves. Secondly, Irish Americans soon became 'Americans' as there were other groups that migrated there later, making them 'natives' vis-à-vis these other groups. In Liverpool, the Irish kept arriving, becoming the permanent outsiders. Additionally, ethnic segregation encouraged patronage. The pattern of political participation encountered by Baxter (1972), considered earlier in the chapter, could also be explained in terms of the Irish middle classes aiming to access some kind of power. Being discriminated against, in terms of ethnicity and/or religion, may have encouraged an attitude towards building networks based around those concepts. This building of networks may be considered patronage or clientelism when it spills over into politics. In a sense, some Irish in Liverpool saw political organisation as a means of social mobility.

Furthermore, Liverpool's population growth was fast-paced during the nineteenth century according to census data, as the table below shows, going

from 77,653 inhabitants in 1801 to 746,421 in 1901. This huge population growth can help account for the increasing rise between people of different backgrounds. In particular, two groups appear to have contributed largely to this population growth, the Irish and the Welsh. Additionally, boundary changes in Liverpool were also to account for these population changes. In 1835, the boundaries were extended to include Kirkdale and parts of Toxteth and West Derby. In 1895, Wavertree, Walton and the remainder of Toxteth and West Derby were included, and, finally, in this period Fazakerley was attached in 1904. It was not until 1974, however, that Merseyside was created as a metropolitan borough, which included Bootle.

Table 3.3. The population of Liverpool over the period 1801 to 1911 inclusive

Year	Population
1801	77,653
1811	94,376
1821	118,972
1831	165,175
1841	286,656
1851	375,955
1861	443,938
1871	493,405
1881	552,508
1891	517,980
1901	746,421

(Census, cited in Neal 1987, p. 12)

This huge population growth therefore impacted on how the city would develop its political culture. Sectarianism was to become a feature of nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century Liverpool, but that "was not just because Liverpool had considerably more Irish Catholic residents than elsewhere, but also because it was home to an exceptionally vocal Orange movement" (Fielding 1993, p. 27). So, it appears that the existence of a politically articulated opposition to Irish Catholics was a crucial factor in determining the level of sectarianism in a city.

Nevertheless, there were further differences to be exploited. In fact, Liverpool's population growth shows that the key dichotomy was not between the Irish and the native Liverpudlians, or the English, but rather, between the many newcomers. In particular, another group stands out, beyond Irish Catholics and Ulster Protestants, the Welsh.

Quite a large number of the 17,400 clerks employed in Liverpool in 1901 which have been mentioned in the previous section, would have been Welsh. The Welsh worked primarily in the burgeoning sectors of banking, insurance and importantly the building industry in Liverpool (Jones 1981). They arrived in large numbers following family connections from rural Wales, and their participation in sectors of the labour market that had a higher standing meant that they soon became more socially mobile than the Irish who were involved in dock work and related activities. This meant that the Welsh saw themselves as somewhat superior to the Irish:

> "This high opinion of themselves [the Welsh] was enhanced by the low regard in which the Welsh in exile (and the English) regarded the Irish. In the poisonous context of Liverpool's religious sectarianism this, despite the Welsh's liberalism, was a significant consideration" (Jones 1981, p. 40).

This was further enhanced on the waterfront. Although the Irish were numerous amongst dockworkers, the Welsh were also present in the port, particularly working in warehousing related activities, and they appeared to look after themselves. According to Waller: "In dockland Welshmen confronted Irishmen as immigrant aristocrats. In the 1830s most warehousemen were Welsh, because employers thought Irishmen unreliable. Since warehousemen hired porters, Welshmen got the best places" (Waller 1981, p. 9-10). However, the Welsh do not appear to have created any political organisations along ethnic lines, perhaps because their socio-economic position allowed them to prosper without the need to promote political networks of patronage, unlike the Irish in Liverpool. Yet the Welsh have a claim to nationalism in Liverpool. For example, the founder of modern Welsh nationalism, Saunders Lewis, was born in the city (Jones 1992). The lack of a large city in North Wales and the

development of Welsh nationalism in the city led many commentators to call Liverpool the displaced capital of North Wales.

Sectarianism, however, became less relevant in Liverpool's political culture in the second half of the twentieth century. This could well be due to the nature of sectarianism itself as "the so-called religious conflict provided a framework and legitimacy for indulging in physical violence the motives for which lay in the tensions and pressures generated by the brutalised environment in which the working class in Liverpool existed" (Neal 1987, p. 448). As the twentieth century evolved it gave way to a unifying working class experience in Liverpool, which was able to erode certain sectarian aspects. Additionally, the rise of secularism everywhere, including Liverpool, should not be underestimated. The extent to which this may be the case and how the new dynamics emerged will be considered in the next section.

The reliance of Liverpool on a maritime economy is presented as a possible explanation for understanding the exceptional character of Liverpool's political culture. However, many other cities were built on maritime economies and yet did not develop a similar political culture. Perhaps the explanation should be more to do with the type of relationship Liverpool built with its maritime economy. For Liverpool, unlike other major port cities such as Barcelona, the maritime economy was not just what provided the economic basis of the city, but also it determined, to a certain extent, the urban organisation of the city. In Liverpool, the city opened up to the sea, it faced the water. In Barcelona, it turned its back to the sea, at least until 1992. A possible explanation for this could be that port cities develop, and become important nodes for trade, during different historical times. Liverpool's heyday was always linked to the British Empire. In fact, "it was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century that shipping became of any importance to Liverpool's economy" (Taplin 2000, p. 443). Continuing with the comparative example of Barcelona, the port's heyday was linked to the Middle Ages. Timing matters particularly as it may impact on whether the sea (and the port) were seen as friends or foes. The sea may have brought trade and work, but it could as easily bring war and invasion. Liverpool was able to develop a more friendly relationship with its port, as the city did not require to be protected from its consequences.

Liverpool's development of the port after 1950 fits with the pattern of development of other port cities, such as Marseilles or Hamburg, themselves to be considered fairly exceptional in comparison with other cities in their own countries. According to Graeme Milne, these cities had "more in common with one another than with industrial cities in their hinterlands" (Milne 2006, p. 257). However, this internationalist vision of port cities is not unproblematic. As this chapter shows, there is a fine historical line between particular cultural identities and certain moments which act as unifying class experiences within local labour politics in port cities.

In Liverpool, the importance of the unifying class experience of maritime related employment became important as, paradoxically, employment started to decline in the industry as chapters two and five of this thesis consider at length. Two explanations have been offered for the decline of religious sectarianism. First, Waller considers it has to do with the way in which political parties developed in Liverpool as the urban restructuring of the city was initiated (Waller 1981, p. 353). In a sense, division may remain but it has been channelled into parties and thus monopolised and democratised. A second option is given by Pat Ayers' (2004) research on the development of masculinities in Liverpool. Sectarianism was not overcome in the second part of the twentieth century, instead the effect of the Second World War in Liverpool acted as a unifying experience.

The latent waterfront working experience acquired importance even in new employment sectors, which were being developed by outsiders. Whilst the Liverpool port employment experience before the Second World War would have been around local stevedoring companies, with local, or at most national, employers, after 1945 new employers tended to be large multinational companies. They no longer had an ethnic or religious identity as employers, a characteristic prevalent in the waterfront, not just in Liverpool but also in places such as New York (Nelson 2000; Davies 2000b; Davis 2000b). Additionally, work practices, such as 'welting', where only a reduced number of the gang works, travelled into new employment sectors. For example, Ford employers

found that such waterfront work practices had made their way into their Merseyside plant (Ayers 2004, p. 157).

Furthermore, casualism had now become part of Liverpool's character "as a long history of casual employment practices in a wide range of port-related occupations sometimes encouraged a certain adventurousness, and impulsive rebelliousness, a disposition to seize the time" (Lane 1997, p. 127). It is precisely the relationship between casualism and trade union militancy that develops what has been termed 'dockworkers' subculture' (Miller 1969). According to Miller's argument, what accounts for the type of subculture developed in *any* port city amongst dockworkers, is not due to specific cultural, religious or ethnic characteristics, but rather it is due to the experience of casualism (Miller 1969, p. 314).

Figure 3.1. Dockworkers' subculture

Conditions producing dockworkers subculture

- The casual nature of employment
- The exceptional arduosness, danger, and variability of work
- The lack of an occupationally stratified hierarchy and mobility outlets
- Lack of regular association with one employer
- Continuous contact with foreign goods, seamen, and ideas
- The necessity of living near the docks
- The belief shared by longshoremen that others in the society consider them a low-status group

Characteristics of dockworker subculture

- Extraordinary solidarity and undiffused loyalty to fellow dockworkers
- Suspicion of management and outsiders
- Militant unionism
- Appearence of charismatic leaders from the ranks
- Liberal political philosophy but conservative view of changes in work practices
- 'Casual frame of mind' (free men or irresponsible opportunists)

(Miller 1969, p. 305 and 308)

The conditions which produce a dockworkers' subculture according to Miller were in existence in Liverpool, and so were the ensuing characteristics. However, this would mean that the type of political culture developed within dockworkers would be (a) different from the political culture developed in the rest of the city, and (b) be equally identifiable across dockworkers *anywhere*. The first point could arguably be the case in Liverpool to an extent, whether one may want to argue that it is because of their class experience or because of their residual Irishness. However, that would fail to explain how it is Liverpool as a city that presents a distinctive, exceptional character, not necessarily its

dockworkers. For example, one of the illustrative events of Liverpool's exceptionalism was the coming into power of a Trotskyist tendency within the Labour Party to Liverpool's City Council in 1983. This was certainly against the tide of the rest of Britain, where Margaret Thatcher was introducing vast neoliberal reforms. However, dockworkers had little to do with these events and in fact the unions in Liverpool found the tactics the new council was using were opposed to Liverpool's workers' material interests (Shaw 1989).

Miller's second assumption, that dockworkers' subculture would occur among dockworkers anywhere with experience of casualism, also suffers shortcomings. It is indeed the case that dockworkers in places such as Marseilles, Hamburg or even New York and London (Davis 2000a) have been known for their militancy. However, other ports have not necessarily produced the same type of subculture, for example Hull (Davies 2000a). Therefore, there must be other local aspects that help account for similar class experiences leading to different types of subculture. In Liverpool, ethnicity, sectarianism and the relationship of the city with the sea and its maritime economy are all crucial contributory factors.

In fact, popular culture in Liverpool considers that the relationship with the sea, and with the river Mersey, should not be underestimated. Although the scholarly literature remains largely oblivious to such arguments, it is said that dockworkers were never ruled by the clock. The clock is seen as the key to capitalist discipline (Thompson 1967). Instead, they were ruled by the tide of the river Mersey which was both enslaving and liberating at the same time (Higginson and Wailey 2006). It was enslaving as it would determine when ships had to go in and out, and therefore it would determine when work was available. However, it gave power to workers as they were able, through a simple *go-slow,* to hold a ship in port for much longer than the shipowners and the dockers' employers wished.

Perhaps this explains the pride many dockers maintained in their perceived freedom from the clock. This may even bring together the combination of Irishness and an anti-capitalist discipline, which answers to work but not to time. As E.P. Thompson noted:

"By the 1830s and 1840s it was commonly observed that the English industrial worker was marked off from his fellow Irish worker, not by greater capacity for hard work, but by his regularity, his methodical paying-out of energy, and perhaps also by a repression, not of enjoyments, but of the capacity to relax in the old, uninhibited ways" (Thompson 1967, p. 91).

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the development of Liverpool's political culture during the twentieth century. It has done so by assessing the extent to which Liverpool's politics, specifically labour and working-class politics, have been exceptional. It has become evident that in order to understand whether Liverpool has a distinctive character or not it must be compared to other British cities or to other maritime cities. Crucially, the chapter maintains that Liverpool's distinctiveness appears to be historically contingent, and therefore it is subject to change.

Thus, it has contributed to the third analytical category proposed by the thesis, which emphasises the importance of workplace and community experience in the construction of popular historical memory. As such this chapter has argued that the selection and construction of memory are crucial processes in the creation of history. The following chapter turns to the second analytical category and considers the trade union strategies of the TGWU.

Chapter 4. The Transport and General Workers Union since 1979. Strategies of renewal?

This chapter focuses on the renewal strategies pursued by the Transport and General Workers Union in response to Margaret Thatcher's attack on the trade unions. To do so, the chapter follows the internal conflicts within the TGWU, paying particular attention to the role of dockworkers, as a trade group both within the union as a whole, and within the TGWU's Region 6. This chapter contributes, primarily, to elucidation of the second analytical category proposed in the thesis – trade union strategies. It does so by showing how the specific interaction of economic restructuring, political deregulation – as assessed in chapters one and two – and local political cultures – as considered in chapter three – contributed to specific choices in terms of trade union strategy.

Two themes have been prevalent since the amalgamation of unions that led to the creation of the TGWU in 1922. Firstly, dockworkers have been at the heart of struggles over the nature of union control and democracy which have proven to be endemic in a union as heterogeneous as the TGWU. The needs and grievances of dockworkers have been at odds with the institutional practices of the TGWU's institutions. Secondly, there has been historical marginalisation of dockers within the TGWU's leadership after Bevin. Ernest Bevin started his working life as a van driver, and at the age of 30 became a trade union official in the Dockers' Union (Wrigley 2010). Arthur Deakin's trade union life also started in the Dockers' Union (Allen 2010), but neither of them had actually been dockers. Of the leaders that were to follow, Arthur Tiffin and Frank Cousins had no direct relationship with dockers, although Jack Jones had had family connections to Garston docks. Moss Evans, Ron Todd and Bill Morris had no connections with dock work.

Whether this general distancing of the TGWU's leadership from its docker members accounts for the way in which the relationship between the union and one of its founding trade groups has proven to be so difficult is impossible to ascertain. What is clear is that it has at times perhaps accounted for the way in which the union leadership has often been unable to understand the

dockers' points of view.   Throughout the history of the TGWU, dockworkers have asserted a higher degree of autonomy than that allowed by TGWU structures and procedures.

The second issue to have become prevalent since the TGWU's amalgamation, and which this chapter traces, concerns the struggles over the political articulation of solidarity. This focuses on the different ways in which the realisation of solidarity is understood politically. This chapter shows that the union leadership has preferred pursuing the political articulation of solidarity through the framework provided by the Labour Party. This has often been presented as the way to achieve the long-term interests of the working class, rather than the short-term industrial concerns of everyday grievances. However, the relationship between the TGWU and the Labour Party throughout the twentieth century points towards more complicated processes. In fact, the struggles over the articulation of solidarity have been deeper than the long-term versus short-term bread and butter arguments would suggest. In particular, dockworkers within the TGWU have presented a constant challenge in the struggle towards a political articulation of solidarity rooted in their own workers' experiences, rather than electoral ambitions. This has remained a problem for both the TGWU and its dockworkers as, politically, there was a lack of other alternatives beyond the Labour Party, and a solidarity based on workers' experience has to deal with diverse experiences and expectations. This was precisely what the TGWU was trying to avoid with amalgamation. The challenge was to ensure that sectionalism did not erode political unity, and the best way to achieve that was to keep a healthy distance between the political and the industrial sphere.

The historical account presented here starts with a brief sketch of Bevin's ambitions to create a general union and extends to the difficulties facing Ron Todd's leadership during the 1980s. The focus, however, is on Bill Morris' leadership and his strategy of union renewal during the 1990s. The chapter is organised as follows: firstly, there will be a brief exploration of the history of the TGWU, from its creation in 1922 by Bevin, including some of the earlier interactions and criticisms of the organisation. There was a high degree of inter-

union rivalry in British docks from the 1940s to the 1970s, and the way in which the TGWU dealt with these issues is important. Additionally, the relationship between the TGWU and the Communist Party will also be considered. After this brief historical survey, the chapter will concentrate on the period after 1979 and in particular on how two[17] General Secretaries, Ron Todd and Bill Morris, dealt with the changes brought about by neoliberalism and a hostile legislative environment for trade unions. In other words, it will consider to what extent these two General Secretaries embarked upon 'strategies of renewal'. Finally, the chapter will end with an assessment of Bill Morris' leadership, including the way in which the relationship between the TGWU and the New Labour project developed after 1992.

The creation of the TGWU

The TGWU was created from the amalgamation of different unions in 1922 under the leadership of Ernest Bevin (Coates and Topham 1994). The TGWU grew in numbers and political influence in the period leading up to 1945, which provided the union with a degree of influence in the shaping of the post Second World War welfare state. Prior to that Bevin had joined Churchill's war-time coalition government as Minister of Labour. This level of political influence also came with a level of political responsibility. This, and the political environment characteristic of the post-war period, meant that the TGWU soon became entangled in Cold War politics. The union had already assumed an anti-Communist stance under the leadership of Bevin, which was later reinforced by Arthur Deakin (elected in 1946), which stood in sharp contrast to the sentiments of some of the membership, particularly dockworkers and London busmen. For example, Deakin's biographer recalls how "dockers and London busmen have needed more guidance than other groups on fundamental trade union matters and continually they have had to be reminded of the benefits of amalgamation" (Allen 1957, p. 57). The TGWU took its anti-Communist stance further than

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[17] Moss Evans' leadership will not be considered in detail due to the short length of his secretariat due to health reasons.

many other unions as it prohibited Communist Party members from holding office within the union. Jack Jones recalls Deakin's leadership in his autobiography:

> "He [Deakin] was an awkward, intolerant man. Undoubtedly the pressures upon him were heavy and his health was poor. But he did not accept change easily. […]. In running the union Deakin resembled a small businessman in outlook, rather than the leader of hundreds of thousands of industrial workers. Yet deep down there was a gentleness which occasionally revealed itself. I formed the impression that he was a shy man who put on a bluff and bluster as a front, although any liberal tendencies he may have had in his early years he brutally suppressed" (Jones 1986, p. 132).

Dockworkers had been a significant sector of the TGWU's membership since its inception, and one which was sometimes influenced by Communist Party members who were unofficial 'agitators' in the docks. This created a situation where unofficial union leaders (usually with strong connections to either the Communist Party or the Blue Union[18]) had often more power on the ground than full-time union officials, which exacerbated the gap between officials and their members. This was increased by a perceived move to the right during Deakin's unimaginative leadership. He has been characterised as "not a man of profound wisdom or pronounced intuitive understanding" (Goodman 1979, p. 100). This "merely had the effect, […], of strengthening the position of the unofficial leaders, and of ensuring them a higher profile and a loyal

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[18] The Blue Union or NASD (National Association of Stevedores and Dockers) "had developed in London after 1945, had Communist members in its leadership, and Communist and Trotskyist influences were evident in Liverpool." Davies, S. (2000a). "The history of Hull dockers, c. 1870-1960". S. Davies, C. J. Davis, D. De Vrieset al *Dock Workers. International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970*. Aldershot, Ashgate. **Volume 1**.
It was only in the Port of London that the Blue Union had official recognition and in fact competed directly with the TGWU. In other ports, such as Liverpool, the situation was far more complicated and perhaps contradictory. Although the TGWU attempted to create a closed shop (with employers being in agreement) dockworkers refused such attempts. In fact, "nearly half the members refused either to show their union cards at the check points or to accept employment offered when Blue Union men were being discriminated against. After ten days employers withdrew their support" Devlin, P. A. L. (1965). Final Report of the Committee of Inquiry under the Rt. Hon. Lord Devlin into certain matters concerning the Port Transport Industry (Port Transport Industry). *Document type: COMMAND PAPERS; REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS*: XXI.827. Furthermore, the Blue Union claimed a membership of 1,565 members, representing 12% of the labour force (p. 39) For more information on this situation in Liverpool: Hunter, B. (1994). *They Knew Why They Fought. Unofficial Struggles & Leadership on the Docks 1945-1989*. London, Index Books.

following among many dock-workers" (Mankelow 2000, p. 382). Yet it also signified an internal division within the TGWU as "the execution of Union policy is in the hands of the professional Union official" (Goldstein 1952, p. 55). This increased the perception by some members of a separation between a bureaucratic union and the rank-and-file.

However, the influence of the Blue Union on rank-and-file TGWU dockworkers should not be underestimated. The inter-union rivalry which existed in some British ports between the 1940s and the 1970s exemplifies some of the main challenges the TGWU faced vis-à-vis dockworkers. They presented a challenge in four ways. Firstly, the TGWU's leadership appeared as insulated, untouchable, and authoritarian in its nature. Secondly, dock work required that grievances had to be dealt with promptly, due to the nature of the work, as the 'factory' (i.e. the ship to be worked) is only a temporary placement. For example, if a ship contained a cargo that was dangerous, or particularly unpleasant, rates and work conditions had to be negotiated there and then, as the ship would only be in port for a few days. It is easy to see why this created a situation where the union official was often far removed from the membership of the union. This usually led to the rise and legitimacy of unofficial leaders who were able to deal with grievances much quicker. Thirdly, the partnership created by employers and the representatives of dockworkers (particularly the TGWU) in the shape of the National Dock Labour Board and its local branches led to the TGWU being involved in disciplinary procedures which might have been against the direct interests of their members. Finally, all of these issues came together to promote a deep rivalry against the Blue Union and against unofficial leaders who were often members of the Communist Party.

This situation was mentioned in all the official reports (Leggett 1950; Devlin 1955; Rochdale 1961; Devlin 1964; Devlin 1965) of the period. In fact, the Leggett Committee of Inquiry was precisely set up to investigate the matter of unofficial leadership in the Port of London. This was prompted by two disputes which had baffled the government and employers, and, to a certain extent, the TGWU. In fact, both disputes were characterised as 'political' disputes since they were not over better pay and conditions or other 'bread and

butter' issues. They were the Canadian seafarers' dispute of 1949, which was stigmatised as linked to international interests of the Communist Party by the TGWU's leadership and the dispute over the expulsion of three of its members by the TGWU. What prompted concern was that "the outstanding feature of the major strikes is the extraordinary way in which they rapidly spread and assumed serious proportions, while at the same time the original issue became confused and distorted and was thrust into the background" (Leggett 1950, p. 4).

The Canadian seafarer's dispute emerged after the Canadian Seamen's Union, which was a communist-led union, and the Canadian East Coast Shipowners failed to sign an agreement. Instead, the shipowners signed an agreement with an AFL affiliated union, the Seafarer's International Union, which had had no representation previously on the Eastern Canada seaboard. Whilst this could have been a local or regional dispute, it achieved international resonance when in April 1949, members of the Canadian Seamen's Union "tried to sit in on two Canadian ships after they docked in London" (Weiler 1988, p. 231). A court injunction prevented them from doing so, which led to the Canadian seafarers setting up picket lines on the London docks. Members of NASD in London refused to cross the picket lines.

The Canadian seafarers' dispute and the solidarity strike that led to the London Dock Strike of 1949 illuminate the relationship between Deakin's TGWU, dockworkers and anti-communism. Communism was blamed for any unofficial dispute. Partly, this was due to the separation between Labour Party politics and the reality of the everyday experience of working life. It became evident that the Labour government was increasingly unable to understand the effect of certain government policies on workers, which led them to blame any kind of action on Communist agitators. In a sense, "Attlee and his colleagues' appeals to a higher social ethic could be persuasive, but they could ignore the discrepancy between Labour aspirations and the facts of working class experience. Allegations about Communists simply evaded the problem" (Howell 2006, p. 101).

The issue at stake, ultimately, was the creation of the National Dock Labour Board, and the way in which that incorporated the TGWU in the

management of employment affairs. In a deep sense, "the men still regarded the employers as their adversaries, not, as the TGWU leadership put it, as their industrial partners" (Weiler 1988, p. 260). This showed a clear lack of understanding by both the TGWU, and the Labour government, of the experience of dockworkers. Whilst the TGWU and the government considered that dockworkers should have felt protected under the umbrella of the TGWU, dockworkers were not about to leave behind the traditions of solidarity that a casual system of employment had forced them to develop for many years. For the TGWU, any opposition to the NDLB, or any attempt at unofficial leadership in the docks was seen as a Communist conspiracy, rather than as an indication of the role the unofficial movement played "as the expression of the dockers' tradition of class loyalty" (Weiler 1988, p. 260).

Ultimately "the view of the Labour government and the TGWU that the unofficial movement was a conspiracy denied the obvious evidence that it existed because the men supported it" (Weiler 1988, p. 264). Instead, what these strikes showed was the uneasy situation that the National Dock Labour Scheme had produced for the TGWU. Importantly, "the evidence is thus extensive that beneath the 1949 dispute, as well as other disputes after 1945, lay the men's deep dissatisfaction with their union and its corporatist position" (Weiler 1988, p. 266). If the TGWU was to participate in joint management, it would also participate in joint dismissals. As Weiler points out "joint control strengthened the employers by removing the union as an active opponent" (1988, p. 251).The impossibility of being a representative of the workers and a partner in management was exemplified during this period. Being a partner in management led to the increasing professionalisation of union officials. From then on, they had to demonstrate they were 'responsible' and understood 'industry needs'. For example, "Deakin was not willing to support industrial action to force through these changes [provisions relating to overtime and disciplinary arrangements] if this meant that the employers could call the union's attachment to the scheme into question" (Jackson 1991, p. 92). This added a sense of distrust between the TGWU official leadership and rank-and-file dockworkers. Examples such as the 30 dismissals in the Port of London in 1949 on the grounds of old age, led to immense dissatisfaction with the TGWU. In fact, the "workers walked out en

masse and this became the first and last time that the T&GWU consented to compulsory dismissals on non-disciplinary grounds" (Sapsford and Turnbull 1990, p. 28). In fact, inter-union rivalry during this period was crucial to how the internal politics of the TGWU developed. There was an increasing separation between the dockers' unofficial leaders, based in the workplace, and the TGWU's union officials and leaders who often appeared bewildered by the actions of their members (Jackson 1991).

From Deakin to Jones

The sudden deaths in 1955 and 1956 of Arthur Deakin and his successor Arthur 'Jock' Tiffin respectively brought Frank Cousins to the post of General Secretary, who was propelled into complex and crucial changes, particularly in relation to democratising the internal structures of the union, as Cousin's biographer notes: "the most significant and far-reaching of all post-war social and political developments in Britain: the emergence of an altogether more radical force throughout the trade union movement which has since became a major power factor in the country" (Goodman 1979, p. xi). But this new radical force, whilst acknowledging the previous shortcomings of the TGWU and the Labour Party as a representative of working class interests, was still unable to understand the experiences of some sections within the union. It was not the dockers but the London bus strike of 1958 that posed the largest challenge to Cousins' leadership (Goodman 1979), and it is precisely this challenge that prompted the changes to the TGWU that were to move the union towards a new path:

> "It was a very special dispute which helped to change, irrevocably, the relationship between the leadership and led in the TGWU. The union Cousins had inherited was, (…), an organisation with a long tradition of autocratic leadership. The strike decisively marked the end of that tradition. It is true that tears in the old fabric were already appearing before the bus strike. But it was Cousins's action in leading that strike which saved the TGWU from being

weakened still further by internal conflicts and, in the process, also helped to lay the foundations for a period of internal repair" (Goodman 1979, p. 193).

In October 1964, it was the dockers who caused trouble for the TGWU's new leader, with unofficial disputes in London, Liverpool and Hull docks. They did not want to accept the pay offer made by employers, but rather to press for more. Cousins managed to delay the decision, leaving the door open to doubts over whether he had done so to avoid an open confrontation with port employers which could have endangered a Labour victory in the forthcoming election on 15 October (Goodman 1979, p. 391).

Frank Cousins joined the Wilson government in October 1964, after creating the Assistant General Secretary post in the TGWU, which Jack Jones obtained. Thirteen years of a Conservative government and a belief that a Labour government needed trade union involvement at the top, such as Bevin in 1945, led Cousins to join the Labour government: "he clearly saw the possibility of a Wilson-Cousins relationship developing into something like the earlier Attlee-Bevin axis" (Goodman 1979, p. 401). However, this never materialised. It has been argued that Wilson lacked an understanding of trade unionism and an appreciation, in particular, of the pressures Cousins might have been under: "Wilson showed little understanding of the complex pressures on trade union officials as they move into the political arena" (Howell 1993, p. 184). Most immediately, the issue of incomes policy was causing further divisions within unions and between unions and the Labour government.

However, in an attempt to sort out the problems within the dock industry, the first Devlin inquiry was set up in 1965. But problems remained. Importantly, an assessment of the seamen's strike of May-June 1966 strongly points towards a key issue in the political articulation of solidarity, and in the relationship between the Labour Party and the unions, as "Wilson demonstrated that when a choice had to be made, a conventional view of the national interest would be preferred to any attempt to protect or advance the aspirations of trade unionists" (Howell 1993, p. 185). In fact, "the aspirations of trade unionists" were often marginalised as being "sectional, or unrealistic" (Howell 1993, p. 185). Trade unionists were seen not as instruments of change but blockages to modernisation.

Returning to the autocratic power of the General Secretary, which many commentators have been keen to emphasise, it has been argued (Murray 2008) that the union moved away from this situation under the leaderships of Frank Cousins (1956-1969) and Jack Jones (1969-1978) as they both prompted a move towards 'lay' democracy within the TGWU which increased the role of shop stewards as workplace representatives. Within the dock industry this had also been identified by Devlin as a way to improve representation and avoid the type of unofficial leadership that had developed between 1945 and 1967.

This type of devolution of power within the union was itself contested and slow. It involved, in particular, a move towards providing more power to the regions and districts. Changing an institution like the TGWU was not completed overnight, and, in fact, many elements remained from the *ancien régime*. In fact, whilst there was a perception that the TGWU's General Secretary had almost unlimited powers, the reality was far more complicated. Minkin points out that "the power of a union 'boss' became part of the mythology of the Labour movement and almost impervious to evidence to the contrary. The fact was that in industrial terms, the new General Secretary represented a wave from below but in political terms it took four years for the new General Secretary to be able to cast a vote at the Labour Party Conference which was out of line with previous union policy; a new TGWU General Secretary had to operate within many constraints, including incumbent officials and past traditions" (Minkin 1992, p. 303). Importantly, Minkin's distinction between what the General Secretary represented industrially and his influence politically shows that whilst the new leadership represented a more assertive industrial strategy, politically, the push for alternatives was weaker and typically seen as secondary.

Incomes policy and wage restraint proved a particular issue for the new TGWU. From the mid-1960s both Cousins and Jones led the TGWU against incomes policy, only for this to be reversed by Jones in 1975. He then became central to the government policy which introduced a £6 limit. It goes without saying that it proved a challenge to Jack Jones' leadership as this was undermined by the lay membership. In the TGWU Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) of 1977, Jack Jones lost a crucial vote. "The delegates rejected Jones's

impassioned advice that their union should continue to support voluntary wage restraint. It was unprecedented for a leader to be defeated in this manner and it proved to be fateful for the Labour Government as well as for the union" (Torode 06/10/1988). This instance was to create a precedent, according to TGWU national and regional officers interviewed during this research. It subsequently became a TGWU tradition that the BDC[19] would overturn the executive on at least one key issue. It is in this way that many in the TGWU were to analyse the 1997 BDC vote on the Liverpool dockers' dispute which will be considered in chapter six. This demonstrates a change in the way the membership related to their leaders, as Bevin had designed a union in which "the procedures of the Conference were very advantageous to the Executive and General Secretary" (Minkin 1992, p. 302). Jack Jones briefly recalled the episode in his autobiography:

> "Critics have said that I was defeated by the very democratic spirit in the TGWU I had sought to create. Well, I am still in favour of democracy. When the result of the voting was announced and I rose to comment, the delegates showed that they respected my views although so many had voted against them. I told them that I believed in the acceptance of conference decisions and would do my best to implement this one" (Jones 1986, p. 326).

Ron Todd: dealing with decline

Ron Todd became a contender for the post of General Secretary following the leadership of Moss Evans (1978-1985), who had to stand down due to ill health. Todd's election was the first the TGWU had to complete under new legislation, the 1984 Trade Union Act, which stipulated elections to Executive positions every five years under secret ballot. It stimulated a great deal of controversy and media involvement, with continued accusations of vote rigging. Todd cleverly re-ran the election in order to silence the accusations. The re-run election showed an even clearer majority for him. Todd's leadership

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[19] Later in the chapter there is explanation on TGWU structures.

(1985-1992) was clearly shaped by the attack on trade unionism undertaken by Thatcher's government. Additionally, the legislative attack came in tandem with a declining membership, increasing levels of unemployment and a media campaign against the trade unions.

Membership within the TGWU was suffering a rapid decline from its peak in 1979, as figure 4.1 shows. Membership of the Docks and Waterways trade group more than halved between 1968 (after Devlin) and 1985 (before the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme), as is evidenced by figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1. TGWU membership changes, 1968-1985
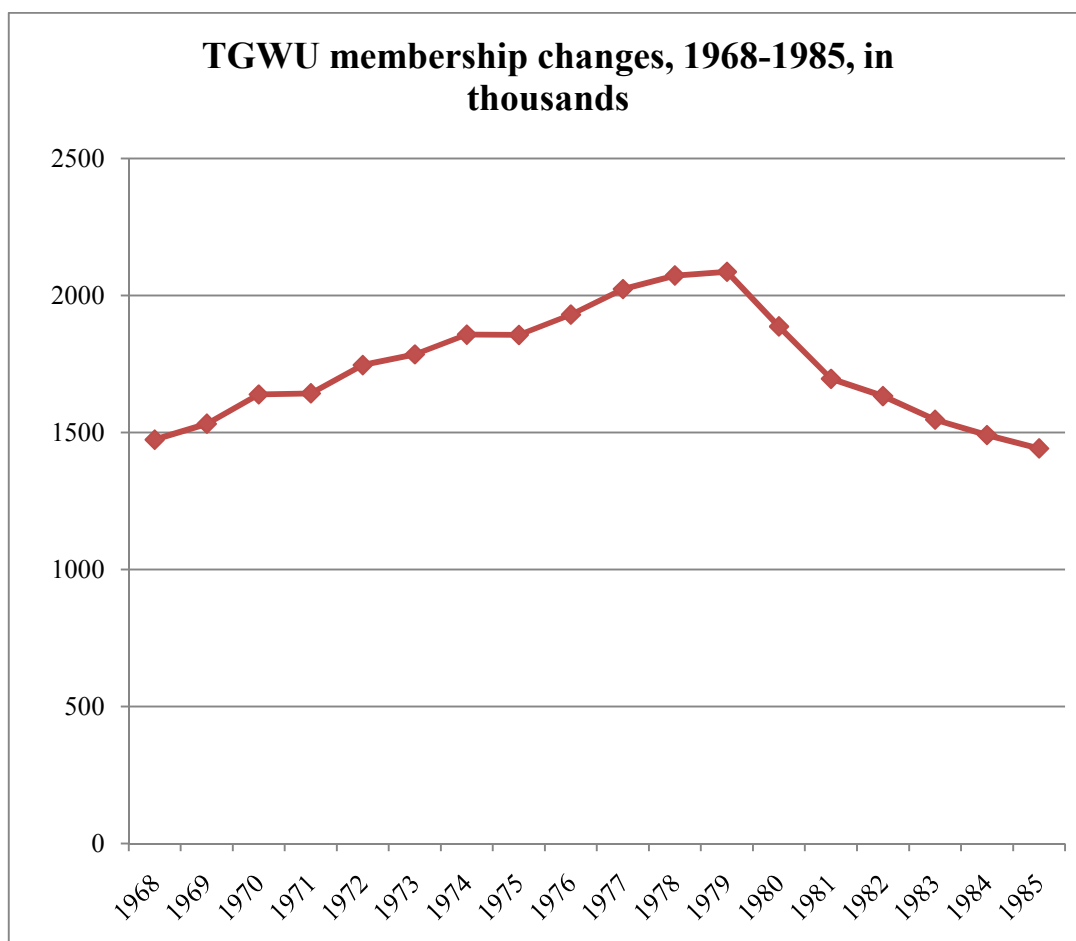
Source: TGWU, General Executive Committee Minutes, various years.

Figure 4.2. TGWU Docks and Waterways trade group membership changes, 1968-1985.

TGWU Docks and Waterways trade group membership changes, 1968-1985, in thousands
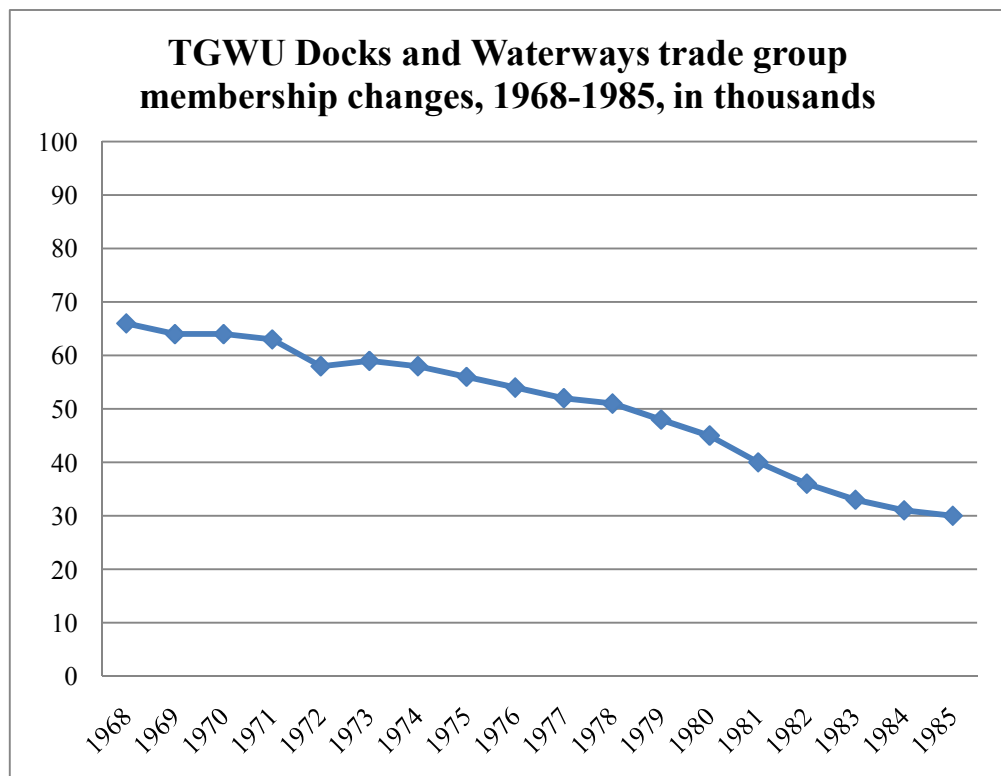
Source: TGWU, General Executive Committee Minutes, various years.

Ron Todd did not just have to deal with a new political and economic environment. There was pressure from below within the TGWU and "executive elections became very closely fought, dividing along political lines – and at one stage the work of the GEC was brought to a halt by an unprecedented walk-out by the anti-Todd elements" (Murray 2008, p. 176). What Murray diplomatically calls political lines, could be better characterised as patronage returning to the TGWU. This led to the TGWU ending the 1980s in a bleak situation with an "intransigently hostile political environment, contracting membership and bitter divisions over strategy and perspective" (Murray 2008, p. 177). In particular, the workings of the Broad Left resembled a jellyfish within the organisation. Invisible, quiet and with the ability to sting before victims knew it was there.

Dockworkers found themselves involved in struggles over the political articulation of solidarity. During the abolition of the National Dock Labour

Scheme in 1989, the TGWU General Secretary was in the line of the dockworkers' fire. The episode presents an early example of the way in which the TGWU would deal with the new environment and its membership. Dockworkers demonstrated outside the TGWU headquarters when the TGWU executive backed Ron Todd's decision not to continue with a strike ballot to defend the Scheme. In fact, a precedent had been set when "the national docks and waterways committee, after a day of tense and sometimes ugly scenes involving more than 200 dockers who lobbied the meeting, did not agree with Mr Todd. […]. Leaders of dock workers were told by Mr Todd that he had to take into account the interests of the whole union in the event of a legal challenge to strike action" (Rudd and Jones 15/04/1989). This reinforced a challenge that ran deep within the TGWU's organisational structure. How does a broadly based union deal with intense sectional demands?

The idea that the interests of the whole union had to be placed above the sectional interests of different trade groups has proved durable. It had been endemic since the 1920s, when sectional pressures challenged Bevin's amalgamation dreams. In the 1980s, it was not just the threat of legal action but the idea that such action would cost excessive amounts of money for a union which was already running at a considerable deficit (estimates for the late 1980s account for about a £9 million deficit) which would prove persuasive. In a sense, this exemplifies the way in which Ron Todd's leadership was not concerned with renewal, but rather with finding ways of *coping* with the decline the TGWU was facing. There was possibly no other choice. In six years, from 1979 to 1985, the TGWU lost a quarter of its members, from just over 2 million, to fewer than 1.5 million, as shown in figure 4.1. All that Ron Todd could do was to stop, or slow down, any further losses, as at this rate the TGWU would have vanished by 1999. It did not, and by September 1999, the TGWU's membership stood at 874,927 members (TGWU data)[20].

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[20] Appendix 2 offers full membership figures for the TGWU for the period between 1961 to 1999.

If Ron Todd had attempted to cope with decline, in terms of slowing it down, Bill Morris' leadership can be characterised as attempting to manage such decline and to then reverse it. The TGWU initiated a period of internal reform in order to become better equipped to deal with these challenges. This was initiated with the election of Bill Morris as the new General Secretary in 1991. Morris' victory was tainted by a highly divisive and bitter electoral contest against the right-wing candidate George Wright, who was also the candidate preferred by the Labour Party (Halstead 13/07/1997). According to an unpublished manuscript of one national officer at the time, the bitter campaign also had racist undertones (Stevenson 2009a). The Broad Left supported Morris. With hindsight, many interviewees have now argued that the support may have been due more to the idea of having a more socially advanced and ethnically diverse union than to any suggestion that Morris had left wing credentials. Morris' victory was clear, with 118,206 votes to 83,059 for Wright (Routledge 09/06/1991). In a sense, what was to follow appears as logical considering the framework of the election and the way in which the TGWU had been dealing with decline during the 1980s. The challenge for Morris was two-fold – reuniting the union after the legacy of a divisive electoral campaign and ensuring the long-term financial stability of an organisation operating in a hostile environment and with a large financial deficit. Was Bill Morris the General Secretary who was going to *renew* the union?

The aim of renewal, however, could not operate in a vacuum. The type of renewal strategy that was to develop was in line with the impact legislation had had on the organisational structures of the union: "in the TGWU, the changes imposed by the legislation strengthened the leading national full-time officials' authority, against the trend to greater executive influence which originated in the late 1970s" (Undy, Fosh et al. 1996, p. 191). Jones' moves towards greater lay democracy were soon reversed by national legislation. This would explain, to an extent, the inability of the GEC to change the TGWU's strategy on the Liverpool dockers' dispute, as chapter six will consider.

The TGWU commissioned a study from a group of US consultants (Adam Klein & Co) in 1992, better known as the 'Klein Report', which fed back into the TGWU's project named "One Union" (GEC 1992; Klein 1992). In addition, there was a move towards mergers of trade groups (which directly affected dockworkers), both within the organisation and with other trade unions.

In order to understand the significance of these two changes a brief explanation of the TGWU's internal organisational structure is needed. The TGWU as an organisation is characterised by a "vertical bifurcation" (McIlroy 1997, p. 115) between regions and trade groups. The highest governing body of the union is the General Executive Council (GEC) and "all voting members of the union's governing body are lay members who work in industry and services" (TGWU website). The members of the GEC are elected from either their region or their trade group. Furthermore, "each member belonged not only to a region, but to a trade group and had a right to representation on both counts" (Minkin 1992, p. 301-302). There were eleven TGWU regions in Britain and fourteen Trade Groups[21]. The first level a union member encounters is the Branch. As part of the internal restructuring, trade groups in the 1990s lost importance in favour of four broad industrial sectors: food and agriculture, manufacturing, services and transport, as well as reducing the regions to eight. The move was towards merging trade groups (with historically strong identities) into a looser network of industrial sectors. The issues arising from such internal dynamics emphasised a division over strategy between the trade groups and the GEC (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 26 October 1995 Circular No. 950598). Certain trade groups, such as the Docks and Waterways, were keen to maintain the trade group structure as it was, for fear of being swamped in a larger transport industrial trade group.

The immediacy for change came from the TGWU's deficit of £12 million in 1991 (Klein 1992, p. 3). The Klein Report's main outcome was to appoint "a highly paid chief executive and sought to encourage full-time officers to perceive

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[21] The fourteen trade groups were: Administrative, Clerical, Technical and Supervisory; Building Construction and Civil Engineering; Civil Air Transport; Chemical, Rubber, Manufacturing and Oil refining; Docks and Waterways; Food, Drink and Tobacco; General Workers; Passenger Services; Power and Engineering; Public Services; Road Transport Commercial; Rural Agriculture and Allied Workers; Textiles; Vehicle Building and Automotive.

themselves as managers. The key link here is between full-time staff and individual members. The emphasis is on professionalism and passivity. The importance of workplace representatives and activism is diminished" (McIlroy 1995, p. 161). The objective was to develop a 'service model of unionism' as identified in some of the literature reviewed in chapter one.

For example, the report emphasises the need to "streamline and professionalise the administration of the Union" (Klein 1992, p. 9). This change brought some discontent within the Docks and Waterways National Committee, particularly the proposal that some trade groups would soon become amalgamated. Twelve months on, a Region 8 member considered that "the restructuring took place and already, in certain areas, problems have been raised because of a loss of identity at grass roots level" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 26 January 1995 Circular No. 950091). But these two issues left some elected representatives, faced with the added costly move of union premises, with a feeling of a democratic deficit:

> "A Region 2 delegate was concerned that the decision to spend this amount of money was determined without consultation and said we should not lose democratic control to professionals brought in after the Klein Report. […]. He asked if we were a lay membership led union or under the control of consultants" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 26 January 1995 Circular No. 950091).

These two aspects of internal restructuring within the TGWU, professionalisation of the union and mergers and amalgamations (both internal and external[22]) were the first steps the TGWU took in order to reverse decline. The aim of these trends was to centralise power "at the top of the union and exercised with the benefit of specialist expertise. It is a trend the state has supported and one which has been facilitated in some unions by the weakening of shop steward organisation" (McIlroy 1995, p. 169). This was no small challenge as there were many internal characteristics of the organisation that encouraged a considerable degree of fragmentation, such as the ***vertical bifurcation*** structure of the TGWU which shielded the union from having to

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[22] Throughout the 1990s the TGWU attempted to merge with other unions such as the GMB, unsuccessfully, until the merger with Amicus in 2007.

follow unitary practices. It encouraged further fragmentation between lay representatives (present in the Executive and regional committees) and the union's District Officers (who are excluded from the Executive and from the BDC) (Kelly and Heery 1989, p. 207). These changes reinforced distrust between groups of shop stewards and regional and national leaderships. This was to take a particularly bitter form in the TGWU's Region 6, and particularly in Liverpool.

Region 6

These changes should be understood in the specific context of Bill Morris' restructuring of Region 6. If anything Region 6 was the most idiosyncratic region of the TGWU and one which was difficult to control for the Broad Left machinery[23], the Communist Party or the right wing of the union. None of the groupings within the TGWU were able to keep the region tamed. For example, in 1991, after some documents were leaked to the press, the feeling in the national headquarters was that "someone leaked documents, probably from the Region 6 Broad Left, since only they would have been stupid enough to put the details in writing, sketching out the structure of the Broad Left" (Stevenson 2009a, no pagination).

In the early 1990s, Bobby Owens was elected Regional Secretary[24]. This choice showed a strong commitment by the region to lay democracy within the union. Conventionally, regional secretaries within the TGWU achieved this post as part of their career progression within the union (i.e. generally, they would

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[23] The Broad Left has been characterised as a "powerful, clandestine, electoral machine with no explicit political programme, minimal democracy and little role in industrial disputes. It was increasingly driven by rivalries between its two main strongholds: Region 1 (London and the South East) and Region 6 (North West). These centred on disputes over the choice of candidates for posts, internal electoral strategy and attitudes towards the General Secretary. Complex machine politics was overlain by the influence of former Communist Party members in Region 1, characterized, in their turn, as adventuristic. By 1993 the Broad Left was fractured by attempts to establish an alternative organization." McIlroy, J. (1998). "The Enduring Alliance? Trade Unions and the Making of New Labour 1994-1997." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 36(4): 537-564.

[24] There are no records about the election as, with the restructuring of Region 6 during this period, most of the records were destroyed in the process of moving to smaller premises.

have been union officials beforehand). Bobby Owens, instead, was a lay member. This was an important development, as regional secretaries within the TGWU were popularly considered to be 'union barons' with a considerable amount of power and a responsibility to maintain the structures of the union. It was expected that having served as an official was the necessary training for the role or a means of allowing the development of resources to win an election.

This novel development was not the only issue that made Region 6 distinct. The region had a number of union officials who saw the way towards dealing and overcoming union decline rather differently from that of the union headquarters in London. A crucial split between the Broad Lefts of Region 1 (London) and Region 6 became apparent in 1993. In fact, according to a national union official "it was no longer possible to work with the Region 6 elements due to their inability to adhere to agreements. The result was that most of Region 6 was effectively expelled from the Left" (Stevenson 2009b, no pagination). By 1993, the Broad Left and some crucial sections of Region 6 had departed in radically different directions.

Two individuals became important during the period, John Farrell and Eddie Roberts. Farrell was a TGWU union official representing general workers on Merseyside; however, he had very distinct ways of going about his job, which often placed him at odds with employers. Many interviewees have characterised Farrell as a union organiser, rather than a traditional TGWU union official. In the personal diary of a senior national TGWU official, Farrell is characterised as "a hard grafter, but a very rough diamond indeed" (Stevenson 2009a, no pagination). For instance, in the early to mid-1990s, Farrell set out to successfully organise contract cleaners on Merseyside. This led to the first collective agreement for contract cleaners in the region. Although this was thoroughly in line with the way in which the TGWU wanted to organise groups of workers who had traditionally been left out of the union (such as part-time workers, women workers, general workers…), it was Farrell's tactics that made the TGWU uncomfortable. He was a rather direct man, with a manner more suited for action than diplomacy.

Roberts was Farrell's boss at the time. As Merseyside's senior industrial organiser, Roberts had the difficult task of organising in a period of decline. With people like Farrell, this was not necessarily a problem in Region 6. A region which was particularly suffering from the decline in manufacturing and in dock work (the region covers the North West of England, not just Merseyside), its union officials were very quick to identify new groups of workers to organise. It was also a region which had the structures to develop a strong trade unionism rooted in the community. For example, in Liverpool, the TGWU headquarters were in a large building very close to Liverpool's main train station, Lime Street; less than a mile up the road, by Liverpool's two cathedrals, the TUC had its Merseyside Unemployed Resource Centre in Hardman Street, another rather large building in the city centre. The two centres had strong links (personal and otherwise) which encouraged the possibility of coordinated action.

This rose-tinted picture of Liverpool's trade unionism in the 1990s could obscure problems. In an environment clearly marked by legislative hostility, unions were swimming in uncharted waters. The way in which Region 6 was carrying out its organising was rather unorthodox from the vantage point of national union officials based in their London headquarters. From the way in which contributions were collected to the way in which the law was interpreted, the union started to feel that they were losing control of the region. It definitely fitted badly with Morris' 'One Union' strategy. To deal with it, early in 1995, Morris suspended both Eddie Roberts and John Farrell under allegations of financial mismanagement. The accusations had to do with the way contributions had been paid and they were charged with misappropriation of funds (which later appeared to be a fabrication, as no money had ever gone missing, it had just been accounted in a more 'traditional' way than that required by the new reforms).

The disciplinary hearings were carried out in a rather unorthodox manner, leading many within the region to believe that it was a witch-hunt rather than a genuine disciplinary issue. Surprisingly, union officials within the TGWU did not have clear frameworks on how to deal with disciplinary matters relating to their own employment. In this case, the disciplinary hearings took place between Bill Morris and the individuals concerned, with minimal space being given for

their defence. In the case of John Farrell, he was consequently dismissed and this caused a certain degree of resentment from many Region 6 members who were supportive of him and initiated an unsuccessful campaign for his reinstatement. Eddie Roberts, on the other hand, was demoted back to the first job he had held with the TGWU 20 years beforehand. Additionally, to take up this new post he had to wait until a TGWU district office in the North West region had a vacancy. Eventually, he took up his post in Wigan, from where he retired in 2009. It was only then that he was vindicated when he won a court case against his unfair demotion, and the TGWU had to repay some of his missing pension contributions. The region was to have a further loss. In late 1995, the lay member who had become Regional Secretary, Bobby Owens, died of a heart attack.

Owens was to be replaced in the interim period by the TGWU's Deputy General Secretary, Jack Adams, who was also a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain at the time, and was to become a leading figure in the negotiations during the Liverpool dockers' dispute. Adams' job was difficult and short-lived in Region 6, as he was soon replaced by Dave McCall, a senior union official of the region, who was seen to be Bill Morris' man. McCall was to revive the image of the 'union baron', not just by becoming Regional Secretary but also through the family connections running through the region's headquarters (Dave McCall's wife, Ann McCall, was TGWU Director of Education for the region in 2009).

This change coincided with the TGWU election for General Secretary in June 1995. This was a year earlier than required and it was seen as a way of securing Bill Morris' authority (McIlroy 1998, p. 556). Whilst Region 6 and the Broad Left had supported Morris in 1991, this time around, in one of those rather contradictory turns of history, Region 6 supported the Blairite candidate, Jack Dromey, better known as MP Harriet Harman's husband. This meant that the Broad Left was divided in their support and therefore, less effective as the electoral machine that it had become within the TGWU. The campaign in 1995 had lost the racist undertones it had in 1991. Instead, it was presented as a fight between Old Labour and New Labour. For the media, Old Labour won in the TGWU (Halstead 13/07/1997), for TGWU members the picture was rather more

complicated as this thesis demonstrates. Although Dromey accused "Morris of being 'out of touch' and a threat to Labour's chances of election [success]" (Wilby 22/01/1999), history suggests otherwise.

Bill Morris' restructuring of Region 6 continued after he won the 1995 election. No more disciplinary suspensions and redundancies were made. Instead, the region was the target of some important cost-saving initiatives. Under the Klein recommendations, the TGWU had to work through its deficit by cutting its major cost, its properties. Hence, in Region 6, Liverpool's TGWU offices were moved from their large building in the city centre (Islington), to a smaller office near the old dock area. The new offices were difficult to reach by public transport but they were provided with good road links and a car park. The audience they were attempting to reach had changed. The Regional Office moved to Salford Quays, in a waterside business development characteristic of the speculative urbanism prevalent in Manchester in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The restructuring of Region 6 had national consequences and recent historical roots. The protagonists had been involved in the leadership contest immediately preceding Bill Morris' election in 1991. In 1990:

> "There were now strong rumours that Bobby Owens would succeed Bill as DGS. Bill even said to me "I know Bobby, he'll move down" [to London]. In this scenario, Eddie Roberts would succeed Owens as Regional Secretary. […] this aspect would feature large in subsequent developments. Bobby was a very forceful type. He was making a lot of fuss about the inadequacies of Central Office and the need for the new Left officers based there to create waves. People with strong left-wing views were now filling one after the other National Officer and National Secretary vacancies and it did not always go down so well, especially when a candidate did not evidence previous experience of the trade group concerned" (Stevenson 2009a, no pagination).

Crucially, the two-fold restructuring of the TGWU, electoral legislative changes and internal restructuring, favoured the Broad Left disproportionally. Specifically, postal ballots, as introduced by new anti-trade union legislation, were beneficial to the Broad Left apparatus. Whilst the centre-right tendencies of

the union were influential in some regions and amongst full-time union officials, it was the Broad Left that had built a widespread national network of activists that were active at the level of the lay membership. Additionally, the internal changes brought about by Klein which strengthened the national structures of the union were also advantageous to the Broad Left (Undy, Fosh et al. 1996, p. 185).

Bill Morris' re-election in 1995 secured his authority within the union executive: "he carried around 19 of the 32-person executive on important issues and had gone some way to circumscribing the impact of factionalism" (McIlroy 1998, p. 556). As the following chapters will consider: "the Broad Left increasingly accepted his position of distancing the union from the Liverpool dockers' dispute" (McIlroy 1998, p. 556). The issue went beyond the Liverpool dockers. It was about a new way of understanding unionism. In a sense, "underlying the desire not to upset New Labour a string of assumptions can be discerned. For some union leaders, the absence of strikes suggests healthy industrial relations and the laying to rest of a disruptive anachronism. Partnership casts a long shadow" (McIlroy 1999, p. 535). How this desire not to upset New Labour developed is considered in more detail in the next section.

The TGWU and New Labour

It was not just the TGWU that was finding the North West a difficult place to manage. Merseyside proved a difficult place for the Labour Party during the 1980s. More importantly, it was increasingly seen as a political liability, hindering any electoral chances the party was hoping for nationally. Between 1983 and 1987, a distinctive type of Labour Party was in control of Liverpool's City Council under the leadership of Derek Hatton. A Trotskyist grouping better known as the Militant had come to power within the local Labour party and then the City Council. Its significance lies in the fact that whilst the rest of the country appeared swept by neoliberal reforms, Liverpool was strongly opposing them in an unprecedented political fashion. Under Neil Kinnock's leadership, the Labour Party prepared itself to become electable. The chosen strategy arose from a belief

that a party with radical links would not appeal to the majority of the electorate, even if the evidence, at least in Liverpool, pointed towards a different picture.

The de-radicalisation, or modernisation as their supporters termed it, of the Labour Party in the late 1980s, led by Kinnock, involved a wide range of measures, which included removing certain sections of the party. In particular, those who might have been involved with the 'Militant Tendency'. The 1992 electoral defeat reinforced the strategic decision to remove the image of being the unions' party. What characterised the position of the main unions in the debate was a certain degree of ambivalence and passivity. Rather than outright support or opposition, the main unions also considered that removing some of their political funds from the Labour Party would allow them to lobby other political arenas (such as the European Union).

Even though the TGWU had considerable weight as Labour's largest affiliate (Leopold 1997, p. 34) with a "vote of one and a quarter million at the Labour Party Conference" (Minkin 1992, p. 301), it was not necessarily a decisive factor in Labour Party decisions (Minkin 1992). The increased marginalisation of unions within the Labour Party included the TGWU. Renewed efforts by New Labour were made to keep the TGWU's leadership close. This showed excessive anxiety by New Labour. After all, Bill Morris and Tony Blair agreed on many more important issues than Blair appeared to realise. For example, in 1993, Morris, who was fascinated with US Democratic Party Leader and US President Bill Clinton, commissioned several educational activities, and a conference, within the TGWU about Clintonite economics. Even Bill Morris' opposition to the removal of Clause 4 was not wholehearted. Rather Morris followed what the union wanted, even though he was quite at ease with its removal.

However, there was a further challenge for the unions, particularly the TGWU, which had been badly hit by the political and economic reforms initiated in 1979. Early on, it became evident that "after 1983, and especially after 1987, solely campaigning for the return of a Labour government and expecting it to reverse Tory anti-union laws was no longer viable or credible" (Leopold 1997, p. 34). More than that, for the New Labour project their relationship with the

unions was to be summarised in quite a straightforward slogan: "fairness not favours". It clearly meant "an end to the particular special relationship, with unions becoming one of many pressure groups seeking to influence the government" (Leopold 1997, p. 35). Yet, the belief that *any* Labour government would be better than the Conservatives for trade unions and workers alike was deeply embedded within the British labour movement. The recent experience of Thatcherism only reinforced such a belief.

It was indeed the end of a special relationship: "for New Labour, marginalised unions and a lightly regulated labour market would ensure that Britain would continue to be an attractive location for inward investment" (Shaw 2007, p. 123). The special relationship had always been marked by tensions and ambiguity. In fact, Jack Jones' comments on his views of Ted Heath in comparison with Labour prime ministers lead us to a more complicated picture of the 'special' relationship:

> "Those of us who had got to know him well felt keen disappointment when he lost the leadership of his party. At the outset I thought he represented the hard face of the Tory Party, but over the years he revealed a human face of Toryism, at least to the union leaders who met him frequently. […]. Amazingly, he gained more personal respect from union leaders that they seemed to have for Harold Wilson or even Jim Callaghan" (Jones 1986, p. 261-262).

Of course, during the 1970s, Callaghan's government had a difficult time in relation to industrial relations. The relationship between trade unions and the Labour Party was, to say the least, uneasy, yet "many leaders from large unions were unwilling to move into open opposition to the government" (Howell 1980, p. 299). The trade union leaders Howell refers to were, above all, Jack Jones (TGWU) and Hugh Scanlon (AUEW, Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers), who had developed particularly strong left-wing styles of trade union leadership from the late 1960s. Importantly, the reason for avoiding direct opposition to the Labour Party "was a product in part of economic constraints and fears of a Conservative alternative but it also reflected a positive response to the Government" (Howell 1980, p. 299). And this is crucial. Trade union support

for the Labour Party cannot be understood just as a way of supporting the 'lesser evil', but rather a political choice, albeit one with limited alternatives.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the TGWU's strategies for renewal in historical perspective. The TGWU's historiography places a high degree of importance on leadership styles as opposed to organisational structures and the way in which political struggles are framed within the union. In fact, this has been a stance adopted by senior figures of the TGWU as they have attempted to explain these strategies of renewal in terms of Bill Morris' leadership style: "the absence of a close feel for the culture, tone and – above all – history of the British working class made Bill a stranger in his adopted country" (Stevenson 2009a, no pagination).

Instead, the chapter demonstrates that a more thorough examination of politics within trade unions is needed if a conceptualisation of trade union renewal is to be developed, which is not based on programmatic attempts, but rather based on a concern to understand workers' organisational capacities. Therefore, this chapter concludes that the path of renewal the TGWU took in the 1990s needs to be understood not just in terms of a hostile political and economic environment, but also in terms of two internal struggles within the union.

On the one hand, there was a struggle over the nature of union control and democracy, which appeared heightened in a union as large as the TGWU, as the restructuring of Region 6 exemplified. This struggle appears to be endemic within a union with such a heterogeneous membership. The structures created to cope with such a large union are invariably contested, and in fact, act as containment, rather than a springboard for solidarity. Whilst it is clear that the TGWU had placed prominence on the unity of very different groups of workers, that emphasis did not necessarily lead to solidarity, but rather, at times, to the erosion of that very solidarity. Indeed, as an organisation, the TGWU offers an excellent case of the tension that occurs between solidarity and containment.

On the other hand, there were different conceptions of the political articulation of solidarity at stake, as illustrated by the events related in this chapter. In particular, the constant thread since 1922 that the political articulation of solidarity is best expressed by staying close to the Labour Party rather than an industrially rooted solidarity based on workers' experience, for fear that it may be a divisive experience and vulnerable to economic fluctuations. Throughout there was a sense of inadequacy, as the union attempted to solve problems without attempting to solve the ***political*** challenges that Thatcherism had introduced. The contradictions brought to the fore by these two struggles have shaped the path taken by the TGWU and indicate that, for the time being, the orthodoxy of building an even larger union (with the merger with Amicus that has led to the creation of Unite in 2007) appeared as the chosen strategy of renewal.

The following chapter returns to Liverpool. It does so by exploring the workplace relations that developed in the Port of Liverpool after the abolition of the National Labour Scheme in 1989. The processes of change that the TGWU and in particular Region 6 of the union underwent during this same period, as explored in this chapter, had a direct impact in the type of workplace conflict that developed during the six years preceding the Liverpool dockers' dispute.

Chapter 5. Workplace conflict in the Port of Liverpool 1989-1995

This chapter brings together the three analytical categories – (1) economic restructuring and political deregulatory processes, (2) trade union strategies and (3) workplace and community experience and popular historical memories – developed in the previous chapters in order to consider their interplay within the Liverpool dockers' immediate work environment. To do so, this chapter considers the relationship that developed in the port of Liverpool between managers and dockworkers following the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme (NDLS) in 1989. This analysis is set against the background of the type of labour relations experienced in the port during two periods, first between 1945 and 1967, and then 1967 and 1989, which have been considered extensively at the national level in chapter two.

The belief that this relationship, and its dynamics, should be considered important builds on Phillips' article (2009) on the way in which workplace conflict can help locate the origins of an industrial dispute. Phillips argues that evidence found in Scotland suggests a reinterpretation of the origins of the Miners' Strike 1984-5. Whilst established accounts present the strike as a battle between the radical leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and Margaret Thatcher, Phillips, not disregarding the significance of what he terms "high industrial politics" (p. 171) argues that "the strike was not imposed on Scottish miners by an ideologically rigid national union leadership, but in fact drew much of its energy and impetus from the workforce's resistance to the managerial strategy of cost control through pit closures and the downgrading of joint industrial regulation" (Phillips 2009, p. 171). Specifically, "at each pit, managers sought to diminish significantly the involvement of workers and their union representatives in the planning and organization of production […]. This management attack on joint consultation and regulation, embedded features of coal's industrial politics, represented a fundamental breach of trust" (p. 172). To a considerable extent this estrangement was also to be found in Liverpool docks following the abolition of the NDLS.

However, the "fundamental breach of trust" did not just happen between workers and managers. There were other dynamics at play, as the previous chapter has carefully considered, which concern the relationship between the dockers and their union. Fundamental breaches of trust were also developing there. The chapter will, therefore, endorse Phillips' approach, but complements this with an analysis of the specific role that the TGWU played in the Port of Liverpool.

Labour relations in the Port of Liverpool between 1945 and 1967

The port of Liverpool had its origins under the Act of Parliament of 1709, but it was not until 1 January 1858 that the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board was created, which was "an autonomous corporation, designated a public trust, governed by a body whose members were predominantly its customers" (Lynch 1994, p. 3). The port had relatively advanced systems (by dockers' standards) of local industrial relations as early as 1912, when Liverpool introduced the first registration system for dockworkers (Jackson 1991, p. 32), ten years before the amalgamation of unions that led to the creation of the TGWU in 1922.

The introduction of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1945 therefore was not such a momentous achievement in Liverpool. In fact, labour relations in the port were difficult between 1945 and 1967, which was similar to what was happening in other British ports operating under the NDLS. The Scheme led to a further separation between the union's officialdom and direct participation in the management of the Scheme, as chapter two has considered in more detail, and the perceived daily needs of dockers' grievances. Inter-union rivalry was a constant presence in the port of Liverpool during this period, although the Blue Union never had as much an official presence there as it had in London.

The Devlin Report (1965, p. 79-83) recalled negotiations in Liverpool over decasualisation. The Report was critical of the way in which negotiations had been carried out as well as of their content. The report identified two main factors as the obstacles, at the time, to successful negotiation. On the one hand,

inter-union rivalry between the Blue Union and the TGWU, and particularly the strength of the unofficial leadership, was seen as a hindrance. On the other hand, the role played by P. J. O'Hare, the TGWU's District Secretary (who died in September 1964, before the compilation of the report) was emphasised within the Report. The secrecy that O'Hare maintained throughout the negotiations coupled with the managerial style formality with which the outcomes were presented led to a deep sense of distrust. The outcomes of the negotiation were presented "in an attractively printed pamphlet entitled 'A New Deal for Merseyside Registered Dock Workers' and with a cover photograph of the port" (Devlin 1965, p. 81). In short, the Devlin report maintained that "his [O'Hare's] failure to woo his constituents led to the belief that he was making himself a spokesman for authority rather than a representative of the workpeople" (Devlin 1965, p. 80).

This needs to be seen within the context of the TGWU's relationship with its dockworkers. As the previous chapter has extensively considered, there was a tension between union officials and workers in an industry where immediate action was a necessity. This had led to the growth of the unofficial movement which, in Liverpool, was partly the outcome of a workforce that required that their grievances were dealt with promptly, or at least before a ship left the port. As such, an increasing distance grew between the TGWU's officials and the dockers which all parties involved saw as detrimental to the type of employment relations that were developing in the port. The union was often seen as being closer to the employer than to the dockers. Particularly, as it has been mentioned before, the NDLS involved joint management between the union and the employer.

For example, the account presented by the Devlin Committee regarding these negotiations was sourced from records provided by the employers, as there were no written records of the negotiations kept by the union. This was blamed on O'Hare's way of doing things, which meant that after his death, what he knew went with him. Such secrecy was to prove fatal. The distrust that such events generated was further exacerbated by the fact that the negotiations led to a division of workers across three different categories of employment conditions

related to permanency, a particularly sore issue considering the history of employment within the industry. Crucially, this stratification was at odds with the drive at the time towards further equality of employment, as it meant some dockers were to be placed in different degrees of temporality of employment. Thus, the outcome was considered to be unacceptable by the dockers – all of the affected union branches voted against the proposals and issued votes of no confidence in O'Hare.

At this stage, it is also worth mentioning that work in ports was often organised by local custom and negotiation rather than by national agreements. This was primarily due to the different types of cargo each port would normally handle. For example, in the Port of London wages were calculated via a combined system of piece-rate and time-rate, which meant that some cargoes were automatically more attractive than others. In Liverpool, it was not payments that were the key distinguishing factors, but rather the way work was organised. The loading or unloading of ships was usually organised around *gangs*, and this led to the development of specific, and fairly widespread, working practices such as *welting*, where only half the gang worked any particular ship.

Yet the first redundancies that were to affect the port industry, due to the implementation of Devlin's recommendations on decasualisation as well as the development of containerisation, left Liverpool untouched. Rather than experiencing a constant surplus of labour, Liverpool had been operating below the number of dockworkers approved in the register. In 1966, there were 14,500 places in the register and only 13,000 registered dockworkers (Lynch 1994, p. 23). However, six months later, there was a surplus of 1,000 dockers. Given that this was happening even before the building of Liverpool's container terminal, it is evident how much the availability of work fluctuated in the port.

Increasingly, Liverpool dockworkers were blamed for the MDHB's financial mismanagement. They became the scapegoat for the inadequate management of the board. For example, when there were labour shortages, they were blamed on the backlog of work created by previous strike action (Lynch 1994, p. 28), rather than on the fact that there were fewer dockers employed in Liverpool than places available on the register. However, the financial mess in which the MDHB found itself could also be blamed on a very different set of problems – the recurring issue already mentioned in chapter two – a lack of willingness to invest in a industry accustomed to being labour-intensive, rather than capital-intensive:

> "The ports were left in a derelict state. Reinvestment in them was running at a low level. The profitable side of the ports, the cargo-handling side, was being taken over by private enterprise. Is it any wonder that the ports of this country are in such a state that there is a need for massive capital investment to update them and make them competitive with countries where this advancement has already taken place?
>
> The managers of the ports—I am thinking particularly of Merseyside—were the main customers. Therefore, the customer ran the outfit—for whose benefit? He ran it for the benefit of the customer. We have heard of examples of the 1964 rate for hiring a crane, at 12s. 6d., still prevailing in 1971 and 1972. The people who at that time were in charge of the port authorities and the docks boards were satisfying their own vested interests in the ports and not the well-being of the ports throughout the country" (Loyden 1975).

But it was not just the employer that was entering a period of major change. It was during this period that the shop steward movement in the port gained ground. However, there was some suspicion between established shop stewards and the younger dockers who started work at the port in the mid 1960s to the early 1970s. It is important to note at this stage that the majority of the dockworkers sacked in 1995 had started work in the port between 1964 and 1971 (interview data). For the younger dockers, the older shop stewards had grown too

close to the employers, a characteristic the younger dockers often saw as problematic. The situation has led sympathetic historians to the MDHB to assess the situation by saying that:

> "Whilst the experience of the more established shop steward leaders has so far enabled them to remain in control, they are increasingly driven to take up or defend extreme positions as the result of irresponsible acts of a number of their colleagues, who appear to believe that the principal function of a shop steward is to harass management" (Lynch 1994, p. 30).

Most of Liverpool's trade was with the East Coast of North America. This influenced the technological development of Liverpool's port required since the 1960s, as American ports on the East Coast had started to introduce containerisation. This meant that Liverpool had to adapt their port in order to be able to load and unload container vessels. Unfortunately, this was bad timing for the MDHB as it coincided with its financial crisis (Lynch 1994), and the Board was unable to finance the large level of investment required. Yet doing nothing was not a possibility, as that would have meant that Liverpool port would no longer be fit for purpose. Therefore, the costly construction of the Royal Seaforth Container Terminal was primarily financed by the British Department of Environment (Lynch 1994, p. 78).

By 1980, the MDHB's financial crisis remained unresolved. Throughout the 1970s strike levels in Liverpool had continued to be high and there was little incentive left for the Board to adhere to the Aldington-Jones recommendations[25], arguing that "the 1972 Interim Report imposed no obligations upon them" (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 85). The refusal by the MDHB to reallocate 178 dockers following the closure of two stevedoring companies, S&T Harrison and Bulk Cargo Services, became the first serious breach of trust, as the security of employment dockers had fought for appeared to be once again fragile (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 85). For the employers, on the other hand, the situation demonstrated what they had been thinking all along, that the system had been exhausted:

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[25] The Aldington-Jones recommendations involved the abolition of the Temporary Unattached Register (TUR), as it was seen as a remnant of casualism.

"In crisis, and in the absence of any available alternative, the response was to throw money at the problem. In 1980 the maximum severance payment was increased to £10,500 and, in the following year, the Government topped this up with a £5,500 supplement in London and Liverpool" (NAPE 1988).

The level of distrust was becoming apparent, and it was reinforced by the way in which technological change had been managed. Whilst, at the time, other ports had set up Port Modernisation committees with workers' involvement, in Liverpool there was little trust between the dockers and their employers and vice versa. This meant that during periods of change conflict became more prominent:

"In Liverpool we never trusted our employers, I don't think they trusted us as a union, they would label us as 'militants' and that, so we never had the closeness as between employer and worker as many of the other ports had" (Interview with Terry Teague, January 2009).

In October 1981, Liverpool went on strike over manning levels, where 16,950 man/days were lost (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 87). Many of the dockers interviewed highlighted how they focused their efforts on manning levels because:

"you knew quite well that the manning levels were never gonna be the same, but if you allowed the employer to just go ahead and bring in all the new technology, before you knew it, you'd be cutting your own throat" (Interview with Terry Teague, January 2009).

The tone had been set for the following years. In 1984 a series of strikes 'coincided' with the Miners' Strike, which included attempts to instigate a national dock strike as well as boycotts of coal cargoes. By January 1989, some dockworkers in Liverpool were beginning to show concern over possible changes. In particular, there was a fear that the Temporary Unattached Register (TUR) could be brought back in Liverpool following the closure of Liverpool Stevedores Limited (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 19 January 1989 Circular No. 890124).

This concern was well founded because in April 1989 the government announced a proposal for the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme. The Docks and Waterways National Committee of the TGWU held a special meeting on Monday 10 and Tuesday 11 April in order to coordinate action which had already spontaneously started in some ports, including Liverpool. By June, action had spread:

> "Information regarding numbers of members involved in walk outs are not complete, but it has been indicated that about 1,050 are involved in Liverpool; 1,000 at PLA [Port of London Authority]; 100 in another London employer; and 26 at Lowestoft. Information received regarding Bristol indicates that there was a split, but other information states only 27 are on strike" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 9 June 1989 Circular No. 890867).

However, it was not until July 1989 that the last national docks strike would occur in Britain. The strike was not observed equally by all ports, and there was a certain degree of ambivalence by the TGWU (Jackson 1991) as chapter two has explored in more detail. By week three of the strike, the MDHC had taken action. This response proved far more sinister than it appeared at first sight:

> "The following day, Tuesday July 25th, Liverpool dockers were not actually dismissed but received an affably toned 'bulletin' from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, urging the men to 'decide whether to stay and work… Or take the money and go'. The company was seeking 200 volunteers for redundancy, and obligingly provided details of release payments to which workers were entitled, along with a questionnaire to be returned forthwith. The questionnaire sought to elicit at which of the terminals (Container, Timber, Ferry, Grain) the workers would prefer to be permanently employed in the future. This seemingly innocent survey was to prove a far more sinister purpose in the aftermath of the strike" (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 163).

However, the Liverpool dockers remained confident. Although dockers in Tilbury had been sacked, Liverpool became the port that would carry out the fight. In fact, there was a certain degree of self-assurance that the MDHC was a soft touch. Many Liverpool dockers held a firm belief that their employer was not as 'bad' as others. However, "the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company,

despite its claims to be less hard line, was no less determined than other employers" (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 158). In fact, it readily used casual non-union labour during the 1989 dispute to unload cargo. The episode regarding the *Falcon*, a ship holding cement and timber, was to act as a stark realisation that the MDHC was stepping up to the plate. The vessel was offloaded over the sea wall on the Wirral by local young men who lacked the essential health and safety equipment, such as adequate footwear rather than trainers (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 158).

These two instances led the Liverpool dockers to step up as well. By then, they had considered that if the return to work was to be worthwhile it had to be achieved with at least union recognition. Therefore, three days after the 'bulletin' by the MDHC described above, the Liverpool dockers' representatives reported to the TGWU's Docks and Waterways National Committee:

> "A Region 6 delegate said that this should make us more determined to fight harder because we all knew this was coming. He rejected the attempt to move an orderly return to work.

> A Region 6 delegate said that only 14 men are working (in Ellesmere Port). The whole of Liverpool is in dispute. Vessels that are trying to move are not being handled by tugmen, lockagatemen, etc. We have recognised trade union labour and they won't be able to bring other labour into the port. The port authorities know that and they will not sack anyone in Liverpool because the men in Liverpool are determined to win. The men in Tilbury have been sacked and there is a principle involved when activists are selected for dismissal. This is not about the Scheme, they are attacking labour organisation and trying to bring this union down in London. We have a responsibility to do what we can this morning and I hope this National Committee moves to extend this dispute and take it into a full trade group issue and encourage members that are prepared to stand up. We have to recognise, understand, and stand by each other. Let's get some control back in the industry. The conference delegates are looking for leadership from this committee. We have not failed them before and we should not fail them now" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 28 July 1989 Circular No. 891122).

No control was gained in the industry. Six weeks into the strike the Liverpool dockers went back to work, days and weeks after all the other ports had gone back. But they were not going back to work willingly. They knew that their return was a return in defeat, which would have damaging consequences for the way in which the relationship between managers, workers and union officials would develop in the following years. Whilst the Liverpool dockers managed to obtain some union recognition, unlike many of the dockers returning to other ports in Britain, the new contracts involved some drastic changes. Management was reasserting itself, and it was ready to become militant. Yet, even though the new contracts "were to be, in the words of port manager Trevor Furlong, 'non-negotiable' and shop stewards' attempts to open up negotiations on the basis of previously existing arrangements at the port" (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 172) were rapidly turned down, the deal achieved in Liverpool was impressive considering the climate at the time and the situation in other ports, such as Tilbury.

Two issues appear as crucial in the new workplace environment that was to develop after 1989. Firstly, the relationship between managers and workers would change forever. Dockworkers would no longer be protected by the NDLS. Previous distinctions between Registered Dock Workers (RDWs) – workers performing dockwork as specified by the NDLS – and Association of Clerical Technical and Supervisory Staffs (ACTSS)[26] – workers performing clerical work in the docks – would no longer apply. As the next section will show this meant that two very different workforces, with particularly contrasting work and union identities, would from then on be employed in the same capacity and expected to perform the same type of work.

However, certain workers were separated on purpose. Shop stewards were sent to work in the general cargo area (the one most dockers disliked) and fairly early on it was clear why they were sent there. By October 1990, the "Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has stated that 180 men in general cargo must complete applications forms for severance by 2nd November 1990 or they

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[26] This included: timekeepers, counter-offs, wharfingers, wharfingers clerks, ship foremen, quay foremen, storekeepers, labour officers and crane foremen.

may close down the conventional area" [27] (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee, 18 October 1990 Circular No. 900951). The tables appeared to be turned, and management, convinced that they had been under the power of the dockers since 1967, were ready to show 'who manages':

> "the place that I worked, the Seaforth Timber Terminal was a very bad place to work […] on the first day back we were told in no uncertain terms that 'the past is gone now, where you ruled the roost you don't now, and if you so much as sneeze we will come down on you like a ton of bricks' and I remember on the very first day when we came back, they assigned people tasks and the task for some people was to go and clean the toilet, or toilets, and there was a stevedore, commonly known as a ship's foreman, and a stevedore's job was handed down over the generations, […], and it was an art and Liverpool stevedores were respected all over the world, for the way they loaded and discharged ships, […], so they had this fantastic reputation, a deserved reputation, and I remember one of the stevedores who'd been assigned to the Terminal that I was at and he was told to go and clean the toilet and he said 'well, I'm a stevedore, it's an art, it's a craft', and so on, and it was 'well, you either go and clean the toilet or the severance is still open, take the money and leave' and they humiliated the man in front of everyone and he burst into tears, and tears weren't things that you saw on the docks, it was a very macho atmosphere, and you didn't show your feelings usually, and he left that afternoon, the first day in work after a strike, he left the industry and was never seen again, probably dead now" (Interview with Bobby Morton, July 2009).

Secondly, the relationship between the Liverpool dockers and the TGWU had become worse as a direct consequence of the 1989 strike. The Liverpool dockers felt that "if the GEC had allowed us another week, we might have got other ports answering the call. That doubt will last for a long time. A lot of trust has gone. We stayed by the policy of the GEC and General Secretary and some

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[27] The story drew to an end: "200 men applied for compensation payment arising from the closure of MDH&Co cargo handling area. There has been a relocation of the Belfast Car to general cargo. Central Stevedoring went into liquidation last Friday and the stewards informed the company that the 22 men affected must be relocated in the Port of Liverpool if they wish, but the men did not wish to go to Merlin. There has been discussion in the area about priorities on the use of the pension fund surplus and transfer values." (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee, 17 January 1991 Circular No. 910068)

people are of the opinion that we lost the strike on the 15th April." (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee, 8 August 1989 Circular No. 891191). The sense of distrust developing between the dockers and the TGWU would deepen throughout the mid-1990s.

Changes in the organisation of work

Before proceeding to explore the dynamics of workplace conflict in the port after 1989, it is important to understand the key changes in the organisation of work in the port. The changes, besides the abolition of the NDLS, had two characteristics. Firstly, the port was restructured following a 'detachment' process where "some major operators no longer undertake stevedoring operations directly, but retain commercial links through licensing arrangements with either independent or joint venture companies" (Turnbull and Weston 1991, p. 5). The MDHC specifically entered "joint ventures on its container, timber, grain and general cargo operations, with the new companies being granted a licence to operate specific berths" (Turnbull and Weston 1991, p. 5). This led to the establishment of different business units, to which workers were allocated, and which led to shop stewards being allocated to general cargo, as mentioned previously.

Secondly, the distinction between Registered Dock Workers (RDW) and staff (clerical workers) was abolished. These two groups had been working together for many years, yet their relationship had some deep rooted tensions. Many of those who joined the clerical side of dock work in the late 1960s and 1970s were themselves the sons of dockers. For them, and their fathers, this was seen as an improvement, not necessarily in security of employment, but in having a job that was less physically demanding. They had traditionally been a workforce that was not unionised, but achieved "a high level of trade union consciousness comparable to that of the more progressive sections of industrial workers" (Carden 1983, abstract), as one of the 'staff' recalls:

"Where I was coming from, staff, hardly any of the staff belonged to a trade union. The history of the staff wasn't good, […] they lived off the backs of the dockers who were unionised dockers. So, whenever they got a good pay rise, they might have had to fight for theirs by going on strike, the staff would get theirs, without doing anything. I picked it up at an early age, I'd like to belong to a trade union, we started our own off, you know the staff, it was all young lads an'all, […], 1968 I got my first union card, 67-68, the oldest one in that branch was 25, which was you know quite young" (Interview with Terry Teague, January 2009).

On the other hand, the immediate interests of 'staff' and RDWs had clashed in the past, when 'staff' lacked the security of employment RDWs enjoyed. 'Staff' often wished the RDWs were willing to back up their pledges to support the staff's campaign for job security, whilst for many RDWs, 'staff' were just management puppets:

"Yeah, historically, going back to when I began, it was a very, a very bad relationship, because we were seen as an arm of the management and the labourers were out on their own doing the work, and that image was fostered for quite a number of years and I think it was again in the 80s, there was a move within the union to try and bring us together, because we had to work, although we weren't doing the same job, we were working side by side, we were trade unionists, and so on and we came together in late 1980s, whereby anyone who worked on the docks in the port of Liverpool was transferred from the clerical sector into what we called the docks and waterways sector but even after we went over it was, up until the dispute that we are talking about, it was a very stormy relationship, both sides didn't get on" (Interview with Bobby Morton, July 2009).

Nevertheless, the new blood that joined the clerical ranks in the late 1960s and 1970s were often far more politicised than the RDWs. In 1971 Eddie Roberts, previously a shop steward at Ford's Halewood, became their union official. He was later to be disciplined by Bill Morris, as the previous chapter has explored. However, the RDWs had traditionally taken the lead as "for many of the ACTSS stewards the dock stewards are in many ways the 'elder statesmen' within this relationship – and often at times the dock shop stewards have no hesitation in reminding the clerks' stewards of their own 'pedigree' hard won

over many years of battle with the evil employer" (Carden 1983, p. 67). However, RDWs remained dubious of the clerical workers' ambitions:

> "From 1972 onwards many of the disputes that ACTSS were to become involved in centred around the issue of parity with the dock worker. Although many of the dock workers' agreements were seen as advantageous to the staff one must realize that the historic legacy of casual labour still predominates in the working agreements of the registered dock worker. Whenever there is no work for the docker he still 'signs on' at 8am and 1pm with the employer, showing him that he is available for work, to receive a relatively low wage in comparison to that which he may receive when he is working; for the ACTSS worker his wage is guaranteed whether he works or not. It is therefore not surprising that whenever ACTSS claimed parity on those parts of the dock sections agreement advantageous to themselves the dock shop stewards felt aggrieved by the fact that ACTSS were attempting to get the 'best of both worlds'" (Carden 1983, p.88).

Once the NDLS was abolished, both ACTSS and RDW became Port Operations Workers[28] (the workers aptly adopting the initials POWs) and started working together under the same managerial structures. This meant that the two previously separated groups of workers were after 1989, technically, doing the same jobs. For example, someone previously employed as a clerk could now become a fork-lift truck driver, after the appropriate training, and an ex-RDW could become a clerk. In reality, this high level of flexibility was a managerial mirage and a workers' nightmare. With very few exceptions, workers viewed the change with deep suspicion and were reluctant to change 'to the other side'. Perhaps in contradiction to expectations, it was not those with the hardest physical jobs that saw this as an opportunity to do a less physically demanding job. Instead, it was some of the clerks that trained to do some of the work

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[28] This was possibly not as innocent as it may sound, as "the attitude of extreme anti-unionism was best exemplified by ABP managers. Statements by witnesses on this were legion. One described attempts to eradicate the very word 'docker'. The ABP port manager in Southampton was reported as saying publicly that the word 'docker' would cease to exist in the English language within five years. Most port employers (not only ABP) now describe dockers as 'port operatives' or 'terminal operators' or such like. The witness understood this as an attempt to eradicate what the dockers had stood for over the years." Southwood, P. (1992). *British Dockers. A survey of human rights in the former Scheme ports*. London, Transport and General Workers' Union.

dockers had traditionally carried out. Two factors may help explain why some clerical workers took up this option and dockers did not. Firstly, the last intake of labour in the port of Liverpool had been clerical workers, and, generally, they were a younger workforce than the ex-RDWs. Secondly, clerical workers in the port had become fairly militant over the previous years and there was a higher inclination by them to experience a different type of work experience, and one which had been, at times, romanticised by a militant popular culture. The opposite was not necessarily the case: dockworkers had a pride in their work and did not feel the inclination to change.

Workplace conflict in the port of Liverpool 1990-1995

Two issues are key to understanding the way workplace conflict developed in the port prior to September 1995. First, the introduction of Torside, which introduced working practices from a bygone era. Second, the derecognition of shop stewards after 1992, which demonstrated a change in the relationship between managers and workers, as the shop stewards were no longer permitted to express the grievances of workers, rather if the union was to be involved it had to be via the union official. Derecognition also decisively attempted to deal with workers individually, following the national mood as precipitated by the defeat of the miners, in order to break down the collective bargaining structures.

Torside

In 1991, a new company employing dockworkers was created by James Bradley, "former Liverpool docker and TGWU Regional Committee" (Carden 1993, p. 422). The company, Torside Ltd., which was to be at the centre of the dispute in 1995, caused concern to the ex-registered dockers in its early stages:

"Regarding a company called Torside, 30 new employees work alongside us but their wages and conditions are worse so we are seeking to improve their

standards. We have suggested that they should be employed directly and we will train them" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 18 July 1991 Circular No. 910651).

Torside was created by recruiting 15 dockers', shop stewards' and union officials' sons as well as 15 workers picked by Torside themselves. For the union and the shop stewards, this was seen as a way of keeping some control over the changes. Torside dockers received lower pay and far worse conditions of employment, particularly in relation to holiday and sickness pay. However, the creation of Torside was presented as a lesser evil by both the MDHC and the local TGWU. For the MDHC it was an opportunity to bring in some flexibility, to ensure a relatively peaceful transition towards new working practices and to reduce labour costs by bringing in a cheaper and – as they characterised younger workers – a more willing labour force. For the TGWU, its involvement in the creation of Torside ensured that they were part of the 'new deal'. All the Torside dockers soon became members of the union, thereby guaranteeing membership levels in an otherwise declining industry.

However, not everyone saw the creation of Torside so positively. For many other dockers, particularly those who did not stand to gain from it, the initiative caused resentment, as not only was casual labour introduced in the port, but some dockers' sons, those of shop stewards primarily, had managed to get priority in the recruitment process. In fact, many rank-and-file dockers brought up the issue during my interviews. They felt they wanted their sons to have been considered, but the deal appeared to have been made behind closed doors. Other shop stewards saw the creation of Torside as dangerous, as a carrot that would at some point be used as a stick. From then on, it was just a waiting game.

The derecognition of port shop stewards in 1992

Until 1992, the Liverpool dockers still enjoyed a relative strength, against all odds if what was happening elsewhere in Britain was anything to go by. For example the dockers achieved an excellent result in their 1991 pay negotiations, when the MDHC offered a 5.8% pay rise and the dockers continued to negotiate

until they reached an impressive 6.4% (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 18 July and 17 October 1991 Circular No. 910651-910886). But the honeymoon was soon over. Threats over job losses were constantly present and shop stewards remained peripheral in the general cargo area. The division into six business units created the desired fragmentation. Each unit started looking after its own, leading to many instances where grievances were dealt with individually or at most within the same business unit, but never achieving port-wide resonance.

Tension culminated in 1992 with the derecognition of the shop stewards by the MDHC:

> "In 1992, following a port dispute over job losses, the Dock Company withdrew its recognition of all dock shop stewards accusing them of being in conflict with both the company and their union, the TGWU" (Carden 1993, p. 339).

The 1992 dispute has been repeatedly mentioned during my research interviews. In the dockers' minds, it was clear that it became the prelude to the 1995-98 dispute. In 1992, the union also failed to recognise the strike. The union did not feel it had that much to lose from derecognition. MDHC was just derecognising the shop stewards, ***not the union***. In fact, the company was quite happy maintaining negotiations with the union and its officials. For the union, removing a group of unruly shop stewards did not appear as being such a bad thing after all.

However, the dispute was not a complete failure for the Liverpool dockers and their shop stewards. Whilst the shop stewards lost their recognition, the jobs under threat were actually saved. It was also the first real training in union militancy that the young Torside dockers received, and it was accompanied by a rather ambivalent lesson about their relationship with their union. Some of the dockers interviewed pinpointed this strike as the main learning curve for the Torside dockers.

A combination of factors appears to have culminated in the events that unfolded in 1995. Trust was non-existent between management and workers and Torside had failed to become the panacea management hoped for: it had failed to realise its objectives. Management's ambition to create a more flexible workforce had not materialised and the young dockers were as militant, if not more so, as their elders. The dockers' ambition had also failed to materialise. Equal conditions for equal work were no longer the norm, as Torside's dockers still had worse pay and conditions. But these were only the tip of the iceberg. Three core issues with varying degrees of complexity were emerging at the same time.

Firstly, following the creation of Torside as an agreed venture between the MDHC and the TGWU, relations between the employer and the union had started to become *too* friendly. The regional union official, Jack Dempsey, was perceived by the dockers to feel more at ease with management than with the shop stewards. But, it was not just the local union official that was producing suspicion, as a shop steward recalls:

> "the relationship between the local union and the national union and the employer, and the employers and the port authority was unhealthy, in my opinion, far too close, and to a certain degree, a bit sycophantic, it was like, whatever the employer wants, so the union were being used to pursue the employers' agenda" (Interview with Mike Carden, March 2009).

Pursuing the employers' agenda led to further changes that were antagonistic to the dockers' interests. For example, in 1994 a change aimed at bringing casualism back was introduced without any complaints from the union. The change brought in annualised hours, which meant that dockers would not have a normal working week. Rather, their hours of work would be organised according to the number of ships in port at any one time. This meant they had to be available for work, and could be called in at little notice, but also, it meant that they could go for days without work. The impact of this was that dockers

could end up owing the employer hours if they had not been called to work sufficient times in any given year:

> "It was like a slave contract, you end up owing the employer hours because in a potentially casual industry where you weren't guaranteed five days work, Monday to Friday, where like a ship would come in for like a couple of days and then you may not get another ship for three or four days, five, a week or a fortnight, then obviously with a situation like annualised hours you were always gonna owe the employer hours, and even the most moderate dockworker was damaged by that, there was no, you couldn't avoid it, everyone was affected by it, and I think that had a big impact on, on the militancy of the workforce" (Interview with Mike Carden, March 2009).

Finally, severance payments after 1989 had continued and as working conditions deteriorated they became a more attractive option, mainly because they were very generous. Considering that a Port Operations Worker in 1994 earned £24,728 gross pay, a severance pay of £35,000 was certainly attractive. The effect of these large severance payments was that:

> "people were selling their jobs effectively, for what then was a large amount of money, and so you were down to sort of a hardcore of 5-600 workers, who had sort of made the decision that they were staying in the industry, and some felt that the industry owed them something, you know, I felt that way, you know, we all could have left, we all could have sold our jobs, in a sense, and we didn't, so then, to not do that and then being met with constantly low wages, longer shifts, you know, there is 12-hour shift, 16-hour shifts, it was dreadful, it was absolutely dreadful" (Interview with Mike Carden, March 2009).

All these issues, therefore, contributed to a heightened sense of workplace conflict. Crucially, the loss of trust between the union and the workers grew as working conditions worsened. And the union was often seen as a willing participant in the worsening of conditions. The relationships became increasingly bitter. In a further dispute in the container area in 1994 over the introduction of the annualised rota system, the Liverpool dockers' representatives complained of "alleged interference by regional officials, against the wishes of the membership, in disputes and other matters" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee, 25 July 1994 Circular No. 940593). As events produced further

interference, the dockers' representatives attended a union Docks and Waterways National Committee meeting in October with a more direct request:

> "Concern was expressed about the resolution sent to the General Secretary from the July Regional Trade Group meeting regarding the alleged interference of the Regional Officers. We are completely opposed to them negotiating on our behalf without being asked. The resolution indicated that the General Secretary should not be involved but that wasn't the resolution that should have been sent down. Regarding the LCH dispute, the resolution that should have been sent down was about the Regional Secretary and leading officers – but not the General Secretary. […]

> A Region 6 delegate said the request was for a delegation meeting with the General Secretary about the interference of the Regional Secretary in Trade Group matters" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee, 27 October 1994 Circular No. 940778).

In fact, the regional union official knew that he had lost credibility amongst the dockers. But in a final attempt to try and appease them, he sent the following letter two months before the 1995-1998 dispute started, warning that the dockers' jobs were at risk:

Figure 5.1 Letter from Jack Dempsey, 18 July 1995

T&G North West (letter headed paper)

18 July 1995

TO THE MEMBERS OF:-

6/601, 6/602, 6/603, 6/605, 6/606 and 6/610 BRANCHES

Dear Brother,

I am writing to you today to explain the very serious situation in the Port of Liverpool at this moment in time, which carries a very realistic threat to people's jobs.

This has been brought about because of a number of instances of late that have convinced the employer and his customers that we do not have the will or ability to abide by any agreements we reach and while you may feel the situation is mutual, they are determined that they will no longer accept people taking unofficial action of any description.

The M.D.H.C. have advised members at Seaforth Container Terminal by letter that they will be dismissing people who take part in any unofficial action. They have further advised that they will be setting an agenda which includes dealing with sixty people who they say cannot or will not train to be used in the manner they require.

Nelson Stevedores have insisted that we put in writing to them confirmation that we will abide by the agreements, in particular the Grievance Procedure and they are disciplining members who took part in an overtime ban.

Torside have declared a redundancy of twenty full-time employees and while this is still being discussed, again reference has been made to a lack of customer confidence due to unofficial actions.

The Shop Stewards are aware of these positions in each of the companies.

The M.D.H.C. and L.C.H. are also asking searching questions as to our ability to conclude a deal in view of the impending Industrial Tribunal cases being brought privately against these companies by our members.

We have, I believe, reached a crisis of confidence position, in that the employer no longer believes that the Union has any control over its members and therefore, they are questioning why they should recognise the Union.

Any unofficial action may well cost you your job, as the employers are adamant that they will sack people who take part in any such action and have stressed this clearly to your Stewards and myself.

We must avoid giving any of these positions to any of the employers and I am appealing to you all as individuals whose jobs are dependent upon our negotiating our way through these difficult problems to abide by agreements and maintain a collective discipline which allows this to happen to all of our mutual satisfaction with the dignity of all being retained.

Yours fraternally,

J. DEMPSEY
REGIONAL TRADE SECRETARY,
DOCKS & WATERWAYS SECTION.

The letter had the opposite effect from that which the writer possibly intended. For the majority of dockworkers, this letter demonstrated their betrayal by their full-time official. It made the dockers become even more distrustful of the relationship between their union and the employers, a relationship that had become far too comfortable, in the dockers' minds, since the abolition of the NDLS.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced workplace relations in the port of Liverpool following the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989. It has done so by following Phillips' (2009) idea of workplace conflict as the fundamental break-up of trust, which may lead to an industrial dispute. In the case of Liverpool, this chapter has shown that these characteristics were certainly found in the type of workplace relations that developed in the port between 1989 and September 1995. Additionally, in Liverpool, the break-up of trust also occurred between the workers and their union, the TGWU, which was not helped by the regional developments that were simultaneously occurring, and which the previous chapter has explored.

Crucially, three key developments in workplace relations between 1989 and 1995 have been identified by this chapter as the direct precursors to the events that unfolded on 25 September 1995, and which the following two chapters consider extensively. Firstly, the creation of Torside and, with it, the introduction of flexible working practices in the port with the agreement of the employer, the union, and to a certain extent, the shop stewards. Secondly, the derecognition of shop stewards in the port in 1992 following a dispute over job losses, breaking up any communication channels between the shop stewards and the employer. Finally, the introduction of annualised hours, bringing in a system more in line with earlier periods of casualism in port employment. The way in which these three episodes shaped the relationship between the Liverpool dockers, their union and the MDHC would have deep consequences.

Chapter 6. The Liverpool dockers' dispute 1995-98: the local dynamics

This chapter focuses on the local political dynamics that developed throughout the 28 months of the Liverpool dockers' dispute. It does so by developing a chronological account of the main struggles arising from within two separate, locally-grounded developments: on the one hand, the increasingly difficult relationship between the Liverpool dockers and the TGWU's leadership and, on the other, the links developed by the Liverpool dockers outside the formal structures of the TGWU. This chapter mentions some relevant developments in the dockers' international campaign but it does not analyse them, as the international campaign is considered at length in the following chapter.

The start of the dispute – September-November 1995

Although the dispute started on Monday 25 September 1995, there are no documentary records of the first few days. It was not until 30 September that the first press article was published in the specialist maritime industry paper *Lloyd's List*. However, there are four valuable sources of information regarding the initial stages of the dispute. The port shop stewards compiled a chronology in 1996, which they submitted to the Education and Employment Committee at the House of Commons, and which was published in the report *The Employment Implications of the Industrial Dispute in the Port of Liverpool*. Also Michael Lavalette and Colin Barker, two academics from Liverpool and Manchester Metropolitan Universities respectively, both active members of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), published a book chapter reflecting on the first two weeks of the dispute (Barker and Lavalette 2001). There were two unpublished manuscripts produced by members of the Merseyside support group, Bill Hunter (1998), a long-standing Trotskyist based in Liverpool, and Dave Cotterill (1997) at the time a well known member of the 'Militant Tendency'. Drawing from

these four sources, together with my own interviews, archival records and news sources, I will trace, chronologically, the unfolding of the local and national dynamics of the dispute.

The dispute started when five young dockworkers employed by Torside were sacked after they refused to complete overtime under different conditions from those established by custom or negotiation. Overtime on the docks used to be paid in two-hour blocks (a customary practice), which meant that if the ship was unloaded sooner, the dockworkers earned more than they had worked. If it took the full two hours they would get paid the same as if it took half an hour. This was an important arrangement since ships would have to be unloaded often before the tide of the river Mersey changed, otherwise they would have to pay for another 24 hours in the port (and port fees are expensive). This meant that dockworkers were used to doing overtime at the end of their shift if there was little left to unload in order to allow ships to leave on time.

On 25 September 1995, the employment conditions changed. The young unionised Torside dockers were not given the usual notice to do overtime, thereby breaking a customary practice, and they were told they would just receive payment for one hour's work (Barker and Lavalette 2001, p. 140). When they refused to accept this, their employment was terminated. The next day, the Torside shop stewards committee called a meeting of the entire Torside workforce; the meeting was interrupted by Bernard Bradley (Torside's managing director). Bradley sacked the 80 Torside workers (Barker and Lavalette 2001). The workers then had to decide what to do. Amongst the five originally sacked, one was the son of the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards treasurer, Jim Davies, another three were nephews of another MDHC shop steward, Billy Jenkins.

A family affair was becoming evident. This was to prove decisive, because it meant that MDHC workforce was, by default, already involved in the dispute. It was clear for many of the dockers that crossing your own son's picket line was certainly not a possibility. Therefore, even if there had just been family ties as a reason, the MDHC permanent workforce had already become involved. This did not mean that the MDHC dockers felt that the stoppage was the right thing to do. For example, Jim Davies, reflecting on the advice he offered to his

son, stressed the importance of negotiation rather than picketing (interview with Jim Davies). It remains unclear to this day the extent to which negotiation was possible at this stage, considering the motives behind Torside's move. The key motive Torside had for risking the development of this dispute was to reduce their workforce. Torside had been attempting, throughout the summer, to reduce the number of jobs in the port as well as reducing the contractual hours of most of its workforce (Davies 1996b). This would mean that those who remained employed would only be guaranteed 20-hours work per week, with the rest being paid as overtime if work was available. This was considered to be unacceptable by the dockers, who saw it as a return to casualism.

However, it is clear from the evidence submitted to the Commons Committee mentioned earlier, that Torside was going through a difficult time. It had not achieved the main purpose behind its creation. The sacked dockworkers maintained that Torside was under the direct control of the MDHC, as a way of introducing casual work practices through the back door. On the other hand, ex-registered dockworkers, through family ties and trade union education, had managed to hand down their historical experience to the young Torside dockers. The inter-generational link between dockers is crucial, and something dockers considered important to fight for as will be explored later in the chapter.

Additionally, there was a breakdown in communication between the TGWU official responsible for Liverpool dockworkers and the dockworkers themselves. Torside's managing director's submission to the Education and Employment Committee states how Jack Dempsey (TGWU official) "came into my office and he seemed to know what had happened as regards the five men but when he arrived he was faced with a total unofficial dispute. He had not spoken to the men on the site that day when he came to my office" (The Education and Employment Committee 1996, p. 19). This type of situation was repeatedly mentioned by shop stewards and rank-and-file dockers during my interviews. The TGWU official would talk first to the employer, and then to the workers.

This epitomises what this thesis has already considered in the previous two chapters. On the one hand, there was a feeling that the TGWU had failed to represent them adequately since the abolition of the NDLS, a belief which was at

one with the dockers' historical relationship with the union. On the other hand, the environment in which the dockers found themselves after 1989 was one in which workplace conflict was characterised by a 'militant management', a particularly different environment to the one dockers who started work in the mid-1960s or early 1970s had been used to.

On the Wednesday, two days after the original five sackings, the Torside workers set up a picket line, which 11 workers from another stevedoring company (Nelson) decided not to cross. This meant they were also sacked (Barker and Lavalette 2001, p. 147). On the next day, Thursday 28 September, a picket line was set up at the main entrance where the MDHC workers were due to go into work. The large majority of MDHC dockworkers and a large proportion of clerical and ancillary staff did not cross the picket line; just thirty workers crossed the picket line (Barker and Lavalette 2001, p. 148). The majority had their reservations. They did not think that the Torside men were doing the right thing, they felt they ought to negotiate: however, they felt that they "wouldn't know how to cross a picket line" (Tighe 20/11/1995). Whether there was any real possibility of negotiation at this stage remains uncertain. Any assessment would depend on understanding the employer's motivations behind their actions. In interviews, management clearly emphasised that they wanted to show 'who was the boss', but they did not expect that rank-and-file dockers would follow their shop stewards to such an extent.

The workers who refused to cross the picket line were instantly dismissed by the MDHC for exercising secondary action, something which was, and still is, illegal in Britain (1980 Employment Act). There were two main issues arising from the dispute. On the one hand, the dispute itself arose from the articulation of solidarity amongst contractually fragmented workers: three different companies, three different types of contracts, and two different employment groups; dockworkers and white collar workers. On the other hand, all these groups of workers were unionised, and belonged to the same union, the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). Therefore, a contradictory situation, with both fragmentation and unity being present, developed. Yet, the union "urged workers not to take collective action, dissociating itself from them

when they did. Initially, the union denied the dockers the use of union premises, only allowing them the use of office facilities after securing a statement from MDHC that it would not sue the TGWU for supporting illegal strike activity" (Barker and Lavalette 2001p. 150).

At this point, the dispute remained localised, with only the specialist maritime press starting to report what was happening from 30 September. It was not until 11 October that the British national press first reported the dispute, in *The Guardian* (Halsall 11/10/1995). The reason for the dispute reaching the national press was that the port was forced to close down, at least for a few days, due to the workers' actions (Rooney 02/10/1995). However, the employer, MDHC, was very quick to react to the situation. By the weekend, they had sent out new contracts to around 200 of the dockworkers (Guest 30/09/1995) as well as starting an advertising campaign in the local press "looking for men or women willing to work a seven-day, three-shift pattern" (Guest 03/10/1995). By then, the workers' action was no longer a matter to be ignored by the national press, or by the employer.

For the dockers, the first few weeks of the dispute were successful in maintaining unity and local solidarity. Although unrecorded, a considerable number of tugboat operatives (who are crucial in guiding vessels in and out of the port) did not cross the picket line for at least the first two weeks (interview data). This would have surely made a contribution to the £4.5 million the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) lost in 1995 including the first three months of the dispute (Mortished 22/08/1996). Crucially, however, the attempt by the MDHC to fragment the strikers by offering new contracts to about half of them, was ultimately unsuccessful. Some of the dockers who received such contracts felt ashamed at first (interview with Sue Mitchell, January 2009) as if it meant they were seen as "good workers", rather than "militant" by the employer. The workers who received them, publicly rejected the contracts in a mass meeting.

The TGWU at this point still remained uncertain. The national leadership had not become involved, and there were deep suspicions between the regional officials and the shop stewards. The docks official, Jack Dempsey,

made it very clear to the dockers that the dispute was not official as there had not been a secret ballot. The relationship between Dempsey and the dockers was one of complete mistrust. The trade union, facing sequestration of funds if they supported illegal industrial action under the 1982 Employment Act (Visser and Van Ruysseveldt 1996), remained silent. Furthermore, there was a concern from the TGWU to ensure they represented all of their members effectively (see table below), including those non-dockworkers employed by MDHC who had crossed the picket line. This was not a response to fragmentation specific to the 1990s, it was deeply rooted in the historical experience of the TGWU: "the leaders of the union were not simply concerned, when framing policy or taking action, with the reaction of dock workers but also were concerned with the reaction of the whole body of the membership, even when the issue was solely of immediate concern to dock workers" (Jackson 1991, p. 39).

Table 6.1. TGWU non-striking members employed by the MDHC, by occupation

TGWU Regional Secretary's figures		Port shop stewards' comments and figures	
Polsa (ACTS)	134	Mersey Docks office staff	100 (max)
Pilots (Mersey)	50	All self employed	
Tugs	139	Employed by Cory/Alexandra	
Dock Gatemen	42	Mersey Docks	42
Boatmen	78	Mersey Docks	78
Pandoro	28	P&O, not Mersey Docks	
Floating Plant Ratings	82	Mersey Docks	50
Stevedores (Container Terminal)	36	Mersey Docks: dockworkers	20
Stevedores (Grain Terminal)	40	Mersey Docks: dockworkers	23
Securicor (Ex-Neptune)	60	Not Mersey Docks employees	
Stevedores (Birkenhead)	16	Not Mersey Docks employees	
Maintenance and Warehousing	51	Mersey Docks	51
Floating Plant Officers, Dockmasters	53	Mersey Docks	53
Total	**809**		**417**

(Davies 1997)

As the above table shows, even though there was major disagreement in terms of how many TGWU members were actually employed in the Port, it was clear that the TGWU had a large number of non-striking members, including between 43 and 76 strikebreakers. This division was used by the TGWU throughout the dispute as one of the reasons for their ambivalence in supporting the sacked dockers. However, the dockers argued that they were not asking the TGWU to place some members before others; rather they had been dismissed, whilst the others had not. Therefore, they needed the support of their union.

The first 'final offer' was put on the table by the MDHC on 18 October 1995. This offer was applicable only to employees of MDHC and Coastal Containers Ltd and not to Torside. It had three elements:

1. "150 jobs would be contracted to Drake Port Services. Sacked dock workers could apply for these posts, but 'no guarantee can be given that Drake will recruit former dockers only'.

2. The establishment of a co-operative composed of sacked Liverpool dockers but with 'no exclusive right being given to such an organisation'.

3. A lump sum *ex-gratia* payment of £10,000." (Education and Employment Committee, HC 413, p. 30)

The offer had not been the product of any negotiation. It carried several implications for the way in which the dispute would develop. Firstly, it was an offer designed to test the ground, nearly a month after the dispute had started and when solidarity in the port, beyond those already dismissed, was diminishing. Secondly, the dockers had stated clearly from the beginning that they wanted their jobs back, yet the offer involved possible jobs with subcontractors, including Drake Port Distribution Services. 'Drake's' was already well known by British dockers. It had established itself as a reliable strike breaking port employment agency based in Kent. In 1993, Southampton dockers had also faced the threat of Drake's, and the Liverpool dockers were familiar with this earlier situation:

"Unbeknown to the Union or the negotiators, management had been preparing a plan since Christmas on how to run the Berth with a greatly reduced labour force, changed working practices and the use of sub contract labour. Furthermore, they had engaged an agency (Drake International) to secretly recruit and train a number of people at Tilbury and Barking to drive the cranes and straddle carriers at Southampton Container Terminal. When management was confronted with this fact, they said they needed insurance in case the talks ended in dispute.

[…]

We are very concerned that an employment agency, registered as being recognised by the TGWU is being used by SCT to undermine the efforts of TGWU members in their fight to maintain jobs. We would like something to be done about it" (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee, 29 April 1993 Circular No. 930317).

Finally, for those who wanted to accept severance payment, £10,000 was almost an insult, when in 1989 they could have left the industry with £35,000. Unsurprisingly, the offer was rejected at the following mass meeting by the dockers via a public ballot (show of hands[29]). The dockers wanted a guarantee that they would all be reinstated. In response, the company proceeded to recruit Drake Port Distribution Services to supply labour in the port of Liverpool.

WoW – from the washing line to the picket line – November 1995

The dispute was shaping up to be a rather different type of conflict. New workers were being recruited to work in the port and solidarity from other unionised workers was not as forthcoming as the dockers had hoped for. It was within this context that the Women of the Waterfront (WoW) was created. This added a new, and much needed, dimension of solidarity. The Women of the Waterfront would provide direct support to the dockers by involving the women in the dispute, ensuring that the women understood why the dockers were in dispute, and strengthening the dockers' determination as they would feel that their families were behind them.

In a lengthy article in *The Mirror,* Doreen McNally is quoted as saying that the women "were just housewives catapulted from the washing line to the picket line" (Doreen McNally quoted in Reade 26/09/1997). The women were catapulted onto the picket line in November 1995. This was the first time that

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[29] This was seen as problematic by the MDHC as the mass meetings were fairly open and it remains unclear as to who had the right to vote in them. "Votes about the dispute are taken by show of hands inside the TGWU's Merseyside headquarters at mass meetings attended by the Torside men and – the company claims after viewing TV pictures – former dockers who took redundancy years ago." Fazey, I. H. (03/04/1997). New-look docks sail to records. *Financial Times*. London.

women had been asked to be involved in a dockers' dispute. However, it was not the first time that women had been involved in a dispute as wives, rather than as workers themselves. What prompted the creation of WoW was the recent experience of the miners' strike.

Initially, the shop stewards asked Doreen McNally to coordinate a women's support group. A meeting was organised with a few shop stewards (two, Bobby Morton and Kevin Roberts) and Sylvia Pye, a woman representing the Miners' Women Support Group (Doreen McNally in Hunter 1998, p. 15), who had been involved during the miners' strike in 1984-85 and during the Parkside closure campaign in 1992-93. The meeting was designed to answer questions from dockers' wives as well as offering a way to support the dispute. Many women attended the meeting wanting to know: "Why did my husband follow what the shop stewards say?!" (data from own interviews). "Are they just sheep? Following what they are told…" The shop stewards had to answer some difficult questions from the wives, who at the same time were advised by Sylvia Pye on their important role. If there was to be any chance of winning the dispute, the women *had to* stand by the dockers.

However, this meeting was also organised with the participation of some of the women. From my interview data, it becomes evident that some of the women had already begun to get involved. The struggle was no longer over work conditions, as in the past; this struggle had gone further. All women interviewed, agreed on how they were used to seeing their husbands involved in strikes before, and they had not felt the need to become involved. Yet, in this case, they had been involved as the struggle became not just part of their husbands' work life, but part of their family life. The length of the dispute and the memories of both the miners' strike and the 1989 dock strike made the women think that this was going to be a dispute like no other. If nothing else, they understood the dockers' isolation. The restructuring of the industry and the severance payments following from the abolition of the NDLS ensured that this time, the Liverpool dockers were walking alone.

The women's involvement provided the dispute with a new lease of life. The determination to show that the dockers were not about to give up became

stronger with them. The employers were probably hoping that through the traditional family structures characteristic of most dockers' families, the wives would 'put some sense' into the men, particularly with Christmas approaching. It is important to understand that the dockers' income was reduced from over £20,000 a year to a handout of around £60 a week in the mass meetings.

From my interview data, it emerges that there was a core group of around 40 women meeting regularly, with up to 60 women committed to the Women of the Waterfront, which usually met every Wednesday. This represents quite a high level of involvement, since there were between 350 to 500 dockers involved in the dispute, and not all of them were married or in relationships. The significance of the women's group was three-fold. Firstly, the women were entering "the men's world". Secondly, they provided the backbone to the dispute; they were the most crucial support the dockers needed in order to continue with the dispute. Thirdly, the women were central to campaigning.

Dockworkers were a traditionally male section of the working class. In Liverpool this was definitely the case. Although containerisation and technological advances meant that many jobs in the docks were no longer as physically demanding, the traditional handing down of jobs from father to sons ensured a male and white (mainly of Irish origin) workforce. The experience of working in the docks was then one of inter-generational male bonding with a strong dose of dockworkers' consciousness, pride and education along the way. Most of the ex-dockers interviewed stated that their father had been a docker, and how working at the docks meant that this was "when I really got to know my dad" (interview with Billy Jenkins, January 2009). This came with a sense of historical experience, of inheriting past struggles. Billy Jenkins talked to me about the 1967 strike (a year before he started working in the docks): "My dad and all the older dockers won the conditions, like pay, cleaner atmosphere, health and safety..." (interview with Billy Jenkins, January 2009). This meant, for many of the dockers, that in 1995 they were not just fighting for their jobs, rather they were fighting to maintain the heritage their ancestors had fought so hard for, as figure 6.1 conveys.

Figure 6.1. Banner on the picket line, 1995

The women encountered some hostility. Often, the dockers would want to keep their work life separate from their family life. Paradoxically, perhaps, the most active women involved in the WoW were not shop stewards' wives; rather they were the wives or partners of rank-and-file dockers. The idea that shop stewards, and by extension their families, may be more politicised did not appear to be accurate. Similarly, it was not a matter of women who worked outside the home versus those who worked as housewives. In fact, many dockers' wives were in full-time employment, and many of those who were not had to look for full-time employment within a few weeks of the dispute starting due to the financial strain that came with the dispute. Some of the shop stewards argued that the lack of involvement of their wives was due to families having to ensure their survival, and, therefore the need to decide which of the two would become more active in the dispute, whilst the other one focused on the family.

The second way in which the WoW was significant was in their role as the dispute's backbone. WoW represented the closest level of solidarity possible, that of the family. It could be argued that without the women's support the dispute would not have lasted as long as it did. There are several reasons for this.

The women's support injected a sense of morality into the dispute, of justice, a perspective on what was right and wrong. This meant the dispute created more sympathy amongst audiences. Additionally, most of the families went through considerable financial hardship throughout the dispute, and the women publicly understood the dockers' collective plight, rather than individually defending their families (as neoliberal constructions of economic actors assumed).

Finally, the women were very creative in their campaigning. They were very successful at fundraising (for example, they were awarded a controversial Human Rights Prize of £30,000 from Colonel Gaddaffi in September 1997). Fundraising was crucial in keeping the dispute going. According to Jim Davies (the port shop stewards treasurer) they needed around £35,000 per week to keep the dispute going. The women were also very active in different types of support. They would design banners for the picket line or demonstrations, organise catering for social events and clothes swapping days. Most importantly, they became engaged politically in two main ways. The women would go and sing outside the strikebreakers and company executives' homes in an effort to shame them in front of their neighbours:

> "These Scab-a-Night activities involved mainly the women and children visiting their homes, marching around in a circle, holding candles and singing Xmas carols to let the neighbours know what was going on"(Cotterill 1997).

The women also became particularly involved in delegation work. These latter activities, in particular, played a fundamental role in the politicisation of the women. As this involved speaking in public, often in meetings of people used to hearing politically trained speakers, such as national and international trade union meetings, the women started to become highly articulate public speakers. This demonstrates how the women's group was more than a defensive resource, and in fact, quickly established itself as a crucial organisation for the maintenance, and the possibility of winning the dispute. Furthermore, there was a shift towards new and politicised forms of activity, in unfamiliar locations. For many women this was a huge learning curve.

However, by December 1995 there was a sense of exhaustion and the support received locally was insufficient. Without national trade union backing

the dockers would remain isolated in Liverpool. This posed a serious strategic challenge for the dockers. Their leadership were becoming increasingly aware that they were on the wrong side of the port gates, and many within the left increasingly considered that occupation of the Port was the only strategic path towards successfully winning the dispute. This was to become a criticism by many left groupings of the dockers' leadership. However, as one of the shop stewards pointed out during an interview, it was not a credible strategic choice, not because of unwillingness, but because it simply became an impossible path to follow:

> "We should have occupied, and the plan, the people I mix with in work was that we knew a dispute was gonna happen, so when it happened, the plan was that we occupied, but the reality was that never took place, not because there was a strategic decision not to occupy, it was because we were outside the gates. And it was difficult to get in then, once you are out, you know. And we discussed it endlessly, not to be left outside the gates, you know, so that when the dispute began we would occupy. But the reality just didn't materialise" (interview with shop steward).

Occupation was not an option. A different reality had to materialise. Local solidarity was important to maintain strength and morale but it was not proving effective at putting pressure on the MDHC. If the picket line was unable to stop work in the port, something else had to. The dockers initiated an international solidarity campaign in December 1995, the immediate effects of which were evident in the offer that was to follow.

Second offer – January 1996

The second offer followed a period of negotiation and it was presented on Thursday 25 January 1996. The main negotiators were Bernard Cliff (MDHC), Jack Adams (TGWU) and Mike Carden (Port Shop Stewards). The dockers' demands were fairly straightforward. They wanted their jobs reinstated and a solution to the plight of the Torside dockers. Torside was no longer a player as it

had stopped providing employment services to the port (although according to Companies House records it did not cease to exist until 2003). However, the dockers wanted the MDHC to re-employ the young dockers. There were two reasons for this demand. First, this would have been the procedure to be followed under the NDLS. Second, they felt that since the creation of Torside had been made by an agreement between the MDHC and the TGWU and that Torside had carried out all of its recruitment and training on MDHC's premises, and with the direct assistance of MDHC's managers, that the MDHC had a direct responsibility for the fate of Torside's workers. Yet the MDHC had made it clear from the beginning of the dispute that the reinstatement of Torside dockers was not negotiable. They were not going to be held responsible for what they presented as another company's troubles.

Whilst the offer differed significantly from the previous one, and was an improvement, it was a far cry from what the dockers were hoping for, particularly after the international show of strength (which will be dealt with in the next chapter). This second offer consisted of a £25,000 payment to 319 workers previously directly employed by the MDHC, and the remaining would receive £1,000. There would also be 40 jobs available. Torside offered an additional 30 jobs to their own sacked workers. It would also have involved the removal of Drake Ports Distribution Services as a labour supply agency in the port (The Education and Employment Committee, 1996 p. 30). However, the company imposed the condition that it had to be submitted to a secret ballot.

Table 6.2. Comparison of the first and second offers

Offer 1 (October 1995)	Offer 2 (January 1996)
150 jobs to Drake Port Services (open for former dockers to apply)	Removal of Drake Port Services
Establishing a co-operative of sacked dockers (but with no exclusive rights)	40 jobs available from the MDHC 30 jobs available from Torside (as it had not officially ceased to trade)
£10,000 to those dockers with more than 15 years of service	£25,000 for 319 MDHC workers £1,000 for the remaining
No negotiation	Negotiated by Mr Bernard Cliff (MDHC), Jack Adams (TGWU), Mike Carden (Port Shop Stewards).
Voted by public show of hands	Ballot carried out by Electoral Reform Society

The offer was not accepted. 271 sacked MDHC workers voted against the offer, with 50 voting to accept it in a secret ballot organised by the Electoral Reform Society (see breakdown of votes in table 6.3). Further meetings in the spring of 1996 proved unsuccessful in negotiating an agreement. Both the dockers and the MDHC maintained their respective positions. The key issue that proved impossible to negotiate was the reinstatement of Torside dockers. By then, it had become clear that many of the other dockers may not have returned to work even if reinstated and that they would have taken early retirement. It was the position of Torside that had to be secured.

Table 6.3. Vote result

MDHC Employees	271 against 50 for 8 spoiled papers
Torside employees	56 against 6 for 14 not returned
Nelson Freight employees	10 against 0 for

(Labournet 1996)

The offer had been considerably more generous than the previous one. Importantly, it was to be the only offer which provided any solution for Torside

dockers (and which included them in the secret ballot). Additionally, it would have agreed to remove Drake's from providing employment in the port. At this stage, this was probably an easier option for the MDHC, as the new workforce was fully established. In the MDHC's Port of Liverpool 1997 Annual Report, Drake's received a glowing mention, alongside a full-page advert which is quite stark, shown in figure 6. 2, this demonstrated that the more time passed, the more difficult it would be to remove Drake's (and hence get the dockers' jobs back):

> "The Port of Liverpool's Royal Seaforth Container Terminal workforce is now one of the best in Britain. 'They are highly qualified, highly motivated and well-trained,' said Les Heather, the Liverpool-based Operations Manager for Drake Ports Distribution Services.
>
> Drake Ports Distribution Services, a division of Drake International which also operates in other UK ports, has been retained by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to provide a permanent workforce to handle Container Terminal cargo.
>
> DPDS, a company of the highest standing with a reputation for providing a totally professional workforce trained to the most exacting standards, works in close co-operation with Mersey Docks' established management team and 24 port workers already at the Container Terminal.
>
> In October 1995, Mr Heather began recruiting 150 employees, including 18 women, for the Terminal's new labour force with selection based entirely on suitability for the vacant positions" (MDHC 1997, p. 37).

Figure 6.2. Drake Ports Distribution Services advert in the Port of Liverpool's Annual Report 1997

By this stage the international campaign had proven useful in securing a much better second offer. Whether that was a direct result of the international campaign, or of the dockers' show of endurance is hard to discern. However, it meant that for the time being the dockers focused their efforts on strengthening the international contacts they had started to build up. This led to the organisation of the First International Dockers' Conference in February 1996 in Liverpool City Hall, which is considered in chapter seven.

The improved offer and support received by the dockers so far meant that they were feeling strong. And they were not alone. In March 1996, two crucial trade union leaders visited Liverpool to address the weekly dockers' mass meeting. John Bowers, President of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the dockers' own General Secretary, Bill Morris.

Bill Morris' grandchildren – March 1996

Bill Morris addressed a dockers' mass meeting on March 13 1996:

"It's one of those situations which passes in time but when you look back you have to justify where you were and what contribution you made. It's one of those situations where as you age and your grandchildren say to you 'where were you at the great moment?' you either stand up with pride and say 'I was there' or you hung your head in shame, without an answer ('hear hear' applause).

And I tell you this, when my grandchildren say to me, in 15, 20, 25 years from now, 'where were you when the Liverpool dockworkers were fighting for their jobs, their community, their dignity and their pride?' I want to be able to say: 'I was marching with them side by side (cheers, applause). I'm here this morning, I'm here this morning full of that pride, and feel almost privileged to be part of this history in its making.

[…]

The great victory, as far as I'm concerned, is to force them [the company] to recognise that it's not the bureaucracy that's gonna lead the working class and the dockers to victory, it is the leadership which you elect, it's the Jimmy Nolans and the Davieses and the Cardens and all the other leadership that you elect that will in fact lead this dispute to victory, and they better understand that because nothing less than a recognition of that is going to bring about the sort of solution that is required ('hear hear')" (Tape no. 13, Mass meeting 13March 1996, with John Bowers and Bill Morris (speaking) at Transport House, Liverpool).

There is still some time left for the then TGWU General Secretary's grandchildren to ask him for an explanation about his role in the dispute. What was important, however, in light of this speech by Bill Morris, was how, from March until August-September 1996, the relationship between the union and the dockers appeared to be good, even after the initial frictions in 1995 between the TGWU official in the Port of Liverpool, Jack Dempsey, and the Torside picketers over the use of TGWU material in an unofficial dispute. As the dispute started, Torside dockers had picked up TGWU's placards and banners from Transport House and used them in their picket line. This led to a scuffle between the pickets and Jack Dempsey as he forcefully took the materials back; as he felt that union material should not have been used in disputes of an unofficial nature.

Bill Morris' speech highlighted the importance of the local shop stewards' leadership in the dispute, something the MDHC appeared to be particularly concerned about. This was linked with some of the concerns for trade union renewal that become evident within the TGWU after 1992, as chapter four has considered at length. Morris' last paragraph is of crucial importance. Throughout the negotiations between the company and the union, there remained the sticking point of the shop stewards. The dockers were suspicious of union officials, yet they trusted their shop stewards wholeheartedly. The company preferred to deal with the union officials and saw the shop stewards as a problem rather than a possible solution. The union officials often felt more at ease with the company than the shop stewards. However, for Morris to have said these words in a dockers' mass meetings meant that he had realised the importance of the dockers' local leadership.

In fact, the problems between the local shop stewards and their full-time official had already been made known to Bill Morris in 1994. In a fax responding to Morris the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards stated that:

"Between 1989 and 1995 the Liverpool Dockers, through their Docks and Waterways Regional Trade Group, requested on *four occasions*, an official ballot relating to job losses, privatisation and centralisation. *These requests were refused by the Union for various reasons*; ongoing negotiations, companies no longer trading, the illegality of holding ballots amongst different companies albeit direct subsidiaries of Mersey Docks etc. The *complaints and concerns of the Liverpool Dockers* are adequately recorded in the Minutes of the Region 6 Committee over a long period of time. Indeed, at least two meetings took place in London with Bill Morris.

Identifying these various concerns at the last meeting which took place in 1994 with Bill Morris, the Dock Stewards spoke of the increasing chaos in the Port that could result in the Dockers' dismissal *if the Union continued to fail to act*. Three *formal complaints were made about the local Docks officer* and a Regional Inquiry again failed to respond fully to the concerns of the Dockers in 1993" (Emphasis added, fax to Bill Morris 09/04/1997).

The issue of union representation and democratic accountability within the union came to the fore. As the speech quoted earlier shows, Bill Morris appeared committed to the leadership style of the dockers' shop stewards. How long this commitment was to last is a matter the chapter will deal with in the forthcoming sections. Similarly, the TGWU's local docks official had been more of a problem than a help, yet here it was, the TGWU's General Secretary offering full support.

Once again, the sense of strategic exhaustion returned during the summer of 1996. It was evident that the dockers never expected the dispute to last so long, and even though they had shown a high level of organisational creativity, nothing appeared to be putting sufficient pressure on the MDHC. Most importantly, international support was not enough to bring the dispute to an end. The strategy turned efforts back towards building local and national alliances.

Meanwhile, the first anniversary of the dispute was commemorated with a rally in Liverpool with massive participation of the environmentalist, direct action group 'Reclaim the Streets'. This represented a clash of left-wing cultures. 'Reclaim the Streets' were well known 'ravers' who had a very different lifestyle from that of the traditionally working-class dockers. In addition, the agreed politeness with which dockers had carried out their picketing, was about to be shaken by the direct action activists within 'Reclaim the Streets'. This coalition was to have two effects. On the one hand, it linked green and red issues in an almost unprecedented manner (Penman 29/09/1996) in Britain; on the other, it antagonised the TGWU further.

In response to the direct action that occurred as part of the first anniversary, when Custom House, the MDHC's headquarters, was squatted, Bill Morris stated his dissatisfaction at the Labour Party conference in Blackpool. Morris said: "We deplore the violence and unlawful action that has taken place. The dockers must disassociate themselves from those who have become involved in the dispute" (Osler 02/10/1996). The relevance or not of such a coalition, and the reaction from the trade union movement, went beyond red and green issues. What it demonstrated was a clear and unexpected alliance between the working class and groups outside the traditional political left, remarkable particularly as the dockers had been surrounded throughout the initial stages of the dispute by small groups from the British left (such as the Socialist Workers' Party, some Communist Parties, etc…). The move was not towards the traditional left, whether moderate or radical. The move was towards a new way of understanding organisation and action.

In Britain, issues of representation with the dockers' union were coming back to the fore. Following the Education and Employment Committee's investigation into the Liverpool dockers' dispute during the summer, new evidence against Jack Dempsey, the docks official, was made public. Torside's evidence, presented to the committee, pointed towards the possibility of reinstatement having been relayed to Dempsey within the first few hours of the

dispute. If this was true, Dempsey had failed to communicate this to the Torside dockers. This led the dockers to present a formal complaint of Gross Misconduct to the TGWU's General Secretary Bill Morris for the action (or inaction) of their full-time union official at the start of the dispute. The complaint focused on two crucial aspects: Dempsey's failure to inform the Torside dockers of their offer of reinstatement and the consequences of him not doing so creating a situation where "he has left the Union open to legal redress" (letter from Branch 6/610 dated 6 September 1996 to Bill Morris). For Branch 6/606 the damage was more extreme: "It is our members' considered view that Brother Dempsey has been totally negligent on this issue resulting in the dismissal of 500 Transport and General Members laying **our Union open to possible claims of Non-Representation**" (undated letter from Jim Davies, Branch Secretary, emphasis added).

This forced the TGWU to make a response. Bill Morris asked David McCall (Region 6's Regional Secretary and Dempsey's boss) to conduct a regional investigation. McCall did so and submitted a report with his recommendations to Morris in November 1996. Some relevant issues were disclosed in the report. Family connections appeared to be widespread, in fact, Dempsey's son was also employed (and sacked) by Torside (McCall 1996, p. 15). More important, however, was the different leadership style of Dempsey, as a full-time union official, and the port shop stewards, as dockers' elected representatives. In his statement to the regional investigation, Dempsey maintained:

> "At that point [Wednesday 27 September 1995], I was still hopeful that, if I could get the cooperation of the Shop Stewards, we might get some resolution from the employer. At the end of the meeting, I asked whether I had authority to speak for them. They replied that they'd have to go back to the lads and seek permission for the negotiations" (Dempsey quoted in McCall 1996, p. 16-17).

The issue of how union democracy was understood will be considered further in the next two sections. The report shed no light on Dempsey's withholding, or not, of crucial information:

"Full-Time Officials have to 'walk on eggshells' in such situations, knowing the legal and financial implications for the Union from possible challenges by the employers. Jack Dempsey was subsequently involved in meetings with other senior officials, and appraised them of the situation as he saw it. It is therefore preposterous to imply that Jack Dempsey, as an experienced FTO, would have wilfully withheld a critical piece of information (about Bradley's offer) from his colleagues. We should conclude, rather, that the 'offer' was not genuine, or that Jack Dempsey certainly had not seen it as 'critical'" (McNulty, Dempsey's representative, quoted in McCall 1996p. 21).

Therefore, it appeared that Bradley (Torside's managing director) might have indeed presented an offer to Dempsey, yet the latter might have felt that the offer was not worthy of being communicated to the dockers. McCall's recommendations, in light of this statement, were surprising:

"1   that Brother Jack Dempsey conducted himself properly throughout these events; and

2   that there should be formal repudiation of Bernard Bradley's statement to the Select Committee" (Letter from David McCall to Bill Morris, 14 November 1996, ref DMcC/SW).

Bill Morris took his time to carry out the second recommendation, and it was not until nearly a year later that Morris wrote to the Chair of the Education & Employment Committee repudiating Bradley's statement (Morris 1997). The TGWU, or at least Region 6's Secretary, appeared to be confident about the validity of the first recommendation. Dempsey was promoted to Regional Trade Group Secretary in April 1998 (Dempsey 1998).

John Pilger – November 1996

In Britain, the first critical response to the role of the TGWU to become public, and probably the best known one, was John Pilger's eight page special article in *The Guardian* (23 November 1996). Pilger's article was a strong critique of Bill Morris and the TGWU over their role in the dispute. Most

importantly, it appeared at a time when the TGWU were calling for support to the Labour Party in their internal and external communications for the forthcoming 1997 general election. The dockers felt that finally the media would be on their side. They were particularly optimistic as they felt that *The Guardian*'s readership who were probably eager to have a change from the Conservative government would have been particularly concerned with how a trade union leadership close to the Labour Party was behaving towards their own members.

With few exceptions, the mainstream press had been generally oblivious to what was happening in Liverpool. With the general election fast approaching and the fact that many of *The Guardian*'s readers would be sympathetic to the Labour Party, the TGWU claimed that Pilger's article damaged Labour's electoral chances. Bill Morris rejected the article as an unfounded attack and John Pilger as an 'ultra-left' journalist (Setting the record straight, TGWU *The Record*, February/March 1997, p. 5). The TGWU had indeed been contributing financially to the dockers' hardship fund [30] as well as maintaining the negotiations with the MDHC. However, *The Guardian* did not publish Bill Morris' reply in full (just a short letter). The complete reply had to be published in the TGWU's own publication, *The Record*, in the February/March 1997 issue. There, the position of the TGWU was made clear:

> "The union's biennial delegate conference has made it clear that while we operate under draconian Tory legislation designed to weaken legitimate trade union activity, the leadership of the union has an obligation to preserve the fabric of the T&G and not engage in activities for which it has no immunity or legal protection" (Bill Morris, *The Record*, February/March 1997).

In the letter from Bill Morris to *The Guardian* a crucial issue was pointed out: the difficulty in reaching a negotiated end to the dispute. This was not presented as an obstacle because of the MDHC, but rather because of the dockworkers' demands. In Morris' words: "One of the difficulties in resolving this dispute, which John Pilger seems to ignore, is the demand by the Shop

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[30] Although there is evidence that the contributions lacked regularity. In the Docks and Waterways National Committee on Thursday 25 July 1996, it was reported that the union had not contributed for 10 weeks (TGWU Docks and Waterways National Committee Minutes, 25 July 1996 Circular No. 961372).

Stewards that eighty men, who never worked for the company in the first place, must be employed by Mersey Docks and Harbour Company as part of the settlement" (letter sent for publication to *The Guardian*'s Editor from Bill Morris, 29 November 1996). What Bill Morris did not mention was that those eighty dockers were also members of the TGWU. The way in which the young Torside dockers were forgotten by the TGWU appears as a barrier to efforts to find a negotiated settlement that was acceptable to ***all*** TGWU members.

Third 'final' offer – November 1996

Meanwhile, negotiations were taking place between the MDHC and the TGWU, including members of the port shop stewards committee, and through the machinery at ACAS (Advisory and Conciliation Service) (Dropkin 1996). The negotiations were difficult as there was little room for manoeuvre by either side. MDHC had grabbed their chance and had followed the strategy of many port authorities around the world (Meyer 1999). They would no longer be employers of dockworkers; in other words, they would no longer provide stevedoring services to vessels. Their business would focus on property management and development, a more lucrative sector. MDHC were now landlords: stevedoring services would be contracted out and direct employment would be limited[31] (Dropkin 1996).

This third offer was no better than the previous one. In fact, little had changed (see table 6.4), and, crucially, Torside dockers were for the first time fully removed from a negotiated solution. The offer was once again rejected in a mass meeting. However, divisions began to appear in regard to future negotiating strategies: "a few expressed the view that reinstatement was now unattainable and talks should focus on increasing the severance payout beyond the £25,000 offered in June (which was subsequently withdrawn when ACL [Atlantic

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[31] In February 2009 I was able to attend meetings between Peel Ports (current owners of the Port of Liverpool) and the few remaining dockworkers employed by them and by Coastal Containers. The message to them was clear. They could either take statutory redundancy or be re-employed by Drake's.

Container Line] left the port). But the strong majority remain committed to fight on despite the personal hardship, and know that the company will treat beggars without mercy. Ancillary jobs are decidedly unpopular" (Dropkin 1996).

Table 6.4. A summary of offers made by MDHC up to November 1996

Offer 1 (October 1995)	*Offer 2 (January 1996)*	*Offer 3 (November 1996)*
150 jobs to Drake Port Services (open for former dockers to apply)	Removal of Drake Port Services	Drake Port Services to remain in the port
Establishing a co-operative of sacked dockers (but with no exclusive rights)	40 jobs available from the MDHC 30 jobs available from Torside	41 jobs (all ancillary) No jobs available for Torside or Nelson dockworkers
£10,000 to those dockers with more than 15 years of service	£25,000 for 319 workers £1,000 for the remaining	£25,000 for MDHC employees with more than 15 years service £1,000 for Nelson employees
		A joint company-union approach to the Pension Fund Trustees to request continuity be restored for all former workers in the scheme.
No negotiation	Negotiated by Mr Bernard Cliff (MDHC), Jack Adams (TGWU), Mike Carden (MPSS)	Negotiated by Mr Bernard Cliff (MDHC), Jack Adams (TGWU), Graham Stevenson (TGWU) Mike Carden (MPSS)
Voted by public show of hands	Ballot carried out by Electoral Reform Society	Voted by public show of hands

This offer, its rejection, and the shift of the dockers' campaign for reinstatement towards the international level provided a turning point in the relationship between the dockers, the TGWU and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). On the side of the company, things were also turning

bleak[32]. The dockers' mass meeting mandated the shop stewards to write to Bill Morris and David Cockroft immediately requesting a meeting with "Morris, ITF General Secretary David Cockcroft, Jack Adams, and Docks & Waterways National Officer Graham Stevenson, who attended the talks and also has international responsibilities within the union. […] Should Bill Morris and David Cockcroft agree to meet in front of witnesses, it might narrow the room for each to blame the other for the ongoing debacle in which ITF-affiliated dockers unions are still being told to refrain from industrial action: Antwerp and Cyprus being the most recent examples cited in the mass meeting" (Labournet 1996). By now, things were becoming harder to manage both nationally and internationally.

Whilst this meeting does not appear to have taken place, there was an informal meeting just after Christmas 1996 between the TGWU and the ITF, which highlights key issues for the dockers and the TGWU's negotiating strategies with the MDHC. Graham Stevenson from the TGWU considered that the dockers' achievement in raising £1 million by Christmas 1996 had made them "very arrogant" (9 January Minutes 1997). Even though the dockers were not present at this meeting, the ITF appeared to have taken into consideration the dockers' demands and maintained that:

> "In the view of the negotiators from the TGWU, the key issue which still remains to be resolved is the creation, either through direct employment or, if necessary, through the granting of appropriate contracts to other companies, of sufficient decent permanent dockworkers jobs to ensure the continued employment in the industry of all workers involved in the dispute who do not wish to take advantage of the severance package" (Cockroft and Marges 10/01/1997).

If job creation, or reinstatement, was the aim, then the TGWU and the dockers may have been closer in their positions that they thought. If the ITF was right in the way it understood the TGWU's position it suggests that the TGWU and the dockers were having some serious communication problems. This would impact on the 1997 negotiations which will be considered in the latter part of this chapter.

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[32] The leading negotiator from the MDHC Mr Bernard Cliff suffered a car crash in November 1996, resulting in his death a few days later on 1st December 1996.

Meanwhile, many groups within the British left (Socialist Workers' Party, Militant, International Communist Party (ICP), Communist Party of Great Britain, etc…) had accepted the open door invitation of the dockers' meetings. The dockers' leadership was proving quite independent and resilient, whilst at the same time allowing others to participate. This proved to be a challenge. From many groups within the left, criticism of the dockers' leadership became more frequent. In particular, their perceived ambivalence towards the TGWU was seen as a matter to be contested. Their relationship with the TGWU had reached breaking point, yet the dockers remained part of the union (albeit a very critical part of it). This caused frictions within the left alliances that the dockers had been building.

Firstly, the ICP offered to take over the shop stewards' leadership as they argued the shop stewards had proved to be ineffective: in a leaflet distributed in the dockers' mass meeting, the ICP argued:

> "the fundamental lesson of this experience is that genuine internationalism cannot be organised by the existing trade unions. The role of the stewards throughout has been to direct that action into bureaucratic channels, effectively stifling it and using it not to strengthen the working class, but to build relationships with transnational companies" (available from http://libcom.org/book/export/html/965).

This led the dockers' mass meeting to expel the ICP and ban it from attending any further meetings. If there was anything clear throughout the dispute, it was the embedded trust the dockers had in their shop stewards. This issue had already been brought up by the Socialist Workers' Party a year earlier: "some on the left would much preferred the dockers to have denounced the union leaders as bureaucrats and betrayers of the struggle, but this was completely foreign to the traditions and methods of the shop stewards. When it was necessary to criticise the union leaders the dockers would do so but in a skilful way" (Cotterill 1997).

This was echoed by two members of the Socialist Workers' Party, Michael Lavalette and Jane Kennedy, lecturers at Liverpool University, who were given full and open access by the shop stewards to all their meetings in order for them to compile a book on the dispute. The book has been the source of heavy criticism by the dockers. It was published quickly (only a year after the dispute started), and was seen as a political attempt by the authors to be the first to be associated with the dispute. More importantly, the book included a strong critique of the strategy of the dockers' leadership which, it argued, had pursued a strategy of international action at the expense of building a rank-and-file movement in Britain and presenting a real challenge to the TGWU (Lavalette and Kennedy 1996). In the view of many left groupings the dockers should have attempted to organise a rank-and-file takeover of the union, rather than working within the union structures and procedures.

However, the relationship between the dockers' leadership and the union leadership was not as 'nice' as some within the left were trying to imply: the world of the Liverpool dockers' dispute was not easily dichotomised into bureaucracy and rank-and-file unionism. By the end of 1996, rumours were rife that the TGWU were going to refuse the use of its buildings in Liverpool to the dockers. The move did not materialise until the end of the dispute; if it had done so earlier it would have caused deep divisions within the TGWU. The discourse within the TGWU was that divisions could have even affected Labour's electoral chances in May 1997. Whilst that was hardly the case, the dockers certainly did not want to be blamed for a further five years of Conservatism. It was precisely the prospect of a Labour government that held great expectations both for the TGWU leadership and the dockers alike. Surely, a Labour government would not allow this situation to continue, considering they would be part owners of the MDHC.

Great expectations – April/May 1997

The year 1997 was starting to look like the year when a possible resolution could develop. The government held "13.9 percent of the issued share capital in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. The current market value of

this stake is approximately £53.4 million" (Waldegrave 21/03/1997). The dockers were still hoping that New Labour would feel under pressure to find a settlement. There were three main reasons to hope for intervention. Firstly, Tony Blair's father-in-law was from Liverpool and publicly supported the dockers, sending T-shirts with slogans of support for the dockers to his grandchildren when they moved to Downing Street. Secondly, John Prescott, about to become deputy Prime Minister, was a former seafarer and trade unionist and had shown interest in 1995 in the dockers' situation. Finally, the party-union relationship could work to their advantage as Bill Morris had, at this stage, a relatively good personal and political relationship with Tony Blair.

It seems the T-shirts did not make a big impression on Blair's children. John Prescott's inaction was to follow him to the Brit Awards in 1998, when 'Chumbawamba' singer Donbert Nobacon threw a bucket of iced water over him in protest at his doing nothing to help the dockers (Ball 05/07/2006). Expecting Bill Morris to influence Blair was not on the cards either. David Cockroft informed the dockers:

> "I've spoken to Bill Morris about this, and we both think at this stage that your best bet of influencing Tony Blair rests with him. In any case, I have a feeling that Tony has other things on his mind at the moment!" (Cockroft 20/03/1997)

The issue was difficult. New Labour had spent the previous years trying to remove their links to the allegedly militant trade union past of the 1970s that, arguably, had provoked Thatcher's electoral victory in 1979. Engagement, in any form, with the dockers' dispute would have jeopardised their image, particularly when considering the 'illegality' of the dispute. Regarding this issue, one of the shop stewards reflected on how the illegal status of the dispute was used to the TGWU's advantage, in order to avoid having to act:

> "We've broke the law for two years and four months, no-one's come and arrested us have they? When people say 'you can't do it because it's illegal', well why hasn't anything happened? Right from Day One why didn't they sequestrate? Bill Morris was giving us money, he's let us use the office. Why haven't they sequestrated? Because they don't want to do it!" (Billy Jenkins, http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/kilculgp.htm)

The dockers' expectations were soon removed. The dispute continued. The change in government did not bring a change in the negotiating terms. What the dockers had really expected was government intervention, at least in the negotiations. It was not an eccentric idea, but the logical conclusion from the dockers' standpoint considering that the government was a large shareholder in MDHC. Although the new government appeared as far from finding a solution as the previous one, negotiations were about to take a new turn.

Labour Supply Organisation – 1997 negotiations

The dockers' main aim in their attempts to solve the dispute was to gain reinstatement of all sacked dockers, regardless of whoever was the employer who dismissed them (whether MDHC, Torside, Coastal Containers or Nelson Stevedoring). Negotiations in early 1997 focused on the creation of a Labour Supply Organisation (LSO) in the port. These negotiations appeared as a response to an idea which had first appeared in the initial offer by MDHC and had been an idea mentioned time and time again in mass meetings and shop stewards' discussions. The idea was to provide a source of employment for those sacked dockers who wished to remain working in the docks.

The shop stewards had compiled a proposal for this co-operative in the form of a business plan. The TGWU and MDHC decided to use external expertise in order to compile a viability report and a business plan. They chose KPMG as the external consultants. This antagonised the dockers straight away. KPMG had been involved in the sale of Medway Ports, which had ended in a large loss to the ex-Medway dockers who held shares, yet it managed to make a good profit for MDHC, as chapter two has explored in detail. Additionally, there was some crossover between KPMG employees and MDHC senior management. KPMG consulted only three members of the TGWU for their reports: Graham Stevenson, Jack Adams and David McCall (KPMG 1997). In an Inter-Departmental Memo from Graham Stevenson to Jack Adams (the leading TGWU negotiator throughout the dispute), Stevenson pointed out:

"I have today had a call from Jimmy Davies of the Liverpool Shop Stewards asking why they have not been invited to the talks on Thursday. Apparently, the AGM of the MDHC was held today and Mr Wardell, who chaired the meeting, announced that talks were taking place. I intimated to Jimmy Davies that the meeting was between ourselves and KPMG and perhaps MDHC have a similar commitment. As you know the shop stewards insist on being present at all meetings. I am not sure this would be helpful at this juncture, especially since the General Secretary is strongly of the view that the final report should be kept confidential to senior officers until we have had a chance to discuss it. Such a breach of confidence as this announcement could be greatly prejudicial to such a step. I inferred that the meeting was to receive an update on KPMG's work.

Finally, Jack Dempsey has heard of the meeting and asked via the Regional Secretary to be in attendance. I am not sure this is wise in the circumstances, but am raising the matter with you for your judgement and decision on the matter" (Stevenson, 22 April 1997).

The idea of creating a labour supply company was doomed to fail from the start. Even though it had the full backing of both the employer and the union, it had failed to bring on board the sacked dockworkers. According to KPMG:

"We have also held an initial, brief, meeting with representatives of the dismissed dockers. However, the meeting, and any further discussion, was curtailed when it was appreciated that our terms of reference specifically excluded any consideration of the LSO providing stevedores in the container and grain terminals in Royal Seaforth Docks" (KPMG 1997, p. 2).

Additionally, the possibility of re-employment was increasingly becoming a difficult prospect. Liverpool, the port which had been lagging behind in bringing in 'flexible' working practices since 1989 had now exploited its window of opportunity. The PR damage had already occurred and the larger financial losses had happened during the first few months of the dispute. It was clear among many operators within the port that "they would not consider using the services of a new LSO comprising dismissed dockers under any circumstances in the foreseeable future" (KPMG 1997, p. 7). Even in the areas of the port where re-employment (albeit in a casual fashion) was possible,

challenges would be great, particularly in regard to scab labour: "the difficulty of mixing staff from a new LSO and existing dockers within the port was seen as presenting a significant problem. In order to avoid such problems, some operators would wish to segregate the two workforces, at least for a number of months once the dispute had been concluded" (KPMG 1997, p. 12).

The Port was boasting in their Annual Report that "performance too, has reached new heights which are putting a smile on the faces of shipowners, shippers and hauliers alike. Since reshaping its workforce and injecting largely new blood into the container terminal team, the Port has seen productivity levels soar by 50 per cent plus in less than 12 months" (MDHC 1997, p. 8-9). The compilation of a viability report for a Labour Supply Company failed to produce a new proposal on the negotiating table.

The Liverpool dockers were once again feeling strong in light of their international support. They were being highly successful at maintaining an expensive international campaign and building an alternative dockers' network. In Britain their chance to influence the TGWU nationally approached. The TGWU held its Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) in Brighton, in July 1997. In a lengthy afternoon session on the first day, delegates presented motion after motion critical of the TGWU's leadership role in the Liverpool dockers' dispute. Finally, delegates voted 283-182 against the TGWU leadership's strategy in the dispute, but failed to propose an alternative.

Speaker after speaker showed their dissatisfaction at Deputy General Secretary Jack Adams' presentation of the Executive view which stated that their responsibility was to "preserve the fabric of the Union and to operate within the constraints of the law" (TGWU 1997). Adams also emphasised the TGWU's role in negotiating with the employer. However, the BDC's floor was unimpressed, as the result of the vote shows.

It was clear what the dockers wanted. A motion presented by the docks branch 6/605 stated that they wished their Executive to "call upon the Government to intervene in the long running Liverpool Docks Dispute in order to return the sacked dockworkers to their rightful place of work in the Port of

Liverpool" (MPSS 1997) as well as to "commend the sacked Liverpool dockworkers for their heroic and inspirational struggle against an unscrupulous employer" (MPSS 1997). A further emergency resolution was presented calling on the TGWU to put pressure on the ITF to support international action in solidarity with the Liverpool dockers.

Yet the events at this session of the 1997 BDC would not represent a turnaround in the union's strategy in the dockers' dispute. For Morris, unity was a priority over the concerns of the Liverpool dockers even if it meant going against the BDC's decision. This was made easier because the motion was sufficiently vague to allow the Executive to continue pursuing the strategy they had followed all along. However, although it did not bring any internal changes within the TGWU, the debate had been opened nationally. There was increasing dissatisfaction from all parts.

Drake's workforce – summer 1997

A new development occurred in the summer of 1997. So far, Drake's workforce had only appeared in the picture as strikebreakers, but after nearly two years of working in the port, they were also growing unhappy at the situation they faced. This led some of them to publish their own newsletter[33]:

> "Here we are, nearly two years after the old workforce walked out of the gate, and still we are having to put up with practices such as sixteen hour shifts; odd shifts, i.e. 0300 until 0700, with the threat of the sack if workers do not comply. All this is on top of the anxiety caused by not knowing what shift one will be required to work the following day, and no regular shift pattern. Does the management realise that we too have families and home lives? If one cannot feel settled and secure then this, inevitably, must have a direct effect on the quality and quantity of the work output.

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[33] Rather than a 'newsletter' it was an A4 black and white photocopied sheet, entitled *The Dart*. I do not know how many were published as I have only been able to obtain issue 1 (undated) and issue 3 (dated 01/02/98). Due to the nature of these documents, they were obtained by an ex-dockworker's friend employed in the MDHC canteen during the dispute. The sheet was distributed inside the port.

[…]

The gravity and seriousness of the situation is appreciated by the authors of this newsletter and this publication was printed with reluctance, but as the employees are not allowed any real representation it can be looked upon as a means to display the current feelings of the workforce" (Drakes Workforce 1997).

The TGWU was avoiding having to provide union membership to the Drake's workforce. Transport House in Liverpool, the TGWU's headquarters in the city, was the dispute's headquarters too: it is easy to guess the difficulties it would have caused to have also housed Drake's workers. Yet the TGWU continued accepting as members the MDHC strikebreakers (the 43 or so dockworkers who continued working in the port during the dispute):

"Mr. Jack Dempsey of the T.G.W.U. has recently paid us a visit. This was not to talk with employees of D.P.D.S. but to talk with the M.D.H.C. workers who have managed to held [sic] on to their jobs throughout this dispute. Mr. Dempsey was asked by drakes [sic] employees, when would he be able to represent the main body of the workforce? His reply was that he will get around it in a couple of weeks. It seems that Drakes workers are taking second place once again, and we would like to take this opportunity to send a message to the management. This message is that everyone is entitled to be a member or not a member of a trade union. These words were spoken to us by the operations manager on joining D.P.D.S., and rightly so, as he is required to do so by law. We can be 99% certain that these words do not reflect the true wishes of the management. The majority of the workers are now free to join a trade union and will do so at the first opportunity. This is not a return to militancy, but this is brought about by the realisation that, in a situation such as ours the need for representation is very obvious" (Drakes Workforce 1998).

It was not until 2001 that two Drake's workers took the TGWU to an industrial tribunal in Liverpool. They had been battling since 1997 to obtain union recognition (Herbert 16/06/2001). What this issue highlighted was the contradictory manner in which workers' consciousness develops and takes shape. There was a sense of disbelief amongst the dockers regarding Drake's workers' complaints. They considered them strikebreakers and, as such, not

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entitled to trade union rights. However, the sacked dockers had other things in their mind.

The beginning of the end – how many Christmases can families survive in struggle?

Maintaining the campaign for reinstatement was proving increasingly difficult, funds were running dry and so was any kind of support from the unions. A 'final' offer was put on the table, from a fed-up employer and a damaged and tired TGWU. The final 'final offer' was offered in a very different manner from previous initiatives. Negotiation was rather closed and information about the offer was sent to dockers individually with personalised letters from Trevor Furlong, Chief Executive of the MDHC, advising them that a postal ballot had to take place, or the offer would be withdrawn forever. This meant that they should either vote yes or lose any chance of a further offer. The offer showed minimal differences from the previous one (see table 6.5) adding the creation of a possible Labour Supply Organisation.

Table 6.5. A comparison of the four offers during the dispute

Offer 1 (October 1995)	Offer 2 (January 1996)	Offer 3 (November 1996)	Offer 4 (October 1997)
150 jobs to Drake Port Services (open for former dockers to apply)	Removal of Drake Port Services	Drake Port Services to remain in the port	
Establishing a co-operative of sacked dockers (but with no exclusive rights)	40 jobs available from the MDHC 30 jobs available from Torside	41 jobs (all ancillary) No jobs available for Torside or Nelson dockworkers	The formation of a Labour Supply Unit to employ 28 men. Torside dockers not included and not balloted. The offer of an interview for up to 41 ancillary jobs plus a register for future vacancies
£10,000 to those dockers with more than 15 years of service	£25,000 for 319 workers £1,000 for the remaining	£25,000 for MDHC employees with more than 15 years service £1,000 for Nelson employees	£28,000 severance (inclusive of £3,000 in regards of a temporary reinstatement) £1,000 for Nelson employees
		A joint company-union approach to the Pension Fund Trustees to request continuity be restored for all former workers in the scheme.	The temporary reinstatement is to ensure continuity of employment to maintain their pension rights, the dockers were not required to go back to work for the 3 months.
No negotiation	Negotiated by Mr Bernard Cliff (MDHC), Jack Adams (TGWU), Mike Carden (MPSS)	Negotiated by Mr Bernard Cliff (MDHC), Jack Adams (TGWU), Graham Stevenson (TGWU) Mike Carden (MPSS).	Negotiated by Mr Peter Jones (MDHC), Jack Adams (TGWU) and Bill Morris (TGWU)
Voted by public show of hands	Ballot carried out by Electoral Reform Society	Voted by public show of hands	Secret Ballot

The ballot was designed in a way that it would avoid the dockers' mass meeting. These meetings were usually held on Fridays. The ballot forms were received on a Saturday morning and they had to returned by the following Wednesday (22 October). This meant that a joint agreement by the dockers would be difficult to obtain. This prompted the shop stewards to pass an emergency resolution, which went to the heart of union democracy and the methods employed by Bill Morris, bypassing the General Executive Council. The resolution can be read below:

Figure 6.3. Emergency resolution 20.10.97/ Region 6 Committee

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Emergency Resolution 20.10.97
Region Six Committee

On Saturday 18th October ballot papers, issued by the ERS, were sent to the houses of 329 sacked Liverpool dockers. The "ballot" involves an "offer" made by Mersey Docks in November 1996.

This "action" was invoked by our General Secretary without the authority of the General Executive Council. Throughout the Liverpool docks dispute the General Secretary has consistently stated that the union's policy relating to this dispute rests solely with the GEC. Indeed, the GEC decided that no actions be taken by either the General Secretary or the F&GP without the authority of the GEC.

Therefore:
"We call upon this Regional Committee to condemn the action of the General Secretary who has clearly failed to obtain the authority of the GEC in this matter under Rule 6 (13) and Rule 16 (3).

Furthermore, that this Region Six Committee call for an emergency meeting of the GEC to be called immediately to discuss this action of the General Secretary and all other matters relating to the Liverpool Docks Dispute."

(Resolution 1997)

The ballot papers were completed and returned, and most of the dockers voted against the offer (see table 6.6). However, around sixty dockers took the cash pay-off (Ward 29/10/1997) and the TGWU fully removed its support for the dispute.

Table 6.6. Results of the final ballot (which only included MDHC and Coastal Containers employees)

Number of ballot papers distributed	329
Number of duplicate ballot papers distributed	11
Number of ballot papers returned	316
Number of invalid ballot papers (blank/spoilt/unsigned declaration)	6
Total number of valid ballot papers to be counted	310
Participation rate	91%
The question put to the membership was as follows: DO YOU ACCEPT THE COMPANY'S OFFER?	
Number voting YES	97 (31% of valid vote)
Number voting NO	213 (69% of valid vote)

(Murphy 1997)

Finally, the shop stewards recommended that the dispute should be ended. By this point, there was a sense of exhaustion. This was further exacerbated by the continuing difficulty in raising £35,000 every week. From the end of the summer of 1997, it had been increasingly challenging to constantly raise such large amounts of money. This was crucial. The money was not just maintaining their campaign for reinstatement; it was also providing a lifeline to the dockers and their families.

The shop stewards' recommendation that the dispute should be drawn to a close was put forward at the dockers' mass meeting on 27 January 1998. Many of the dockers interviewed, particularly the younger MDHC dockers, were unhappy with this decision and voted against it. The dispute had started supporting the Torside dockers, yet they were receiving nothing from this settlement. For the younger MDHC dockers (in their 40s and early 50s) the thought of being so far from retirement and not being able to work in the docks again was unbearable. The dispute itself had provided many dockers with a new lease of life, and the thought of losing the friendship and sense of loyalty

developed over the previous 28 months was seen with sadness by many. In a sense the dispute had become a way of life, beyond any kind of specific purpose.

Additionally, one of the main conditions stipulated by both the MDHC and the TGWU was that the dockers would cease to use the TGWU's Liverpool office as soon as possible, except to contact members regarding the severance payments and wind down their campaign. Importantly, although the dockers would still be allowed to carry out these two activities, "the 'Women of the Waterfront' should not operate from the building at all" (David McNall, T&G North West Regional Secretary, letter to Bill Morris dated 29 January 1998). The TGWU had managed to remove the Liverpool dockers from its structures and buildings. This side of the story ends the history of British dockworkers since the Great Dock Strike of 1889. Their legacy however may not be all lost as the following chapter shows.

Chapter 7. Competing solidarities: the ITF, the TGWU and the Liverpool Dockers

This chapter focuses on the international character of the Liverpool Dockers' Dispute. As the previous chapter has shown, the dispute was caused by the sacking of 500 Liverpool Dockworkers in September 1995 and it became one of the longest and least researched industrial disputes (with few exceptions such as Lavalette and Kennedy 1996; Saundry and Turnbull 1996; Davies 1996b; Castree 2000; Gentile and Tarrow 2009) in contemporary Britain. What is ultimately important about the dispute, however, is not its duration. Rather, what the dispute exemplifies is a case of competing visions over trade union politics and action, with one dimension of this occurring at the international level. The international campaign had two aims. On the one hand, it hoped to put pressure on the MDHC via industrial action in other ports. On the other hand, it would collect financial assistance for a dispute that was not officially recognised by the TGWU.

This chapter considers the Liverpool dockers' internationalism. It does so by addressing the following questions: what were the factors which prompted the need for international action? Also, what were the characteristics of the Liverpool dockers' internationalism? The chapter follows an analytical chronology. Firstly, the analytical framework is defined, outlining the key actors. Secondly, the chapter considers how the international campaign took off and proposes the idea that, in the dockers' minds, there was a need for internationalism if they were going to be successful. Thirdly, the way in which internationalism started to take shape needs to be considered. Two issues became evident at this stage: the dockers' direct communication styles with other dockers and the relationship between the dockers and the ITF. Finally, as the campaign was taking shape, complications between different understandings of international trade union action developed and became bitter.

The ITF, the TGWU and the Liverpool Dockers – understanding the relationship

Before considering the development of the Liverpool dockers' international campaign, it is important to understand the historical character of dockworkers' internationalism. The ITF was created by dockworkers in 1896 "born out of the urgent and very practical need for international solidarity when port employers and shipowners in northern Europe set out to break a series of dockers' and seamen's strikes and to crush the unions which had organized them" (Lewis 2003, p. 2). The ITF was to develop as a federation of social democratic unions which were not always the majority unions in European ports.

In Europe, trade unions representing dockworkers are divided between transport unions and dockworkers' unions. It is important to bear in mind that the labelling of them refers less to political ideology than to the way in which their organisations operate. On the one hand, transport unions are particularly strong in the ports of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, although some breakaway unions are also in existence. In France, Spain and Sweden the picture offered is more complicated. In France, the major union representing dockworkers is the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT). Although the CGT was an ITF affiliate, the dockworkers' section was not. This comes from deep historical divisions and the role of the ITF during the Marseilles dock strike at the height of the Cold War. In Spain, *La Coordinadora* is the main dockworkers' union, with representation of around 80% of dockworkers, but it shares its space with Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) and Comisiones Obreras (CCOO), both ITF affiliates. Spain has had a history of inter-union rivalry on the docks throughout the twentieth century (particularly during the 1930s and then, after the 1970s). In Sweden, the space is shared by the Swedish Transport Workers Union (ITF affiliated) and the Swedish Dockworkers Union (non-ITF affiliated), a breakaway organisation created in the 1970s. They are both very strong in Swedish ports, and a considerable degree of inter-union rivalry is present, with certain ideological distinctions. This was not the first time that non-ITF affiliated unions had attempted to create a dockworkers'

international organisation. In the 1980s, the Spanish dockers' *Coordinadora* attempted to create a European-wide dockers network (Coll Botella, Pérez Martín et al. 1988), which included dockers in Liverpool and Sweden. The efforts at that time were short-lived and contacts were lost, only to be reignited with the Liverpool dispute.

In the rest of the world, the divisions the Liverpool dockers encountered were not as deep as in Europe. In North America, two main unions represent dockworkers. The West Coast of America (including US and Canada) is represented by the ILWU (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union). The ILA (International Longshoremen's Association), on the East Coast (which also represents dockers in the US and Canada) has a rank-and-file rival in Montreal, Quebec. These two unions had originally been one organisation which split during the 1930s and "by the early 1950s, then, both longshore unions had been expelled from their respective labor federations: the ILWU for following the Communist Party; the ILA for collaborating with the shipowners. It would be difficult to imagine a sharper political contrast, particularly within the same industry, or one that more clearly demonstrates there is no necessary connection between the structural characteristics of certain industries and the political orientations of their workers" (Kimeldorf 1992, p. 15). Besides clear ideological differences, they also differ in the way they engage in trade union action and politics. While the ILWU is usually considered a more militant union, the ILA appears as a union slower to react (Erem and Durrenberger 2008). Partly, the difference lies in the way the employment relationship works in American ports. On the East Coast, the relationship between the ILA and employers is considered to be close (Erem and Durrenberger 2008). Crucially, the Liverpool dockers managed to obtain support sooner from the ILA than from the ILWU. This could be attributed to a number of reasons. Liverpool's trade routes are primarily with Ireland and the East Coast of America. Many American dockworkers in the northern US ports, within the east coast, are of Irish descent[34], as are many Liverpool dockers. Gaining support from the ILWU, which has a far more ethnically diverse membership, involved persuading sceptics of the anti-racist

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[34] Although some Liverpool dockers are keen to emphasise their Irishness, it is unclear to what extent this played a significant role in achieving the support of the ILA.

credentials of the Liverpool dockers[35], since the lack of ethnic diversity within their ranks caused suspicion amongst the ILWU rank-and-file.

Understanding the special relationship between the ITF and maritime and dockworkers is crucial to this case. The reason why such a relationship is 'special' is due to the differences between the ITF and other international federations. Generally, international trade union federations are removed from the daily concerns of the workplace, as they tend to operate at a more remote level. The ITF operates very differently in ports. It has a large group of Port Inspectors, paid for by local unions, but employed by the ITF. Their role is to ensure that work conditions in vessels are within established agreements between the ITF and the ship owners. In order to achieve this, port inspectors liaise regularly with port workers, as they are usually the ones who have first hand access to the inside of a vessel. Therefore, the ITF maintains a closer relationship with port workers in their workplace than other international trade union federations.

Port Inspectors are crucial to the international activities that the ITF may be involved in. They were central in initiating an unprecedented move from within the ITF to support the Liverpool dockers at the port inspectors' autumn 1995 meeting. They knew that the ITF was organised in a way which meant the Liverpool dockers would not have had direct access, but they felt that they could force something from within by using other ITF structures, those of the port inspectors. The ITF is organised around affiliated unions. This means that the ITF works under the instructions given by their affiliates, in reality, the leadership of their affiliates. Under normal circumstances, the ITF would have been asked to engage in solidarity action by the national leadership of the TGWU, and then the ITF would send a request to all their other affiliates to do so. The circumstances here were very different; the TGWU had not asked the ITF to do anything.

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[35] The dockers and their supporters emphasised the Liverpool dockers' solidarity actions with South Africa, when, in the 1980s, they regularly boycotted South African ships as an anti-apartheid protest.

The first international action by the Liverpool dockers as part of their campaign for reinstatement can be traced back to December 1995. The decision to extend their campaign internationally was based upon two crucial aspects of their struggle. Firstly, the dockers already had some international connections and experience of international action, as it has been outlined. Secondly, the dispute was quickly becoming the *one*, the dispute that would determine their future as dockworkers in the Port of Liverpool. What propelled Liverpool dockworkers into the international arena, were the characteristics of their own *local* struggle. There appeared to be confidence during the first ninety days of the dispute. This emanated from a generalised feeling that *we have been here before*. Long-running disputes in the Port of Liverpool had not been a frequent occurrence, but they were not a new event either, as previous chapters have shown. In fact, considering that most of the dockworkers working in the Port in 1995 (with the exception of the Torside dockers) had started employment between the mid-1960s and 1972, they had strong memories of two previous bitter disputes – the 1967 strike (in relation to Devlin's recommendations) and the 1989 strike (during the abolition of the NDLS) which had lasted 6 weeks in Liverpool. [36]

Six weeks became the magic number and the realisation that this was a different dispute hit the dockers clearly by November 1995. From late October, the Port had managed to work with a certain degree of normality; the picket line outside Seaforth Container Terminal was not really affecting MDHC's daily business[37]. The dockers realised this lack of impact and although the picket line was to be continued for many other reasons, such as ensuring that the men were kept in solidarity by being involved in the everyday struggle, they had to re-think their overall strategy. This prompted them into thinking how to stop work in the Port. As their picket line was unable to achieve that, they had to try and stop work on vessels loaded in Liverpool but going elsewhere in the world.

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[36] In fact, they had lasted longer in Liverpool than anywhere else in the country and the outcomes had maintained the union's influence in the port.

[37] Although it was affecting MDHC's share prices.

The need for internationalism grew from the stark realisation that the way in which dockworkers in Liverpool had fought previous struggles was no longer going to be effective. The world in which they operated had changed radically. In 1967 and 1989, they were not alone and they were not just fighting their employer. Their struggle was not localised, but rather part of the struggle of many other British dockers against both their employers and the regulatory (or deregulatory) changes initiated by the government. This time it was just them and the employer and they were only a few. It was in this sense, that shop stewards' chairman Jimmy Nolan, recollecting his previous international experience, launched the idea of an international initiative in a pub conversation amongst the shop stewards.

Nolan's idea got the ball rolling. The dockworkers already had contacts, and the support groups that had started to be formed in Britain, particularly the Merseyside support group and some of the initiators of the London support groups, had contacts in the international Trotskyist movement. The international campaign was based upon three pillars[38]: the dormant international contacts amongst dockworkers, the international Trotskyist movement and the Liverpool dockworkers themselves creating 'flying pickets'. At the same time, a fourth factor started to become prominent, the use of the Internet. At this stage the coordination of these four factors was not necessarily a coherent strategy, but rather the attempt to utilise everything available. In fact, it was the need for internationalism that led to the pursuing of all these four paths, rather than a strategy which attempted to make them work together. This was to become a double-edged sword for the dockers, as their international scope would be increased beyond any possible previous projections, yet their strategy would suffer from some unintended contradictions. In a sense, what was to develop highlighted the limited extent to which this coordination was feasible.

Surprisingly perhaps, the first international action did not come from existing international contacts in Europe or from Trotskyist networks. Instead the ILA in the US and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) were the quickest to react. Labournet reported on 20 November how MDHC's main customer, the

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[38] It is important to note that the ITF had not been brought in at this stage, and it had shown minimal interest in the situation.

Atlantic Container Line (ACL) was re routing its flagship *Atlantic Conveyor* after action by the ILA in the US (Labournet 20/11/1995). Meanwhile, Australian dockworkers also reacted to the call for solidarity, and in December 1995 the Liverpool dockers received a fax from dockers in Sydney stating that they would hold the ship in the port for at least 24 hours (Coomber and Donovan December 1995).

So far, faxing was proving a useful method for communicating with other dockworkers around the world, and some results were being delivered, including both industrial action and financial help. Nolan's idea was starting to provide the dockworkers with a much needed boost to their campaign and more importantly, it was bringing pressure on the MDHC. But the Liverpool dockers had to step up the international campaign if their initiative was to be effective. It was becoming clear that, although the dockers believed that international solidarity action was possible, it was not going to be easily achieved. Sending a fax was never going to be as powerful as going there. This initiated a strategy based around a combination of communications and methods – which included the use of fax, the internet, telephone and the production of their own newspaper, the *Dockers Charter*. As the campaign developed, it became clearer how these different types of communications and methods were going to enhance each other.

The Flying Pickets

It was within these multi-faceted communications that the idea of 'flying pickets' developed. Britain was not the only place suffering from anti-trade union laws and therefore secondary action was going to be difficult to achieve in other countries as well. A fax was not going to convince sufficient numbers of workers to engage in such action. This meant that if the Liverpool dockers wanted other dockers to engage in solidarity they had to go there and explain their situation. The east coast of the United States was a great place to start. There were many reasons for this. Firstly, the Port of Liverpool's main trade routes were with Ireland and the east coast of the US. Secondly, the US dockers'

unions, particularly the ILA, had already expressed an interest in the situation. Finally, by this stage, one of Liverpool's main shipping lines, ACL, was the only shipping line reacting to the pressure of the dockers' dispute. ACL's route followed the east coast.

Three Liverpool dockers brought their picket line to other ports. The idea was to get around many of the legal problems associated with secondary action. Therefore, the Liverpool dockers would set up a picket line and other dockworkers could then choose not to cross it due to issues independent of secondary action, such as Health & Safety or individual conscience. On Friday 15 December 1995, three Liverpool dockers set up a picket line in the Port of Baltimore as the ACL vessel was arriving there. This was an important date and event, as it provided the Liverpool dockers with renewed strength, and, most crucially, it meant that the turn in their strategy had been effective, at least for the time being.

For the next few days, these three dockers developed a very credible type of international action. They followed the ACL vessel port by port. By Monday, they were in Newark, New Jersey, having spent the weekend in Norfolk, Virginia. The pressure on the MDHC was no longer just outside its own gates. The action led to "ACL offer[ing] to make a statement that the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company (MDHC) should sit down with the TGWU in an attempt to find an immediate solution to the problem and, if it is not settled by 15 January 1996, the ACL would switch to discharging and loading its vessels in another UK port" (Morton December 1995).

The New Year was going to be crucial for the way in which the dockers' internationalism would be shaped. In fact, it was rapidly successful as ACL pulled out of the Port (albeit temporarily for six weeks) in January 1996. Losing their main transatlantic customer put serious pressure on the MDHC. Throughout December 1995 and January 1996, *Lloyds' List* published almost daily news stories related to the dispute, increasing the sense that the dispute was a concern for the shipping industry. This in turn had a direct effect on profits and it led MDHC to announce that further job cuts could become inevitable.

The ITF inevitably became aware of the dispute at an early date. But it was not until January 1996 that the Federation began to show an interest in the situation. The ITF Inspectors pressured the ITF to be proactive about the Liverpool dockers. This was supplemented by the pressure that some affiliates were placing on the ITF, as they were receiving updates from the Liverpool shop stewards but there was no mention of extending the dispute via official means. In fact, according to a circular to all its dock workers' affiliates dated 16 January 1996, Marges[39] pointed out that "The ITF Executive Board at its meeting in October 1995 expressed sympathy for the aims of the strikers, namely avoiding casualisation of work in the port of Liverpool" (16/01/1996). The circular was primarily aimed at informing affiliate unions of the ways in which they could support the hardship fund set by the Liverpool dockers. However, it caused friction with the TGWU's General Secretary. Marges reported in an email to Cockroft (ITF's General Secretary) that:

> "Today, Tuesday, I handled a phone call which was originally for you. It was Bill Morris who wanted to discuss my circular to all dockers and seafarers' affiliates. The draft for this circular you and I discussed before we left office on Friday. He told me that T&G did not founded [*sic*] the Hardship Fund. He also wished to refer to the established practice that only union officials communicate about matters of support. He was worried about the direct contacts we had/have with the shop stewards and other people in Liverpool. He also suggested an amendment which I asked him not to include to avoid any misunderstanding about their (non)involvement in this kind of circulars and our requests to affiliates. I explained the situation and gave him some background information about my involvement and experience in the past with Miners', Seafarers', and Dockers' strikes in the UK. At the end he was satisfied" (Marges 23/01/1996).

The dynamics that were to unfold over the following months were already taking shape at this early stage. The ILA had already initiated a strong involvement with the Liverpool dockers. The ILWU followed quickly. Jack Heyman was the ITF Port Inspector in the Port of San Francisco and a member of the ILWU. The ILWU were a fairly new ITF affiliate, but quite a powerful one. Heyman took an early interest in the situation in Liverpool and he travelled

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[39] Kees Marges was at the time the ITF's Dockers Section Secretary.

there in January as an individual, rather than an ITF representative. His role would become increasingly important as the relationship between the Liverpool dockers and the ITF developed[40].

The struggle in Liverpool was not unique. The situation had many local specificities but the threat, and the reality, the dockers were facing were well known elsewhere. Casualisation and hostility towards unionised port workers were being felt by workers in many other ports in the world. Meanwhile, Liverpool's international campaign was becoming increasingly successful at putting pressure on MDHC. In February 1996, MDHC threatened the ILA with legal action for their role in boycotting ACL (Labournet February 1996). It was in light of this success that the dockers tried to ensure their international strength was brought home.

The first International Dockers' Conference

The first International Dockers' Conference organised by the Liverpool dockers took place at Liverpool City Council in February 1996. The conference was funded by the 47 'victimised' Liverpool Labour ex-Councillors (from the Militant Tendency) who donated £20,000 from their defence fund. (Labournet February 1996). The dockers' conference was significant on at least two counts. It managed to secure representation from over 20 different countries (Aitkenhead 23/02/1996) and to obtain a considerable amount of media interest. Furthermore, it also aimed to have an internal impact. It was bringing 'home' their international strength. This was crucial both for the dockworkers and MDHC. For the dockworkers, it meant that they could all experience internationalism. For MDHC, it showed the possible international strength of the dockers.

By this stage, the ITF was (at least in their discourse) supportive of the dockers' efforts, although the ITF's archive on the Liverpool dispute contains no

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[40] Heyman became instrumental in mobilising the West Coast dockers. He also became one of the most outspoken critics of ITF's ambivalent reactions to the Liverpool situation.

information about this dockers' conference[41]. The absence of ITF officials at the international conference gave rise to speculation that they had been discouraged from attending, though there is no evidence to support this. Many representatives of ITF affiliated unions attended, yet neither the ITF nor the TGWU gave official support to the event. The show of strength by the dockers was the first international challenge they were presenting to these organisations. The reaction of the ITF and the TGWU was to be developed in the following months.

By July 1996, the ITF had increased their involvement with the dockers' dispute. Following communications between the ITF and the Presidents of both the ILA and the ILWU (John Bowers and Brian McWilliams respectively) in May 1996, the ITF was being propelled towards taking a more direct stance. By June 1996, the matter was no longer in the TGWU's territory. In fact, the MDHC had initiated their threatened legal proceedings against the ILA in the US due to their involvement in the boycott of ACL. The ITF had an affiliate to support.

Meanwhile, in July 1996, representatives from the Liverpool dockers were allowed to address the Fair Practices Committee Meeting of the ITF held in London between 3 and 5 July. A resolution was passed and sent to all affiliates calling for solidarity action: "we urge you to take appropriate action to show solidarity with the Liverpool dockers and their families." (Marges and Dickinson 11/07/1996). Additionally, financial support was also forthcoming: "The FPC delegates demonstrated their support by collecting over £2,000 for the Liverpool Dockers' Hardship Fund and the General Secretary of the ITF, David Cockroft, announced that a further contribution would be made from the ITF's International Solidarity Fund, amounting to £5,000" (Marges and Dickinson 11/07/1996).

The ITF's involvement in coordinating solidarity action during this period should not be underestimated. In fact, the ITF was instrumental in arranging a crucial meeting with the BTB (Belgische TransportbeidersBond, the Belgian transport workers' union). ACL had decided to return to Liverpool, as another container line, CAST, were taking their business. Overall, this prompted

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[41] This point illustrates how at this stage the ITF were not actually unsupportive of the dockers' international efforts, but ignorant of them. Later sections of their archives contain a wealth of material, even when they had withdrawn their support.

a confidential letter from Mark Dickinson to Fons Geeraets (President of the BTB), which state:

> "From Jimmy [Nolan]'s fax you will see that at this stage they only want to meet and discuss with local port representatives in Zeebrugge about CAST but in the end I expect they will be hoping that the BTB will assist them in organising protests and demonstrations in solidarity/sympathy with the Liverpool dockers. I hope this will be possible. The Merseyside Port Shop Stewards will doubtless also want similar assistance in Antwerp in respect of ACL" (Dickinson 24/07/1996).

The coordination of solidarity action highlighted some of the difficulties for the ITF in dealing with this type of situation. As mentioned before, the ITF operated strictly under instructions from its affiliates. The model was no longer suited to the situation at hand. For the dockers, the point of international action was to overcome the hostile national political framework represented by anti-trade union legislation. Hence, whilst the TGWU may have been unable to support the dockers officially, the ITF should then be able to step in. Yet that was not the case. In fact, the TGWU leadership were concerned that the framework upon which the ITF was organised was being eroded by having direct contacts between shop stewards and other affiliates. This was seen as a challenge to the TGWU leadership. Furthermore, since the ITF were part of this communication network (between the shop stewards and other affiliates) they were also in effect challenging the TGWU leadership.

Meanwhile, it was not just the TGWU's leadership that felt their authority was being eroded in the international arena. The ITF were becoming wary of the Liverpool dockers' international activities, particularly since the dockers were not just engaging with ITF affiliates using the ITF as an intermediary, as in they did in Belgium. A letter from Cockroft to Morris showed that the ITF's patience had been exhausted by calls from the Liverpool dockers to create an International Steering Committee:

> "The organisation of international solidarity by the ITF for the dispute has, however, been seriously hampered by separate contacts undertaken by representatives of the shop stewards with non-ITF affiliated bodies, several of

which are either unrepresentative breakaway factions from the relevant ITF transport workers' union, or political groups with little or no real trade union function. Although we have made clear that these contacts are not made via the ITF and are not officially supported by the TGWU, they do cause confusion and could, potentially, have a negative impact on the TGWU's international reputation. The establishment of a semi permanent 'international steering committee' in parallel with the ITF will, of course, not make things any easier" (Cockroft 01/08/1996).

Thus, the ITF requested Morris to keep a tighter rein on his members. The tables had turned. Throughout the first half of 1996, Morris was attempting to keep control of communications between the ITF and its affiliates regarding the Liverpool dispute. By the summer of 1996, it was the ITF asking the TGWU to control its own members. At the end of August, Morris received a further letter from Cockroft (28/08/1996), this time with concrete examples drawn from the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium and Germany. The main problems reported had been the contacts that the Liverpool dockers had made with left-wing political parties and social movements (such as squatters in the Netherlands) as well as breakaway unions (such as in Sweden). At this point the ITF was seriously concerned at the Liverpool dockers' reactivation of certain European unions, many of them involved in episodes of inter-union rivalry in their respective ports with ITF-affiliates.

Second International Dockers' Conference

A second International Dockers' Conference was organised from 31 August to 1 September 1996. There was a sense that international support was proving the best strategy to put pressure on the MDHC. If what had happened so far was a taste of what was to come, the second offer the dockers received (in January 1996) was far better than the first (October 1995)[42]. Hence, the international actions that started in December 1995 seemed to be successful. This

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[42] Although neither of the two offers offered their reinstatement. This was a problem for the dockers as they had agreed that their jobs were not for sale.

time, however, they also wanted some media spotlight in Britain. The media had remained fairly silent over the past few months. The Conference was to provide the background for a BBC TV documentary directed by Ken Loach, 'The Flickering Flame', which was broadcast at prime time (Labournet 1996).

The conference's timing was everything. Negotiations were forthcoming with the MDHC and the honeymoon period between the dockers and the unions seemed to be cooling down. Once again, delegates from all over the world, but primarily from Australia, Canada, US, Denmark, Sweden and Spain, congregated in Liverpool to pledge their support, both financial and in boycotting vessels loaded in Liverpool. The fact that this international support was brought home and broadcast was designed to offer a demonstration of strength by the dockers, both towards the MDHC but also towards the 500 sacked dockers, in order to ensure they knew they were not alone.

Nevertheless, not everyone was impressed. Some ITF-controlled European ports "have pulled out of this weekend's conference in Liverpool at the last minute after receiving faxes from ITF General Secretary David Cockroft. Apparently Cockroft is upset that direct links, international picketing, occupations of gantry cranes in Montreal etc. are taking place without his advance knowledge" (Labournet 1996). This brought back some painful memories to some ITF controlled European ports, and particularly to the Dutch ITF Dockers' Secretary, Marges. During the 1989 strike in Britain, when the National Dock Labour Scheme was abolished, many British dockers (including Liverpool dockers) crossed the channel to obtain support in Antwerp, Rotterdam, etc (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992). This created discontent within some union officials in those ports, one of them being Marges, in the port of Rotterdam. At the time Marges had been the docks secretary of the FNV, the Dutch Transport Workers Federation. The current situation in 1996 reminded the ITF of what the FNV called in 1989 "strike tourism" (Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 156). The problem was that "the ITF leadership is deeply hostile to the style of independent international rank and file direct contacts pursued by the Liverpool dockers" (Labournet 1996). ITF affiliate FNV had already made it clear in 1989 that:

"In order to ensure that so-called strike tourism does not show its face again (see the experiences with the [British] miners' and seamen's strike), and that, in this manner uncoordinated actions take place that could bring both the T&GWU and the continental unions in legal difficulties, the T&GWU will, in a letter to all… shop stewards… urgently request that no visits to European ports be carried out on their own initiatives. If and when possible, an attempt will be made to enable such visits to take place in an organised manner" (FNV union bulletin, 1989, quoted in Turnbull, Woolfson et al. 1992, p. 156).

Meanwhile, the ITF quickly responded to the critics by sending out a circular, signed by Cockroft, to all its affiliates on 10 September 1996. It reported on a resolution agreed by the European Dockers Regional Committee of the ITF on 5 September. The resolution and, in particular, Cockroft's circular were carefully worded:

"After a detailed discussion, the meeting adopted a resolution [...] expressing full support for the efforts of the TGWU to find a negotiated settlement to the dispute and pledging full support of all European dockworkers' unions to this end. I am sure that these sentiments will be echoed by all ITF affiliates, including those in other industries who have had occasion to appreciate the long tradition of international solidarity shown by Liverpool dockworkers over the years" (Cockroft 10/11/1996).

This resolution emphasised the appropriate means and channels for the communication of international solidarity, where union rules and governing bodies were to be placed above all else. It also tried to ensure that there were no further reasons for friction between the TGWU and the ITF. So far, the ITF had been relatively successful at juggling a very difficult situation. On the one hand, their affiliate with a direct relationship with the dispute (the TGWU) was not asking them to do anything. On the other hand, other affiliates (some of them quite powerful within the ITF) were putting increasing pressure on the ITF to coordinate solidarity action. The ITF had to be seen to be doing something in front of affiliates such as MUA, ILA and ILWU, but it could not be seen to go against another affiliate, the TGWU. Such juggling was not easy. This second conference provided the ITF with an opportunity to drop one of the balls it was juggling, the Liverpool dockers. The opportunity was provided by the dockers'

proposal of creating an 'international steering committee', composed of those who had shown their support with the Liverpool dockers internationally. This gave the ITF a reason to cool down their support.

The European withdrawal

Some European ITF affiliates were growing increasingly concerned about the 'international steering committee'. This needs to be understood within the historical division in the trade unions of many European ports, which has been explained earlier. However, the initial point of friction between the Liverpool dockers and the ITF affiliated dockers' unions was one of communication. Some union officials felt uneasy being contacted directly, rather than via the channels set up by the ITF. The following excerpt from an email from Marges exemplifies some of the issues:

> "Bob Baete rang me. I tried to ring him several times, including this morning. Last Sunday night (!) he was contacted by the shop stewards at home! Their request was the same as it was in their letter of which Bob sent us a copy. They wanted to visit him. Bob agreed at the end and met them on Monday night. They arrived together with a BBC crew (4) and a group of dock workers from different countries including Quebec (!), Gothenburg and France, many of them member of non-affiliates. The Canadian was very critical about the ITF which Bob did not accept. A typical action of these kind of people. They haven't changed since I left Rotterdam. Bob accused the Liverpool shop stewards for starting the action wrong footed without contacting T&G and he also accused them for not informing the ITF in the first half year, while they wanted support from the ITF at the same time. Etc. etc.

> But at the end Bob promised them to try to delay an ACL ship if a ship of that company would be in Antwerp before or during the Liverpool conference celebrating the one year action. Bob received my fax advising him to stick with the Euro Dockers resolution before he met them but he read it after their meeting. He already made the appointment on Sunday. After some discussion I advised Bob to contact T&G, Bill Morris or Graham Stevenson, to ask T&G's

opinion about a delay action in Antwerp. If it is also supportive for their position and they agree Bob's problem is solved. If they are against an action in Antwerp Bob intends to cancel the intended delay and will stick to the Euro resolution" (Marges 25/09/1996).

In Europe such a mixture of syndicalist practices and embeddedness in an ITF affiliated union was not easy to understand. Therefore, when a delegation of dockers travelled to Antwerp on 23 September 1996 (nearly a year after the dispute had started), Baete, the National Secretary of Ports of the Belgian trade union BTB, promised the dockers solidarity action. However, his promise went against what the European Regional Dockers' Meeting of the ITF had agreed on 5 September 1996. In an apologetic fax sent to Morris on 4 October 1996, Baete stressed that he would stand by the agreement that "we only undertake actions on request of the T&GWU, we have to support as much as possible our affiliate T&GWU" (Baete in a fax to Morris, reference BB/MV/N.1341). This raised the complex question of who exactly *was* the TGWU? The dockers on delegation to Antwerp were members of the TGWU, and they may have even been members of one of the TGWU's executive or national committees.

The European withdrawal did not just come from Baete. From the Netherlands, the *Vervoers Bond FNV* (an ITF affiliate union) sent the Liverpool shop stewards a letter explaining unequivocally why they would not offer financial support:

"We would like to inform you that at this moment we won't give any financial support to your organization.

We think it is more advisable to come to a full solution for the Liverpool dispute by means of negotiations.

[…]

We haven't yet observed any movement from your side which lead to short term negotiations by the TGWU.

However, we do observe that you are busy with the organization of international industrial action such as soon will take place in Le Havre.

Finally we want to let you know that we will only reconsider a request for financial support when negotiations fail because of the employer" (Waleson 15/10/1996).

When a relationship breaks down

By October 1996, it was becoming apparent that the relationship between the Liverpool dockers and the ITF had broken down. There are several possible reasons. Firstly, the ITF could have been feeling not only threatened by attempts to build an international movement but also used, in terms of its infrastructure or funds. Secondly, the Liverpool dockers' European counterparts misunderstood their motives. The dockers themselves may not necessarily have been aiming to build an international movement outside the ITF, but rather to transfer their national experience (in terms of the shop stewards' movement) to the international arena – the experience of *a rank-and-file movement working within and alongside a bureaucratised union, the model they knew best*. Thirdly, there may have been several agendas (those of the ITF, the TGWU, the affiliates, the non-affiliates, political groups) at stake, and perhaps the dockers were not always aware of them. In a sense, all three factors contributed to the breakdown.

It is important to understand politically motivated cultural differences here. The Liverpool dockers had a very particular organisational style rooted in their own historical experience. The European division, between social democratic transport unions and syndicalist-influenced dockers' unions, was rather unfortunate and rather unintelligible for the Liverpool dockers[43]. And they were well aware of the problem:

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[43] Jimmy Nolan, chairman of the Liverpool shop stewards, was characterised by a French anarcho-syndicalist as the only Stalinist with anarcho-syndicalist strategies she had ever met. For the Liverpool dockers an ideological stew of Stalinism, Trotskyism and social democracy had never presented them with difficulties. They were all united in the way industrial action was understood, and this was far closer to anarcho-syndicalism, than to any other ideological brand.

"I just got a phone call from Jim Nolan. He asked me to participate in his meeting with John Coombs[44]. I told him that I was very busy with meetings and other urgent activities, but that the most important reason for not accepting his invitation was the decision taken by the European Dockers' meeting limiting our support for the Liverpool case to support only for the T&G, if requested by the T&G. I explained that decision did not allow me to accept his invitation. If he really appreciates my participation he should contact the GS of the ITF, I advised him. Not by phone, because of all meetings, but by fax. He again referred to the 'misunderstanding' about setting up an international committee. He repeated that this committee was not set up as a competitor of ITF. *He got the impression that some of our affiliates thought it was set up as an alternative to the ITF.* I confirmed that affiliates indeed have that opinion and that it was one of the arguments for them to take the decision as it has been taken by the European Dockers' Committee. Shouldn't we raise this issue tonight when we meet John Bowers? Kees" (emphasis added, Marges 22/10/1996).

By November, the international steering committee was no longer an international version of the port shop stewards' movement to which the Liverpool dockers had been accustomed. It was now organised and appealing to particular unions engaged with dockworkers. The first document signed by the 'International Dockworkers Committee' was produced in Le Havre and addressed to Morris. It requested:

"Following a meeting of this International Committee held in Paris in October, it is urgent that a small delegation from this International Committee meet with you as the General Secretary of the TGWU, to firstly give you the opportunity to know who we are, and secondly to receive the position of the TGWU in this dramatic struggle" (Minot 20/11/1996).

Importantly, the message was signed by a group of unions that were not ITF affiliates (except for the ILWU).[45] By now, the ITF would have quite

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[44] John Coombs in representation of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)
[45] The unions signing the message were (in the same order): Dockworkers Union, Le Havre; Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, Liverpool; Dockworkers Union, Montreal; Swedish Dockworkers Union; Port of Aarhus Dockworkers; CULMV, Genoa; Coordinadora, Tarragona; Port of Copenhagen Dockworkers; ILWU, San Francisco; and, Port of Hamburg Dockworkers. Many of these unions were groups of rank-and-file dockers within mainstream unions, such as the Hamburg dockers.

happily left Liverpool behind as a nightmare to be dealt with by the TGWU. The ITF's problem was that there were still some ITF affiliates whose imaginations had been captured by Liverpool. It was not just imagination, as some unions wanted to see a clearer stance by the ITF. Tom Dufresne, President of the Canadian Area of the ILWU, wrote to Cockroft on 20 November 1996 demanding information:

"I am writing to inquire as to the status of the ITF's support for the Merseyside Dockworkers in Liverpool. As the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and the ITF have enjoyed a longstanding relationship on Canada's west coast, I am distressed to hear that these longshoremen in Liverpool may not be receiving the full support of the ITF.

When the ITF requested support in its campaign against FOCs[46] and support in the campaign to organize the cruise ship industry, the longshore unions were there to aid the ITF. Could you possibly clarify the current state of the relationship between the ITF and the Merseyside Dockers?" (Dufresne 20/11/1996)

Cockroft's response was quick and to the point:

"I very much regret having to answer a letter like this, because it should be obvious that the ITF continues to provide all maximum support for all dockworkers' unions in struggle, and the Liverpool dockers are no exception. I know, however, that Jack Heyman from San Francisco has been busily spreading information to the contrary around the world, and this has already had a very negative impact on how some of our affiliates view us.

[…]

The current situation is that the union, in the form of its General Executive Council, has called for the reopening, without preconditions, of negotiations between the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and union leaders. The company has accepted the invitation to talks and, as far as I know, these are proceeding. The shop stewards, on behalf of the members concerned, do not

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[46] FOC: Flags Of Convenience. This had been a crucial ITF campaign against some states providing their flags to vessels that were then able to sail under no regulatory terms. This usually affected the conditions in which seafarers worked. The campaign had been very successful for the ITF, not just in terms of improving the working conditions of seafarers but also in generating revenue from ship owners.

appear to be happy about the 'no pre-conditions' part of the decision, and they are maintaining their original demand for full reinstatement of all dismissed dockworkers as a basis for any settlement.

[…]

A further complicating factor has been the tendency of some of the shop stewards to make contact with minority political factions inside some of our European dockworker affiliates, a fact which has on several occasions caused embarrassment. This is nothing to do with the ITF Secretariat, but it happens to be a simple fact and it is one which our affiliates have indicated to the TGWU on a number of occasions" (Cockroft 22/11/1996).

The really complicating factor was the position in which the ITF was being placed. As preparations for a day of action in December 1996 were taking place, the ITF had only met with silence from the TGWU. The issue was clear. In a fax sent to Cockroft by an ITF senior official on 4 December 1996, the ITF were willing to support the day of action but the TGWU had not provided the ITF with a clear position. The ITF confirmed their support with a press release on 5 December 1996, which had been cleared by Graham Stevenson. The haste was unnecessary, as the day of action was moved to 20 January 1997. This allowed the TGWU to react. And by 9 December Morris and Cockroft had had a chat, and it was made clear that "Bill wants everything connected with the dispute cleared with him personally (i.e. clearing it with Graham is not enough)" (Cockroft 09/12/1996).

International Day of Action – 20 January 1997

ITF affiliates, particularly European ones, were worried about the Liverpool situation, as the TGWU appeared not to be producing any communication in regard to the International Day of Action. After clearing it with Morris, the ITF's leadership sent out some basic points, outlining their position: "(1) It is a day of action called by the Liverpool dockers and supported by the ITF. (2) The TGWU has not asked us to do this. They have no position on

the day of action. (3) We are supporting primarily because we are asked to do so by dockers' unions in other countries. […]" (Cockroft 15/01/1997). This final point shows a legitimising emphasis in Cockroft's position.

The day of action proved successful in terms of showing solidarity action across the world. Yet it increased the TGWU and the ITF's concerns. There was a feeling that the dockers were no longer organising solidarity actions in order to pressure MDHC in their negotiations. Rather, they "have moved on and they are no longer running an industrial dispute but a political movement" (Morris 1997). The extent to which this was a political movement is questionable. However, for Morris it needed to be contained for two reasons; firstly, the TGWU was publicly supporting the Labour Party for the forthcoming general election and they had to be careful how they dealt with the situation. Therefore, "given the anti-union laws we are of course unable to state publicly the level of assistance we have given to the dockers in the dispute" (Morris 1997). Secondly, Morris wanted to see the offers submitted to secret ballots, rather than being voted in mass meetings. Once again, different understandings of democratic practices collided with each other.

Conference season

Internationalist dockers had a busy two weeks on the other side of the Atlantic. A further International Dockers Conference organised around the international support network that the Liverpool dockers had activated was held in Montreal (Canada) at the end of May. Two weeks later (9-10 June) the ITF's Dockers' Section held its conference in Miami (US). What these two dockers' conferences represented was a clearer breakthrough towards an international bifurcation of dockers' organisations. Marges pointed out to Cockroft and Flint that "my impression I got previously that Liverpool would be set up [*sic*] an alternative for the ITF is becoming true more and more. […]. There is no reason for panic of course, but we have to be alert. T&G should be more active to avoid

that the Liverpool case could become a starting point for this kind of developments" (Marges 1997).

The Liverpool dockers were once again feeling strong in light of their international support. They were highly successful at maintaining an expensive international campaign and by now building an international dockers' network that was soon rivalling the ITF. In Britain their chance approached to influence the TGWU nationally, in the July 1997 Biennial Delegate Conference, as the previous chapter has considered in detail. There was increasing dissatisfaction within and outside the TGWU. Even the ITF was starting to be annoyed by the TGWU. For example, when Cockroft came back from a trip to Washington DC, Marges welcomed him back with an email with the subject line: "Welcome back in [*sic*] the country of Liverpool and Morris" (Marges 1997). The country of Liverpool and Morris was moving closer towards ending this situation. Liverpool dockers stepped up their international actions, whilst Morris was decided he had to put a stop to the situation. It was now clearly damaging both his reputation and that of the national TGWU leadership.

Inter-union and intra-union communications

Some of the major European transport trade unions remained uncomfortable with the way in which the development of the Liverpool dockers' campaign was impacting on their own organisations. The way in which communication was organised worried them. For instance, the chairman of the FNV [47] wrote a letter to two of its members, Ron Wiechels and Harry Kappelhoff, who had written to the TGWU about the Liverpool case. The problem here was that these two members used the letterhead of the FNV, yet they did not follow procedures in doing so. The content of their letter was also at odds with the FNV's official position. The reprimand concluded:

> "the union board considers your working method careless and undemocratic, and you have compromised our position in an international context. If members

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[47] The Dutch Transport Workers Union

do not agree with the policy and working method of the union, they can discuss this within the union in the appropriate places. The union board expects that you will behave in accordance with union rules in the future" [48] (Waleson 16/07/1997).

It was becoming clear that the way in which internationalism was taking shape would have consequences for the way in which national unions operated. In fact, it was going to have consequences for the way in which internationalism or at least international union communications were to take place. In a meeting with senior ITF officials, it became apparent that the way in which the Liverpool dockers organised internationally, prompted the ITF to reconsider their internal communication strategies. Specifically, the way in which communications within the ITF and their affiliates followed a pyramidal model was unsuitable when quick action was needed. During the Liverpool dispute, the ITF was often unable to react appropriately due to the slowness of their procedures.

International Day of Action – 8 September 1997

The dockers could not afford to waste any time and, as the second anniversary of the dispute approached, they organised another international day of action. This time, however, there were more hurdles to overcome than before. The day of action was originally scheduled for 18 August, but in July it was decided to delay it until 8 September (MPSS 1997). The reasons for the change were many, including the increasing difficulty the dockers were facing in keeping the momentum going, with their unions becoming less sympathetic. The ITF was not requested to participate this time around, and it was clear that they would not have done so, if they had been asked (Marges 1997). In August 1997, Cockroft's holiday had to be interrupted by an urgent fax from Marges regarding the ITF's position on the International Day of Action. This was prompted by many ITF affiliates requesting an official position (Marges 1997). The International Day of Action was successful in achieving active participation in

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[48] Translated from Dutch by Annelies Vredeveldt, University of York, Department of Psychology. Acknowledged with thanks.

the US West Coast, Sweden, Japan and Australia. Figure 7.1 shows the countries where the Liverpool dockers achieved support from, whether in the shape of financial assistance or active industrial action, throughout the 28-months of the dispute.

Figure 7.1. World-map of solidarity with the Liverpool Dockers
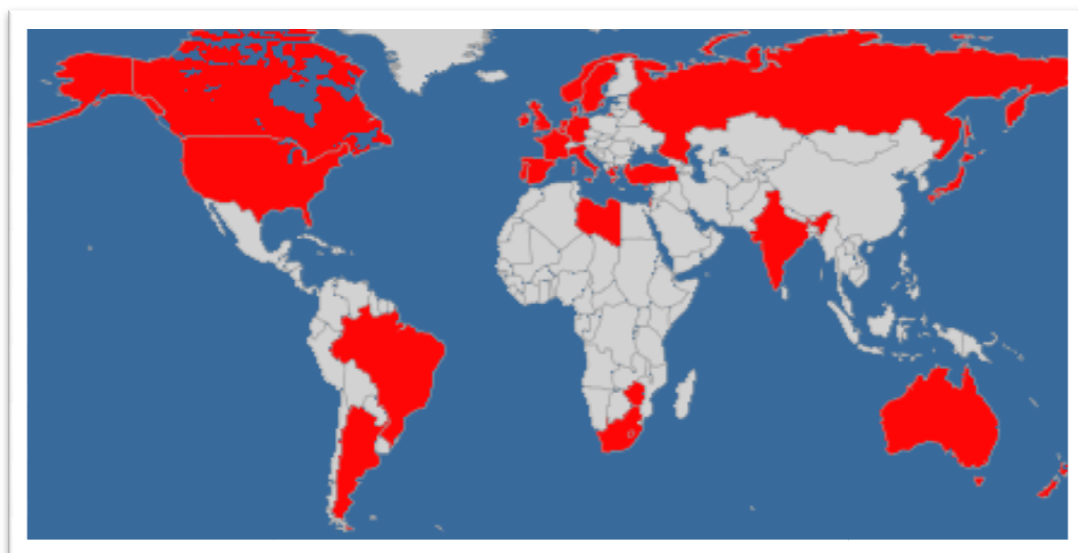
What is worth highlighting from this day of action was the ITF's reaction. It was mentioned in their email bulletin dated 16 September 1997. But although the day of action was mentioned, Liverpool was significant by its absence. Brian McWilliams, President of the ILWU, sent a concerned letter to Cockroft:

"[…] The item omits any reference to the Liverpool dockers when the express purpose of the action was to draw attention to their struggle.

The plight of the Liverpool dockers has touched a nerve among the ILWU rank and file, generating an enormous feeling of solidarity and concern for their fate. Disturbing incidents such as this add fuel to the viewpoint that the ITF is not supporting the Liverpool dockers. It is very difficult for me to advocate and defend the ILWU's commitment to working through the ITF when official publications display this level of indifference" (McWilliams 02/10/1997).

The response illustrates the juggling exercise the ITF was becoming involved in. In this case, blaming the TGWU was the appropriate measure:

> "As usual we are caught on the horns of a dilemma in relation to the Liverpool dispute, and on this occasion I can only apologise for the editorial decision, which was made by me personally, not to include a reference to the Liverpool dispute in the recent edition of 'ITF Info'.

> The TGWU is extremely sensitive to anything we say on the dispute at present, and in trying to avoid a reaction from them I clearly erred too far in the other direction. Rest assured that it will not happen again" (Cockroft 14/10/1997).

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed chronologically the development of the Liverpool dockers' international solidarity campaign. The chapter has highlighted interaction of different ways of understanding trade union politics and action during the campaign. It is precisely this interaction that led to the development of irreconcilable and competing political articulations of solidarity. Firstly, the chapter has considered the factors that led to the international campaign with the Liverpool dockers. Although the leaderships of the two main trade union organisations (TGWU and ITF) believed that the dockers were pursuing a politically loaded strategy that was designed to weaken their leaderships, this chapter has argued that the pursuing of an international strategy arose from *need*. It developed when the length of the dispute indicated that it was different from previous disputes, and, crucially, when the dockers' local and national strategies were almost exhausted. It grew out of a ***lack of available alternative strategies*** and it gave rise to a series of unintended consequences as this chapter has shown.

This led to specific characteristics in the political articulation of solidarity at the international level. Throughout the twenty-five months of the international campaign different ideological strands of international trade unionism became evident, most notably in terms of a clash between syndicalist practices and large

social democratic union organisations. Particular national traditions of trade union organisation clashed when they met internationally. Whilst for the Liverpool dockers a constant tension between centralised bureaucratisation and rank-and-file agitation were two sides of the same coin, for European dockworkers these were seen as irreconcilable contradictions. The international strategy of the Liverpool dockers was *lost in translation*.

Whilst the way in which the campaign was conceptualised and organised was directly related to the dockers' historical experience with international trade union action, each new move was decisively shaped by the available options at the international level. New tactics were pursued which led to unintended consequences. This was because it was not the consequences but the feasibility of action that drove decisions. In particular, the development of more permanent and organised international dockers' networks, which led to the creation of the International Dockworkers' Council (IDC) in 2000, needs to be understood in this way. The Liverpool dockers showed a high degree of creativity and organisational capacity in the development of the international campaign for their reinstatement. What this chapter has shown is that strategic choices at the international level were made on the basis of the exhaustion of national resources and the availability of international ones.

Finally, the creative use of trade union communication channels by the Liverpool dockers highlighted the inability of unions to control their internal communications in this case. This was due to two factors: the dockers' determination to keep the control of the dispute within their own organisational frameworks (particularly the shop stewards' committee and the Friday mass meetings) and the development of instant communication, in the form of fax and email, which happened alongside the dispute (Carter, Clegg et al. 2003), and which the dockers and their supporters were particularly quick and able to use to their advantage.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

The Liverpool dockers' dispute ended in defeat. The 500 sacked dockers failed to achieve reinstatement after 28 months of constant campaigning and hardship. This thesis has sought to understand the tensions and dynamics that shaped the way in which the dispute was conducted. The thesis started by asking *how workers articulate solidarity in an age of economic restructuring and political deregulation*. Throughout the preceding chapters it has become clear that this is a complex question with an equally complex answer. However, the way the answer has been developed has resulted in a core concern taking primacy over others: the availability of resources and the willingness and capacity to use them. The issue of resources adds complexity to some of the answers provided by the literature discussed in chapter one. Whilst that literature appears to focus on workers' organisational capacities in light of their effectiveness in securing desirable outcomes, the thesis has, instead, considered effectiveness in a different manner. It has done so by arguing that the struggles that arise from the development, or non-development, of the political [49] articulation of solidarity are crucial for understanding workers' organisational capacities.

In order to develop the argument, the thesis proposed three analytical categories which have provided a framework to help understand the case. The three themes which have provided the analytical thread of the thesis are:

1. the type of economic restructuring and political regulatory processes within each national economy, and also within each industry;
2. trade union strategies;
3. workplace and community experience and the construction of popular historical memories.

Each chapter has contributed to the development of a theme, although not necessarily in a linear manner. For example, chapters two to five provide the core analytical tools that place the case study in context. However, their role is

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[49] The 'political' is understood as the arena that goes beyond direct bread and butter issues.

not just to contextualise the case study chapters that follow, but to build up the key analytical elements that the thesis develops. Therefore, chapter two has focused on understanding how the first analytical category illuminates factors relevant to the political articulation of solidarity. In agreement with those identified as 'national optimists' in chapter one (Regini 1992; Fairbrother and Yates 2003a; Frege and Kelly 2004), the specific domestic structures in which a labour movement finds itself *do* matter. These structures include not just the national state, but also the specific institutional configuration in which a particular industry operates. Within this view, neo-Gramscian approaches such as Cox (1987) and Bieler (2006) offer some interesting distinctions on whether a particular productive sector is nationally or transnationally organised. Therefore, chapter two assesses the economic restructuring, political regulatory and deregulatory processes that affected employment in the British port industry.

It becomes clear within the second chapter that the British port transport industry had traditionally been characterised by fragmentation. This fragmentation was particularly marked in two crucial areas, ownership of ports and employment. British ports, unlike many of their European or US counterparts, developed as conglomerates of business interests around shipping, cargo handling and warehousing. The state, whether in the form of a national state or a municipal authority, was not heavily involved in port matters. This meant that the British port transport industry grew in an uncoordinated fashion, without a common strategy. Such fragmentation would have consequences for the technological transformation that ports were to undergo during the latter part of the twentieth century.

The radical change that the port industry underwent in its move from being labour-intensive to becoming capital-intensive after the 1960s appeared to take British ports by surprise. The introduction of containerisation, initially on the East Coast of the US, meant that ports such as Liverpool had to transform themselves quickly. Containerisation forced ports across the globe to utilise similar technology, as ships would need to be unloaded in the same way that they had been loaded in their port of origin. Up until then, little investment was needed to become an employer at the dockside, as most cargo was moved on

pallets, which required strength and skill, but no specific expensive technology. Technological change required a geographical relocation of ports, as they needed to be accessible by ships that were much larger in size. Warehouses no longer needed to be dockside, but heavy machinery such as fork-lift trucks and gantries did.

The second and third parts of the chapter chart the regulatory and deregulatory political processes that have affected employment in British docks, with emphasis on the period when the National Dock Labour Scheme (NDLS) was in operation. This shows the piecemeal approach that successive governments took towards the difficulties that the industry faced. Throughout the period there was an underlying belief that the key problems during this period were due to the militancy of its workers, rather than with the industry itself (fragmentation, low investment, etc). Yet, as the chapter argues, fragmentation was precisely the largest challenge the industry faced, as demonstrated by the inability of successive British governments to develop a coherent and cohesive port transport policy.

Chapters three and five consider the third analytical category proposed – which relates to historical experience and memory. Both chapters show, in different ways, the importance of historical experience both in the workplace and the community. However, the memory of that experience is not one that is required to be based on *real* events, but rather on a constructed experience. What is meant by this is that *perceived* historical identities and culture matter, regardless of how close to reality they may be. Two issues appear as crucial when considering memory. First, memory is constructed and therefore selective, but this inescapable process of selection must be analytically separated from myths and inventions. Such selective construction of memory is not necessarily a conscious act. For example, in chapter three, I mention how the sacked Liverpool dockers have several items of NUDL memorabilia which make reference to James Larkin, rather than to James Sexton. The dockers' reference for that period, therefore, is to someone who was not the leader of the NUDL, whilst the actual leader appears to have been erased from their history. This selective

memory, at least in this case, appears to celebrate and legitimise a radical and transgressive leadership as opposed to a pragmatic and anti-heroic one.

Second, it is important to identify and understand the creation of memories of events that never happened, but are still powerful. These invented memories become historical experience as new choices are made based upon them. As the interviews conducted for this research demonstrated the power of such memory cannot be underestimated in its ability to *make history*. The first appendix of this thesis has a larger reflection on the effect of this in research interviews.

Chapter three considers the reasons why Liverpool's political culture has been characterised as exceptional. The chapter focuses on two key aspects of Liverpool's politics that have been characterised as distinctive, the development of local politics and the way in which trade union identities have evolved in Liverpool. The chapter argues that Liverpool has exceptional characteristics, but they are not simply because of idiosyncratic trade union identities or distinct local politics, but rather because of when these developments occurred. Chronology is critical. The chapter then assesses the dominant explanations provided by the literature on Liverpool's exceptionalism, the role that ethnicity and sectarianism have played in the development of political culture, and the role of Liverpool's over-reliance on a maritime economy throughout most of the period considered by the chapter. Some of the issues in this latter part of the chapter are picked up again in chapter five.

Chapter four offers a crucial contribution to understanding the choice of available trade union strategies, particularly in terms of the tensions which contribute to the availability and feasibility of such choices. Although this chapter emphasises the second analytical category, trade union strategies, it argues that the choices available and the perceived feasibility of each option were directly related to the other two analytical categories. The chapter follows the organisational dynamics of the Transport and General Workers Union. The emphasis has been on the period between 1979 and 1997, a period marked by hostile legislation and a succession of governments clearly driven by anti-union animosity. The chapter argues that the union followed two strategies during this

period. First, under Ron Todd's leadership, the union attempted to respond to these challenges within their existing organisational framework, seeking to manage a rapid rate of decline in the union's key membership areas, such as transport. In contrast, Bill Morris' leadership was far more proactive in an attempt to respond to decline. This distinction is crucial, because whilst Ron Todd's leadership had very few options available, Bill Morris' leadership could have pursued several different avenues.

Todd's leadership (1985-1992) was marked by a constantly changing and deeply hostile political and economic institutional environment, in which it was almost impossible to devise any kind of strategy beyond trying to survive day by day. Every day could unveil a new attack, whether it was in the form of anti-trade union legislation, or in closures of largely unionised companies or large redundancy offers. During the 1980s unions had few options open to them, as it was difficult to ascertain what kind of institutional environment they were in. By the early 1990s, things had settled down as the new institutional model had stabilised. This meant that unions were able to assess the new environment and decide how to operate within that. The new institutional model was clearly anti-union, but at least then, they knew what that actually meant.

As chapter four showed, the avenue chosen by Bill Morris' leadership was one that would reinforce the union as a ***unitary*** organisation, limiting any ***searches for autonomy*** within it. Morris, who was initially elected with full support from the Broad Left, initiated a wide range of changes within the TGWU designed to deal with the three key challenges the union faced. Firstly, the union had a £12 million deficit. Secondly, membership decline throughout the 1980s meant that recovering the deficit via membership dues was not an option. Thirdly, the union had become organisationally disjointed, showing signs of strong factions controlling certain regions and leading to animosity between them. Whilst these were the challenges facing Bill Morris' leadership, it was the way in which he dealt with them that highlights particular issues over trade union renewal strategies during the 1990s.

Morris brought in a group of consultants who compiled the 'Klein Report'. The report focused on the state of the TGWU at the time and offered

specific solutions, such as the merger of trade groups into industrial sectors, and the reduction in regional offices. The relevance, as chapter four argues, lay within the emphasis on centralising the union's structures, particularly the ruthless restructuring of Region 6, which is used in the chapter as an example of the changes being implemented. Crucially, however, the changes were not the product of internal democratic processes and debates, but rather brought in from the outside, through consultants. For many within the TGWU's membership this resembled managerial strategy a bit too much.

Yet Morris' choice was not at odds with the TGWU's historical experience: it connected with powerful traditions within the union. The thesis sketches the TGWU's history with a particular emphasis on styles of leadership. This leads to the conclusion that both the union structures and the historical experience of the TGWU's leadership have encouraged strong leaders. The union has historically given primary importance to keeping a diverse union together even if, at times, this has been at the expense of democratic practices *per se*. Such maintenance places a premium on effective leadership.

Chapter five returns to some of the analytical themes considered in both chapters two and three. The chapter focuses on the type of employment relations that characterised the Port of Liverpool between 1989 and the start of the 1995-1998 dispute. The chapter thus provides a direct background to the following chapters which deal with the dispute itself. The chapter considers the character of the relationships that developed in the port after the abolition of the NDLS. Within a different industrial context, it uses Phillips' (2009) argument on workplace conflict as a crucial factor in the origin of an industrial dispute. In the case of the port of Liverpool, what Phillips calls "a fundamental breach of trust" (2009, p. 172) did not just happen between managers and workers, but, importantly, it also occurred between workers, their shop stewards and the union officials. The six years preceding the Liverpool dockers' dispute were marked by a constantly deteriorating situation in the relationship between management, the union and workers.

Finally, chapters six and seven are pivotal in understanding the *actual* organisational capacities available to the Liverpool dockers during their 28-

month dispute. Chapter six focuses on the local dynamics of the dispute, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between the Liverpool dockers' and the TGWU's leadership as well as on the links that the dockers developed outside the structures of the union. Chapter seven, on the other hand, has focused on the international networks developed during the Liverpool dockers' campaign for reinstatement. The findings analysed in these chapters will now be assessed in light of the literature reviewed in chapter one. The complexities of the case mean that each interpretation within the literature reviewed can find some aspects supportive of its claims.

From amongst the pessimists Tilly (1995) and Silver (2003), the former's argument that globalisation threatens labour rights would certainly be apt for a dispute that started the same year as his controversial article was published. His core argument, as quoted in chapter one, is that "globalization threatens established rights of labour through its undermining of state capacity to guarantee those rights" (Tilly 1995, p. 4). This claim appears to be vindicated by large sections of this thesis. In particular, chapter six, which focuses on the local and national dynamics of the dispute, demonstrates how institutional legislative changes had a large impact on the kind of action, and the type of support, the Liverpool dockers were **actually able** to achieve.

Tilly's case is relevant to the analytical category proposed by this thesis which deals with processes of economic restructuring and political regulatory and deregulatory processes. Labour rights have been undermined under neoliberalism. Whether that process has occurred due to the state itself being undermined by globalisation, as Tilly argues, or by government choices, is of little relevance to this thesis. What matters is that workers' organisational capacities have been significantly curtailed by a series of economic and political changes that have taken place at the global, national and local levels. The Liverpool dockers' dispute is a clear example of industrial conflict within that neoliberal environment. This meant that the number of options available to the union were limited. The TGWU decided not to support the dispute *officially* by choosing to operate within the framework of diminishing labour rights.

The key point, in Tilly's view, is that the organisational capacities of workers have been curtailed because the state is losing power vis-à-vis globalisation. Their only recourse, in his view, is that "if workers are to enjoy collective rights in the new world order, they will have to invent new strategies at the scale of international capital" (1995, p. 21). The dockers, it appears, agreed with Tilly. This was precisely the reason why they chose to bring the campaign for reinstatement to the international level. Chapter seven follows closely the decision the dockers took to set up a picket line on the US East Coast in December 1995, just over two months into the dispute. This choice was the direct result of the dockers' realisation that their dispute could not be won if they just focused on a local or a national campaign. However, as the chapter demonstrates, these international strategies cannot just spring from an understanding of how international capital operates. They are also the outcome of how resources are configured.

In the case of the dockers, the three analytical categories proposed by the thesis relate to each other in a way that made international action a logical choice; *but* the dockers also had the resources to make that choice a reality. Those resources included their own historical experience of internationalism, particularly during the 1980s. In their case, international action only appeared as an option when they realised that their available resources locally and nationally had been exhausted. Yet this presents a crucial challenge. Whilst their predicament made international action a choice this did not translate into that action being *effective*. The key issue was how to make international action effective when the existing local and national resources were ineffective. At one stage this appeared to work. The period leading up to the second offer in January 1996 and up until March 1996 held the key, as chapter six shows.

Whilst local and national resources had certainly been exhausted by December 1995, the success of international action that same month reactivated some of these already exhausted resources. The initial shock that international action created within the maritime and port industry led to an over-inflated industry-related media reporting. This was highly beneficial for the dockers' campaign.

On a different analytical level from Tilly, Silver's argument (2003), based upon an abstraction of the conflict between capital and labour globally, can also help as a framework for analysing the case. Although the Liverpool dockers lost their dispute, their struggle did not go away. In fact, the international campaign and the networks that developed ensured that the conflict between capital and labour in the docks had not ended; it had just been temporally *fixed* in one particular location. Conflict followed the global docks in two characteristic ways. The triumph of the MDHC meant that other employers around the globe knew that, if they were prepared to accept a long fight, getting rid of unionised labour in the port was a possibility, provided local labour laws were sufficiently sympathetic to the employer. On the other hand, dockworkers had grown confident that if they were to be attacked, there was a network of contacts that could be called upon.

The Liverpool dockers and their supporters realised that although the dispute was lost, they had built a strong international network of dockworkers that could be mobilised should a similar situation occur again elsewhere. The key was to ensure these networks were not lost. The development of international networks that arose from the Liverpool campaign led to the creation in 2000 of the IDC (International Dockworkers Council). Its slogan was homage to the dockers – "You'll never walk alone again". It has very quickly become a key organisation for international dockers who were outside the orbit of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). The impact of the Liverpool dockers' campaign has also been felt outside the IDC and within the ITF.

As chapter seven considers, the ITF's ambivalence towards the dockers demonstrated that rigid international trade union structures were unable to react to the new environment adequately. Communication, to which I will return later, highlighted the rigid structures of the ITF. Its pyramidal structure, which meant that everything needed to be brought to the top before it could return to the bottom, meant the federation proved inadequate for the needs of transport workers. Rank-and-file workers within the ITF were unable to communicate with each other using existing structures. Instead, they would have to raise their own issues nationally, as a precondition for them to be considered elsewhere. This

time consuming activity proved ineffective when dealing with a situation where rapid action was required and where the affiliate was not officially supporting the dispute, even though some of their members were involved in it.

A good example of the way in which the Liverpool dockers left a lasting legacy was the Australian waterfront dispute in 1998. In this case, a concentrated effort by both the employer (Patrick stevedores) and an anti-union government saw Australian unionised dockworkers locked out. What ensued was a very different story from that of the Liverpool dockers. The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) rallied behind its members, and, rather than acquiescing in the neoliberal legislative environment, it challenged it on its own terrain. It went to the High Court, which ultimately saw the dockers' jobs restored (McConville 2000; Wiseman 2002). In this case, two factors were key to the outcome. The union supported the dispute and the International Transport Workers Federation also did so, to the point where it was threatened that its assets in London would be sequestrated. Two key issues distinguish the Australian waterfront dispute from the Liverpool dockers' dispute.

On the one hand, the MUA is a specifically maritime union, representing dockers and seafarers in contrast to the TGWU, which is a broad based union. This distinction is crucial. Whilst for the MUA an attack on dockers really was an attack on all, for the TGWU that was not the case, in fact dockers were one of their fast declining membership groups. This raises the question as to what is the most effective form of organisation for dockworkers? A broadly based one or a sectional one? The evidence is mixed. Whilst a broad base union is able to cope better with blows to specific sections of the organisation without necessarily damaging the organisation as a whole, it also appears as less willing to risk the future of the diverse organisation for a small section of workers.

On the other hand, Australia's labour laws were also characterised by a narrowing of the scope for lawful strike action, particularly after the election of the Howard Liberal-National Coalition in 1996. New legislation was introduced which meant that strike action was severely limited by time scales and arbitration procedures. Whilst the MUA action may have been in breach of this new legislation, the union was very quick to react. They actually brought the

employer to the Federal Court on charges of conspiracy and unfair dismissal (McConville 2000, p. 399-403). Yet, whilst the dispute can be considered a success in comparison with the Liverpool experience, it had its unresolved questions:

> "The successive court wins by the union did not automatically result in unionists returning to their jobs. Patrick's, thought to have accumulated annual losses of $8 million, had restructured its business in September 1997 and was no longer the employer of MUA members inside Patrick's terminals. The workers were technically employed by four distinct labor-hire companies, which, Patrick's was quick to remind the courts, were insolvent. Losses of $56 milion were noted. On 7 April, the labor-hire companies had been placed under administration of the accounting firm Grant Thorton. The final High Court rulings could be seen, in effect, as forcing insolvent companies to continue to trade" (McConville 2000, p. 401-402).

This shows that, as in Liverpool, the specific configurations of the conflict between capital and labour need to be understood in light of both macro-structural factors, such as economic restructuring and political deregulation, as well as specific factors such as types of union organisation, strategy and specific changes in employment relationships.

Although the case provides a contribution to both Tilly and Silver's argument, it becomes apparent that their theoretical frameworks offer only limited possibilities when analysing the *actual* organisational capacities of a particular group of workers. This is because they both place an overarching emphasis on the power of structural forces, which are considered to determine workers' organisational capacities. Whilst this thesis does not claim that structural constraints can be evaded, the case has shown that there are different ways to act within those constraints. In other words, agency does matter.

Do the optimists offer a more useful framework? In chapter one, the optimists' arguments were presented across both national trade union renewal strategies and internationalism as ways to counteract an increasingly global capital. The distinction is important, as in a sense what distinguishes these two types of optimists is how much power they think the state still retains. Or in

other words, to what extent national institutional arrangements still matter and how. The 'national optimists' as represented by Fairbrother's work (Fairbrother 2000; Fairbrother and Yates 2003a; Fairbrother 2009) have aptly informed the second analytical element of the thesis – trade union strategy. At the core of their argument is the claim that "national labour movements play a decisive role in how organizing is understood and strategically pursued" (Fairbrother and Yates 2003b, p. 16). This is in line with the argument of the thesis, and particularly with the material presented in chapters four and six. The difference, however, is that renewal, in Fairbrother's eyes will occur within an organisational model of unionism rather than within a service model. Chapter four, however, shows that such a dichotomy is unable to grasp the fact that the TGWU actually followed aspects of both models. For example, Bill Morris' *Link-up* campaign to attract non-unionised workers (such as part-timers, women, ethnic minorities, etc.) falls within the organisational model. Yet bringing US consultants in to provide advice on how to rebuild the union is clearly an instance of service model unionism.

It becomes difficult to ascertain how much of the literature is based on empirical observation and how much of it is based on prescriptive recipes. Fairbrother's model questions whether the TGWU's combined strategy can be considered one of renewal since it does not fall within the organisational model's prescription. Nevertheless, Fairbrother's research has a sound empirical basis. It starts off by considering the national institutional contexts within which unions operate and, within that, his work identifies the sectors that may experience such renewal. In his argument, the public sector is identified as having all the necessary advantages for renewal strategies to take hold, due to a relatively healthy level of trade union density within the sector. Whilst this may be the case, it leaves the question open as to what is feasible for unions operating in other sectors that may be less promising for renewal.

In a rather more passionate fashion, and less concerned with specific sectors, Waterman and Munck (Munck and Waterman 1999; Waterman 2001; Waterman and Wills 2001; Munck 2002; Munck 2004; Waterman 2005; Munck 2007) consider that the situation is not that bad after all, if only the *right* strategy

is pursued. That strategy would involve a unity between labour and other social movements that was able to counteract capital at the global level. Whilst the thesis partly critiques their argument as programmatic, rigid and failing to actually understand workers' *real* organisational capacities, this work points towards a crucial aspect of workers' internationalism in a neoliberal environment: communication. That became the single largest issue in the dockers' international campaign.

Chapter seven dedicates some space to issues of communication. One of the dockers' innovations during the dispute was the use of the internet, a media that was in its infancy at the time. Whilst this has been considered in more detail elsewhere (Carter, Clegg et al. 2003), what became evident during the campaign was the effect that instant, and global, communications could have on organisationally and culturally rigid labour movements. Trade unions had become the centralisers of information, maintaining control over what is disseminated, how and when. One of the challenges the dockers posed to these formal organisations was in the breakdown of that system. For example, the traditional communication channels between the ITF, the TGWU and the dockers were soon challenged by the new media. The dockers were able to communicate immediately with other dockers across the globe *bypassing* the communication channels that had been put in place by established union procedures. Waterman and Munck's fine eye for the importance of communication has been relevant to the case study. It points towards a more practical aspect of trade union strategy that some of the other approaches seem to miss in their quest to show deep structural dynamics.

A familiar difficulty reappears. Whilst the case has vindicated Waterman and Munck's emphasis on the importance of communications, it does not follow that communication will guarantee strategic effectiveness. Quite the contrary: in some instances rapid and uncontrolled communication can harm strategic effectiveness. In the case of the Liverpool dockers, the situation that developed during the summer and autumn of 1996, as explored in chapter six, is a perfect example. By that point, a combination of exhaustion, desperation and openness led the Liverpool dockers to lose some control over how the dispute was being

communicated. Issues such as John Pilger's article in *The Guardian* probably did more harm than good to the dispute. Whilst the article publicised the dispute nationally, its frontal attack on the TGWU and its leadership further antagonised a difficult relationship.

This was to prove dangerous. Whilst the relationship between the dockers and the TGWU had lacked any kind of honeymoon period and had already started a divorce procedure, it had some positive characteristics. The problem was that the dockers kept operating from within the union, yet permitted such public frontal attacks. The dockers' multi-faceted communication strategy was certainly advanced for the period. An 'open' communication strategy had the advantage that crucial issues could be disseminated globally in a rapid manner. But it also meant that the range of 'unintended' consequences could be multiplied at any point.

The old ghosts uncovered in chapter one have proven unhelpful when dealing with the case study at hand. It has become evident that there is no such a thing as a choice between bureaucratic trade unionism and rank-and-file activism. Instead, the case has shown that the two tendencies ***cohabit in tension***. This cohabitation becomes more or less marked at different times. The key issue, the thesis has argued, is not which one *wins*, or which one is preferable or even feasible, but rather the ***dynamics that develop from the tensions between the two***. Both the tensions and the dynamics are historically specific, because they are embedded within the resources available, which ***also*** affect the organisational capacities of workers.

The literature appears to be divided between systemic approaches, which often give little space to workers' organisational capacities, or programmatic approaches, which offer much wishful thinking but on a limited empirical basis. Within this division, a dichotomy arises, which is the juxtaposition of bureaucratised forms of trade unionism, or service models if we are to use a more fashionable term, and rank-and-filism, or organisational models. This dichotomy is unable to grasp the realities of workers' organisational capacities in the 1990s. As this thesis has shown, a case such as the Liverpool dockers exemplifies that these two models are not mutually exclusive, but rather two

sides of the same coin. Research on workers' organisations would benefit by focusing on the political articulations of solidarity that arise from the interaction between these two dynamics *and* the type of resources available. This last point brings the argument back to the three analytical categories proposed by the thesis.

The first analytical category, economic restructuring and political regulatory processes, impacts on the systemic resources workers have at their disposal at particular times and in specific places. In the case of the Liverpool dockers, these included the restrictive legislative environment in which they had to operate their dispute. In other words, it impacted on the kind of support they were to receive, or not receive, from their union and other British workers. These macro changes were to define the institutional context in which their dispute would operate. Whilst this had a large and detrimental impact on their organisational capacities it was not the only factor to determine the resources available to them. One of the key challenges they faced was the changing character of work, which took specific forms in the port industry, as chapter two has shown, and which also had wider changes in two particular areas: employment became more fragmented in terms of types of contract of employment or different rates of pay for the same work, and security of employment was seriously eroded by an increasingly flexible labour market.

The second analytical thread proposed by the thesis, trade union strategy, highlights a framework where agency does matter. The thesis argues how, from the early 1990s, the TGWU reacted to the new institutional environment by finding specific ways to respond to it. In particular, the types of renewal paths chosen by the union were to shape the type of resources available to workers. In the case of the dockers, it was clear that the union had moved towards a vision of defending the organisation as a whole, even if that meant that its actions would be at the expense of specific groups within the union. This was not new for the TGWU, but rather rooted in the union's historical experience.

The final analytical category, the way in which workplace and community experiences together with popular historical memories play a part in the configuration of the political articulation of solidarity, is also illuminated. In

fact, it was these 'memories' that placed available resources at the fingertips of the dockers. As chapter seven has extensively shown, the dockers did not just wake up one day and decided to go international. Such a decision was based on their previous experience of internationalism *and* the way in which dockers' collective memory has been built around conceptions of international trade union action, in a manner which was unambiguously positive.

To conclude, this thesis has argued that understanding the way in which workers articulate solidarity in an age of economic restructuring and political deregulation requires a complex answer. This is because, as this thesis shows, different analytical categories interact in ways that illuminate the availability of different types of resources. Importantly, however, it is not just their availability that matters but also the ability of workers to utilise them. The Liverpool dockers showed an outstanding degree of creativity when it came to utilising all of the, rather limited, resources available to them.

No intellectual exercise can fully attempt to comprehend the way struggle is shaped and fought. All that can be attempted is to ensure that its lessons and analysis are able to increase our knowledge of what may work or not in the struggle against capital. I cannot find a better way of ending this thesis than with the words of one of the sacked dockers, George Langan from Birkenhead, who wrote, at the request of his wife, WoW member Dot Langan, a long entry of how he felt a few days after the dispute ended. The following words are just an extract of the eighteen pages he wrote:

ONE OLD FELLAH ONCE TOLD ~~ME~~ YOU HAVE GOT TO BE PREPARED TO DEFEND SOMETHING YOU HAVE WON OFF THE EMPLOYER BECAUSE GIVEN HALF THE CHANCE HE WOULD TAKE IT BACK, HE THEN TOLD ME ALWAYS RE-MEMBER SON
IF YOU DONT FIGHT YOU HAVE ALREADY LOST
IF YOU DO FIGHT YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO. WIN.

Appendix 1. Dockworkers' vocabulary

Term	Meaning
Blue Union	National Association of Stevedores and Dockers (NASD)
Blue-eyed boys	Dockworkers who had become the employers' favourites and therefore were able to get work most of the time.
Calling on	The system in place to allocate work to the casual docker. Dockers had to attend a morning call to obtain work for the day.
Containerisation	Reduction of staff and facilities by using containers and container ships, providing faster loading times
Continuity rule	A docker was entitled to complete any job he had started.
Employer of last resort	Port Authority position to absorb dockworkers whose jobs had become redundant (in place during the NDLS)
Floaters (or drifters)	Dockers that were unable or unwilling to gain regular or semi-regular employment and would only obtain work after everyone else had been allocated.
Foreman	A docker charged with initial responsibility over a gang of workers
Free call	Registered dockworkers' allocation to a work gang; if unsuccessful they still got some pay under NDLS

Term	Meaning
Groupage	Groupage work was the loading and unloading of containers in warehouses outside the docks and where the work was done by non-registered dockworkers. Usually, the work was done at a much lower rate and with considerably worse conditions
Palletisation	Organising cargo in pallets to reduce loading times
Scouse	Lob Scouse – type of local stew which gave its name to the natives of Liverpool (Scouser)
Welting	The practice, believed to have been widespread in Liverpool, where only a reduced number of the gang works at any given time.

Appendix 2. TGWU membership data 1968-1999.

Part 1. Membership changes by region 1968-1999

TGWU- Annual membership figures by region 1968-1978

Region	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
1	352623	358310	390285	396123	411934	420926	450608	471619	496513	523754	536844
2	69961	72839	81935	80799	83589	86307	90237	90342	96767	102723	107097
3	112243	117021	129005	128317	133555	134864	137085	136600	140913	146354	150243
4	71833	115388	111438	107223	109473	108568	110666	106809	110407	114697	115653
5	246209	253128	270610	276470	317573	324060	334701	328004	341295	360327	376387
6	102784	188970	208391	208327	217881	227490	236713	224496	230830	238374	239303
7	118011	126442	129369	139044	153963	161216	166559	166300	167833	176080	181423
8	68112	72082	75411	72042	74143	77085	82041	83193	85452	87571	89828
9	71678	75636	82465	78961	82755	83564	87564	88103	92650	98406	100663
10	43712	47959	52740	50212	51321	53269	52851	53823	58339	64201	65375
11	96220	98504	101709	99542	100441	98343	99738	97639	99073	100489	100753
12	74760										
13	39780										
PWG											
H.O.	5579	5328	5328	6074	9606	9804	8545	9237	9762	9762	9249
Total	1473505	1531607	1638686	1643134	1746234	1785496	1857308	1856165	1929834	2022738	2072818

TGWU- Annual membership figures by region 1979-1989

Region	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
1	550582	481920	445094	412650	393316	375279	362841	342956	329653	322332	299400
2	109780	97841	88972	85931	82754	78797	76322	77904	75706	70766	65742
3	151786	136590	127865	123174	119368	114055	103778	97482	92189	89154	88749
4	116101	102553	90165	86323	80591	76984	74083	71699	70019	68606	67820
5	379724	349715	288403	268182	251137	242337	234498	223843	220128	216360	221110
6	233706	212783	188316	179957	172832	169085	164875	161626	164785	164566	160724
7	179612	169143	156492	152287	145059	139407	135099	132374	126100	119654	113120
8	89572	81644	73550	70534	65121	62843	60770	58484	60724	56259	55070
9	98879	93085	86036	99836	93798	90531	87386	83165	81824	79111	76969
10	66611	59858	54117	63632	59407	58540	55467	54237	54047	53248	51185
11	100113	93030	88391	82277	78595	77600	73371	68666	67404	66774	64872
12											
13											
PWG											
H.O.	9815	8809	8417	8208	5465	5097	5515	5508	6133	6023	6015
Total	2086281	1886971	1695818	1632991	1547443	1490555	1434005	1377944	1348712	1312853	1270776

TGWU- Annual membership figures by region 1990-1999

Region	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
1	281866	266824	247042	207124	196304	192238	192526	189931	196287	198152
2	63987	59646	52847	116094	109947	104710	103028	102.406	101940	99766
3	83735	77649	70832	54355	50518	49953	48717	49.310	49368	51680
4	65016	59857	56362	52457	50438	50153	49514	51.177	49203	51033
5	219354	190826	169505	159008	160179	164131	165193	163.616	164976	157452
6	160357	144319	132164	123257	119507	114397	110561	113.966	112538	109330
7	109084	102163	96228	91212	88877	87016	84441	82.444	79676	80113
8	49951	46576	43356	140936	134083	130063	126384	124.408	123670	120097
9	75104	69922	65587							
10	47590	43559	40505							
11	62197	60008	57239							
12										
13										
PWG										
H.O.	5650	5282	4919	4664	3970	3889	4305	4.099	3967	3891
Total	1223891	1126631	1036586	949107	913823	896550	884669	881357	881625	871514

Note: following from the internal restructuring of the TGWU in 1992, discussed in chapter 4, the number of regions was reduced.

Part 2. Membership changes by trade group 1968-1999

Please note:

- Until 1984, the figure for Public services included civil aviation
- Agricultural and Textile workers were new trade groups created in 1982
- Trade groups changed considerably between 1967 and 1968 making comparison very difficult, hence only docks figures are included

TGWU- Annual membership figures by trade group 1968-1978

Trade Group	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Docks, Waterways, Fishing, etc.	65806	64025	63883	63021	58102	58673	58467	56231	53691	52493	51153
Admin. Clerical, Technical	65229	70370	86365	88059	93098	99817	113353	118901	125581	139247	149801
Passenger	169722	164646	163893	161493	148311	143042	145637	149377	148832	145963	144501
Commercial	221339	183527	193855	206217	207540	205293	213092	211307	213804	220206	226290
Power & Engineering	300724	248376	263935	250966	255673	267291	271694	260203	268956	279103	278407
Automotive	NA	78509	83594	86165	165561	170549	172811	163601	175860	190983	193458
Building, etc.	50831	52153	55613	52838	56429	58258	61242	64207	71901	75929	75055
Building crafts	14055	12943	13192	12515	12842	11476	13251	12615	12886	13290	14405
Public services	100664	124763	140172	145821	156484	166391	174892	188846	199767	210955	224225
Food, Drink & Tobacco	25988	148983	173403	172198	181292	185399	195920	199878	209272	225433	231796
Chemical Oil Refining	69935	118971	121144	126978	128952	131017	141621	137450	138025	144391	145494
General Workers	328844	201312	216733	213584	216886	223699	230016	227017	243532	256779	269845
Textile Workers		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Agricultural & Allied Workers		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Civil Air Transport		included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS
Retired members	35731	38049	37512	37213	38127	36584	36846	37099	37361	36916	36984
Free Cards	24637	24980	25392	26066	26937	28007	28466	29433	30366	31050	31404
Total	1473505	1531607	1638686	1643134	1746234	1785496	1857308	1856165	1929834	2022738	2072818

TGWU- Annual membership figures by trade group 1979-1989

Trade Group	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Docks Waterways, Fishing	48126	44554	40132	35541	32663	30628	28895	28218	27275	26020	23827
Admin. Clerical Technical	158622	146803	129357	119189	115037	110990	109099	105607	103506	96997	93093
Passenger	140373	128794	120044	114783	112452	110310	106622	98439	97247	92560	91900
Commercial	233105	208172	185800	171601	167525	160911	152010	143584	139313	136111	131100
Power & Engineering	276392	241348	208285	182511	166970	157784	149074	147483	142146	134744	133946
Automotive	188881	168612	148429	131104	119268	110252	105895	100142	97092	97110	99094
Building, etc.	74564	65877	59074	52635	49937	48045	45407	43790	44814	43913	42052
Building crafts	14195	13179	11735	9895	10570	9487	9109	8446	8768	9585	9279
Public services	230448	228025	215645	199149	194813	159096	153794	148707	141883	134850	125849
Food, Drink & Tobacco	233504	208551	190778	159212	160974	155261	150731	143378	139244	131757	128689
Chemical Oil Refining	140984	125060	110830	100437	93240	90290	87153	83688	80716	80233	77471
General Workers	277805	237953	205133	155856	145388	139015	129525	124765	127081	126319	123264
Textile Workers	NA	NA	not existing	60000	51294	54506	52671	49228	48914	49275	46661
Agricultural & Allied Workers	NA	NA	not existing	70000	53232	48746	45355	41322	40476	40603	36570
Civil Air Transport	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	included in PS	31940	34739	35713	36849	37597	35989
Retired members	37590	37923	36725	35313	35926	33359	32664	32735	29830	30435	27435
Free Cards	31697	32120	33851	35765	38154	39935	41262	42699	43558	44744	44557
Total	2086281	1886971	1695818	1632991	1547443	1490555	1434005	1377944	1348712	1312853	1270776

TGWU- Annual membership figures by trade group 1990-1999

Trade Group	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Docks, Waterways, Fishing, etc.	20560	17820	16410	14425	13674	12185	11648	11523	11216	10935
Admin. Clerical, Technical	91941	88311	83641	77322	72451	70210	67733	74240	72839	72544
Passenger	89927	82633	80505	76963	75795	76275	76381	76007	77957	80309
Commercial	126859	116424	103551	89984	85817	80655	78300	78027	77020	76305
Power & Engineering	125186	108154	95794	84798	80115	81417	77519	74.302	72807	69133
Automotive	97739	85800	77148	71011	71384	74427	74889	72616	72187	66623
Building, etc.	40684	36697	28495	22612	19401	17885	16837	16980	17670	18153
Building crafts	7832	8177	5436	3863	3515	3470	3483	3446	3352	3669
Public services	120096	116908	110785	101550	96642	94934	95504	94236	93738	94211
Food, Drink & Tobacco	124295	115757	107022	98520	94524	90888	90108	91435	93154	95304
Chemical Oil Refining	75543	68976	64331	59030	55045	53266	51845	50646	49988	47039
General Workers	117896	99880	89990	80254	78126	75646	74580	74732	73465	76535
Textile Workers	41344	37622	34055	31206	30475	29041	28095	26456	24.081	21.516
Agricultural & Allied Workers	35134	33222	30507	26997	25666	24038	23187	21776	21451	21091
Civil Air Transport	35784	34668	35437	35169	35454	37367	39765	38676	42923	44020
Retired members	31456	33209	30366	31882	32433	31416	30662	28432	27640	25386
Free Cards	41615	42373	43113	43521	43306	43430	44133	47827	50137	51571
Total	1223891	1126631	1036586	949107	913823	896550	884669	881357	881625	874343

Year	Total membership
1961	1357521
1962	1369718
1963	1412603
1964	1464663
1965	1481565
1966	1465662
1967	1439288
1968	1473505
1969	1531607
1970	1638686
1971	1643134
1972	1746234
1973	1785496
1974	1857308
1975	1856165
1976	1929834
1977	2022738
1978	2072818
1979	2086281
1980	1886971
1981	1695818
1982	1632991
1983	1547443
1984	1490555
1985	1434005
1986	1377944
1987	1348712
1988	1312853
1989	1270776
1990	1223891
1991	1126631
1992	1036586
1993	949107
1994	913823
1995	896550
1996	884669
1997	881357
1998	881625
1999	871514

Appendix 3. Methodological notes and reflection

These reflective notes consider the different methodological choices and their justifications for the research presented in this thesis. They are divided in four parts. Firstly, there is an exploration of case study research, considering the advantages and disadvantages it provides for research in politics. Additionally, this section allows me to offer a methodological justification for the case study I have chosen. The second part focuses on qualitative research as they are the main methods used in this thesis. In particular, I focus on archival research, qualitative interviews and observation. Finally, I present a reflection on the relationship between the researcher and the researched based around my own experience of conducting research in this topic.

Case study

For this thesis I have chosen to study the Liverpool dockers' dispute 1995-98 as a case study. The research question focuses on how workers articulate solidarity in an age of economic restructuring and political deregulation. The question is then dissected into different aspects in order to be able to provide an answer which is able to consider all the different variables. In this case, the experience of restructuring and deregulation in a particular industry, together with the pattern of trade union renewal as well as the actual experience of workplace and/or community relationships may or may not lead to different political articulations of solidarity.

The reason why it may present a challenge is in the distinction between case study and history. In this particular case, there is a very fine line. According to Yin "histories are the preferred method when there is virtually no access or control. The distinctive contribution of the historical method is in dealing with the 'dead' past – that is, when no relevant persons are alive to report, even retrospectively, what occurred and when an investigator must rely on primary

documents, secondary documents, and cultural and physical artefacts as the main sources of evidence. Histories can, of course, be […] about contemporary events; in this situation, the method begins to overlap with that of the case study" (2009, p. 11). However, there are two issues that can help distinguish between one method or the other: "The case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events" (Yin 2009, p. 11). In a sense the Liverpool dockers' dispute was "history in the making" (Davies 1996b). Although direct observation of the events studied has been impossible, as they had already happened when I started researching them, I have been able to observe the spaces and social situations in which some of the events occurred.

Qualitative research

As the dispute remained unofficial for the two main trade unions involved, the TGWU and the ITF, records are scant. Furthermore, they are divided between different union officials who may not have deposited them into the relevant archives.

Archival research

"Not all manuscript or printed matter has evidential value: it is the mark of the ignoramus to believe a statement because he sees it in print"
(Webb and Webb 1932, p. 98).

The above quote is a crucial warning for anyone involved in archival research. Although we are concerned about the authenticity and reliability of what someone might tell us orally, we appear to be more readily convinced of something when we see it in some form or another.

I have encountered many different types of documents during my fieldwork. It is important to note, however, that as technology develops and becomes cheaper and easier to use more and more social research will need to deal with a varied repertoire of documents. However, the definition of what makes a document should be made clear. The Webbs have distinguished between two different types of 'written word': documents and literature. A document, in their distinction, "*is an instrument in language which has, as its origin and for its deliberate and express purpose, to become the basis of, or to assist, the activities of an individual, an organisation, or a community*"(Webb and Webb 1932, p. 100, emphasis in the original). On the other hand, literature is "all other contemporaneous writings yielding information as to what purport to be facts, whether such writings originate in the desire for the intellectual, emotional, or artistic self-expression, or for the purpose of describing and communicating to others any real or imagined event." (Webb and Webb, p. 100-101) In this case, I have encountered the following types of documents or literature (listed in no particular order):

(1) Websites

(2) Meeting minutes

(3) Pamphlets

(4) Audio and video recordings

(5) Interview transcripts of the period

(6) Personal diaries

(7) Unpublished manuscripts

(8) Newspapers and magazines

The wide range of documents and literature listed above presents the researcher with many different sources of data as well as many challenges, some common to all types of document. However, there are some specific issues that need to be considered.

Generally, all documentary research suffers from one major pitfall: "there is a shortage of data and […] the researcher has no control over the quantity and form of data" (Platt 1981b, p. 62). This was something I considered carefully. In this case, the Liverpool dockers' dispute, this challenge was magnified. The

dispute had not been considered official by any organisation. The role of the organisations involved had not always been one of which they appear proud today. This means that many records were either never kept, or subsequently destroyed. The dockers themselves collected an archive of the dispute. In addition, the quantity of data I obtained was much larger than I had anticipated. This, together with the variety of documents I obtained, meant that the process of sorting, organising and analysing has presented particular challenges, aggravated by the fact that much of the data has been collected together for the first time by me, rather than by a professional archivist.

There is a problem with which documents survive an event, and therefore, may become available, as noted by Scott (1990): "In order to survive, documents must be 'deposited'. This may be through publication in a form which is itself capable of survival, or by way of storage in a public or private archive or more prosaically in a cardboard box in an attic. Not all documents are deposited in a place in which they are likely to survive, some (e.g. official papers) are destroyed in an incinerator or shredder, others (e.g. personal documents and 'ephemera') may be thrown away, and all are susceptible to accidental destruction or loss. Sometimes deposit is a deliberate, systematic and selective process which results in the survival of an unrepresentative selection […]" (Scott 1990, p. 25). In a dispute such as the one studied here this was indeed a danger I had to be aware of.

In order to identify the validity and reliability of a document Platt offers advice on issues of evidence and proof: "(i) how to establish the authenticity of a document; (ii) whether the relevant documents are available; (iii) problems of sampling; (iv) how to establish the extent to which a document can be taken to tell the truth about what it describes; (v) how to decide what inferences can be made from a document about matters other than the truth of its factual assertions" (Platt 1981a, p. 33) Although this may act as a useful checklist, in the case of the documents I have encountered, they may not always be clear, or important for the research. Instead, the Webbs propose a different way of seeing documents:

"The exact date, authenticity, meaning of the terms used, and even the personal authorship of a document, are matters for research by the historian whether of ancient times or of recent events. In our investigations into comparatively modern social organisation the date, authenticity, and meaning of the terms used are seldom in question, whilst the personal authorship of a document is usually unknown, and in nearly all cases irrelevant to our investigation" (Webb and Webb 1932, p. 105, footnote).

Furthermore, documents cannot be taken at face value. "The interpretative meaning of the document which the researcher aims to produce therefore is, in a very real sense, a tentative and provisional judgement which must be constantly in need of revision as new discoveries and new problems force the researcher to reappraise the evidence" (Scott 1990, p. 35).

For the archival research part of my fieldwork, I visited the Modern Records Centre (MRC) at the University of Warwick. The files consulted can be seen in the tables accompanying the bibliography. I spent three days at the Centre during March 2009. There was very little relevant material, as the only file they had was Bill Morris' file, which was fairly slim (containing just over 20 documents). Their records of the TGWU's Docks and Waterways National Trade Group Committee only had an incomplete set of minutes of their meetings. However, Unite's national transport officer, Graham Stevenson, also allowed me full access to his professional archive at Unite's headquarters in London, where I spent four days. This contained a full set of minutes of the TGWU's Docks and Waterways National Committee from 1985 to 2000, which has proven invaluable. At the time I started my fieldwork, the ITF had not yet deposited their records of the period in the MRC. I was fortunate that the ITF allowed me to see their file on the dispute (a summary of which can be seen in the tables accompanying the bibliography) at their headquarters in London in October 2008, a few weeks before they were sent to the MRC.

Additionally, I have visited three further archives. I visited the TUC Library at the London Metropolitan University in April 2009. I obtained many conference proceedings and trade union reports relevant to the period in their

archives. Also, I visited two local archives in Liverpool. Firstly, the Central Library Archives, where I consulted the two local papers, the *Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Liverpool Echo*, which are held there in microfilm. Secondly, I visited the Merseyside Maritime Museum in the Albert Dock. There, an almost complete collection of *Port News*, the internal newspaper published by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company for its employees, was consulted.

However, these five archival sources did not yield sufficient information due to the unofficial nature of the dispute. Furthermore, many local archival sources have disappeared. A TGWU official in Liverpool informed me that when they moved from Transport House to Jack Jones House, the caretaker destroyed many papers, as they did not have sufficient space to store them in their new premises. Where I was fortunate was in the generosity of many of the participants in the dispute, whether sacked dockers or supporters. I was given extensive copies of their personal archives, including diaries, pictures, video and audio recordings, interview transcripts and a full set of the *Dockers Charter*, the newspaper the dockers published during the dispute. Due to the wide range of documents I have had access to, an assessment of them in terms of how to deal with different sources of data is required.

Websites

Increasingly, political research will use resources which may be available only via websites. The labour movement has been perhaps slower in the use of the internet for many of its activities. However, if anything, the Liverpool dockers' dispute has been considered unique for its use of the internet (Carter, Clegg et al. 2003). From November 1995, two months after the start of the dispute, the dockers' supporters start using the internet as a way of publicising the dispute. This meant that, particularly after the start of international activities in December 1996, the dockers started to see the benefits of using the internet. An impressive archive of the dispute exists online: as different pamphlets, communications, debates emerged they were being posted on Labournet.

Archival material posted on the internet offers a very accessible source of data for researchers, in terms of cost and availability. No travel needs to be organised and expenditure is reduced to a minimum. The materials are available twenty-four hours a day every day, so that no specific time needs to be booked or allocated. However, there are challenges of validity and accessibility. Anyone can post something on the internet. In the case of Labournet this is restricted as only those involved in the project are able to manage its online content. In the case of the Liverpool dockers' dispute only two people were involved in the actual posting of content. Their effort paid off. Labournet contains the largest single organised archive of the dispute.

Accessibility is another issue to bear in mind. Content that is available today may not be available tomorrow. Data posted on websites is costly to maintain, not just in financial terms but also in terms of time. Particularly for unofficial websites (which may be run with very limited funds), the cost involved may mean that they can disappear as quickly as they appeared. In my case, I made sure I printed the complete archive held in Labournet in a Portable Document Format (PDF). Although this involved over two days of work, due to the large amount of material, it ensured that I can access the material regardless of what may happen to the website.

It is important, therefore, to consider present and future accessibility, which can be achieved either by printing the material in paper or by printing it electronically, as I did. Additionally, issues of reliability and validity can be overcome by cross-checking what is found on the internet. For example, Labournet holds many interview transcripts of some rank-and-file dockers' opinions on the dispute. I had the opportunity to interview some of these dockers, who confirmed that those interviews did indeed take place. Similarly, I was able to check other documents or debates as they also existed in other formats.

Nevertheless, there were other materials available on websites relating to the dispute. Many political groups had placed reports on their websites about the dispute. These were more problematic. Whilst Labournet was dedicated exclusively to the reporting of the dispute, almost as a newswire, these other

websites had the objective of analysing the dispute according to their own political aims. The reliability of their information remains questionable. Hence, not all websites offer the same level of validity and reliability. This challenge may be particularly difficult when researching topics outside the orbit of officialdom.

Meeting minutes

I have used many meeting minutes in my research. Primarily, the meeting minutes of the Docks and Waterways National Trade Group of the TGWU during the 1990s have provided me with a useful source of data. I have also relied on the minutes of proceedings of the TGWU Biennial Delegate Conferences and of the House of Commons Select Committee designed to investigate the implications of the dispute for employment (1995). However, these types of documents cannot be taken at face value. Yin reminds us that "documents must be carefully used and should not be accepted as literal recordings of events that have taken place. Few people realize, for instance, that even the 'verbatim' transcripts of official U.S. Congress hearings have been deliberately edited – by the congressional staff and others who may have testified – before being printed in final form" (Yin 2009, p. 103). I am unaware of the extent to which this type of editing has taken place in the documents I have analysed.

Pamphlets

Pamphlets are designed to publicise the struggle and, as such, are highly subjective items of propaganda. This, however, does not mean that they are unusable for political research. In fact, they can yield vast amounts of information into the different conjectures and contingencies of the struggles, of the highs and the lows. The dockers' dispute produced vast amounts of pamphlets. Under the heading of pamphlets, I consider the following documents:

- Press releases produced by the dockers
- Circulars asking for solidarity
- *Dockers Charter*, the newspaper of the sacked dockers, or *The Dart*, the newspaper of the new work force (Drakes), or *The Record*, the TGWU's publication.
- The two booklets produced during the dispute (one from the dockers and another from the Women of the Waterfront), which can be seen in the pictures below.
- Leaflets

In some of these types of material, authorship is clear, in other cases it is not. For example, press releases, circulars, newspapers and booklets are usually signed by a group (often by the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee or the Women of the Waterfront). Leaflets are often unsigned and their authorship is difficult to ascertain. For example, I have obtained a leaflet containing the names and home addresses of the strike-breakers together with insulting nicknames. This leaflet is unsigned and it remains unclear where it may have come from.

Cover page of the booklet produced by the Women of the Waterfront (below):

The Story of the
Women of the Waterfront
Supporting the Sacked Liverpool Dockers

STAND BY OUR MEN
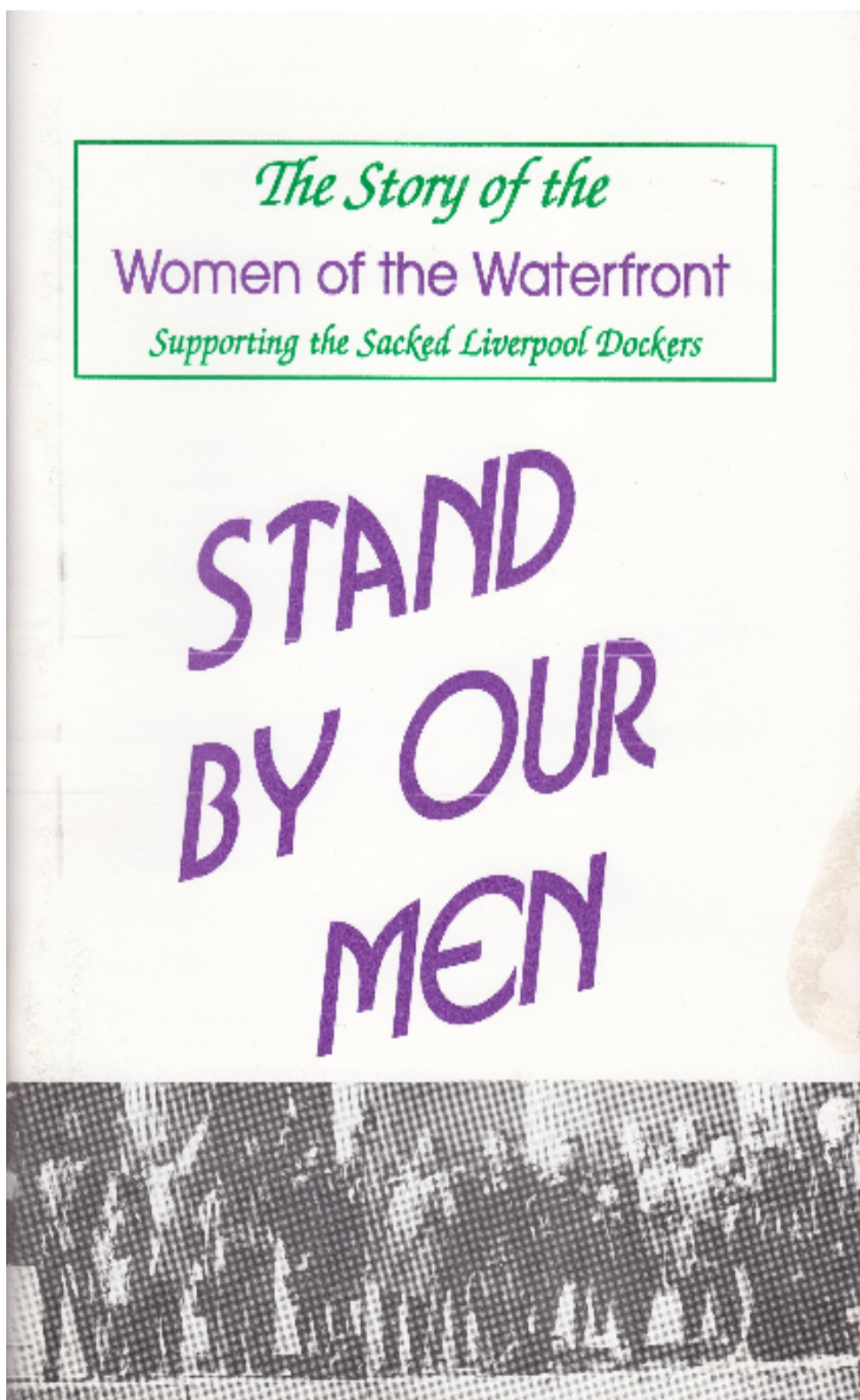
Booklet produced by the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee (below):
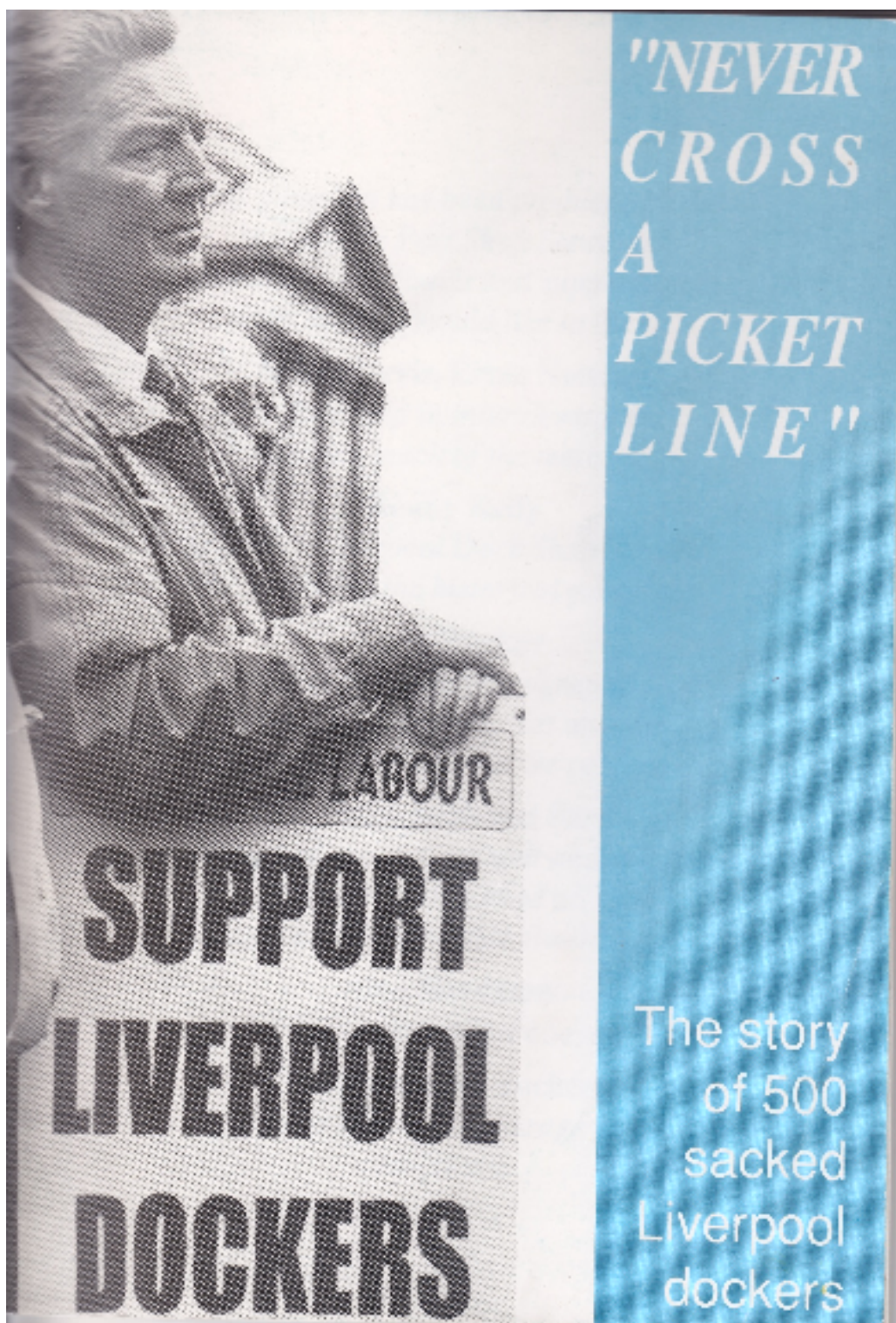
Audio and video recordings

I was given access to over forty recorded audio tapes of mass meetings and interviews of the period. Additionally, I was given eight video tapes of solidarity actions, the TGWU Biennial Delegate Conference debate in 1997 in relation to the dispute, and a tape of the hearing at the House of Commons Select Committee. The first problem I faced was how to operate technology that is now obsolete. I was able to transfer the audio tapes to MP3 files so that I could listen to them from my computer. This was a very time consuming exercise. The video tapes were transferred for me onto DVD discs by the staff at the Alcuin Research Resource Centre (ARRC) at the University of York. The advantage of transferring old formats of recording into new formats is that I am now able to replay the recordings as many times as I need to (as I had to give the originals back).

Interview transcripts of the period

Two members of the Merseyside support group, Greg Dropkin and Bill Hunter, completed many interviews with the sacked dockers during and after the dispute. For both of them the material may have ended up in a book. However, it has not happened. Both of them have given me the transcriptions of these interviews as they will not be completing their projects. I am very grateful for this. The transcriptions have provided me with two advantages. Firstly, I am able to use them to cross check my own interviews. I can check how memory plays a part in people's recollection of something which happened 10 to 15 years ago. I can also check to what extent what someone tells me is part of their own script. People's descriptions of events are often created rather than lived. In some cases I found a situation where the people I interviewed had scripted their memories and, as they were used to being interviewed, they just repeated their script. This proved difficult to overcome at first but, as I will explain later, I managed to do so. The transcriptions of the period helped overcome this as I already knew what

the script was; therefore I was able to prepare my own interviews more effectively.

Secondly, these transcripts give me an insight on how the participants in the dispute analysed the events as they were unfolding. Hindsight, knowing what happened afterwards, and time to assess and re-assess, meant that the responses they provided me with may have been based on a different analysis to the one they made at the time.

Personal diaries

I have been kindly provided with two personal diaries compiled by shop stewards. Mike Carden kept a very thorough set of diaries throughout the dispute with daily entries, which he has made available to me. Terry Teague compiled a list of events as they were unfolding, which included references to what was being published in the media.

Unpublished manuscripts

Additionally, three unpublished manuscripts have been made available to me by the authors, Graham Stevenson, Bill Hunter and Dave Cotterill. The first is a manuscript related to Stevenson's experience as a national officer in the TGWU. The latter two are unpublished manuscripts related to the dockers' dispute, which contained vast amounts of primary material collected during the dispute.

An important newspaper source has been *Lloyd's List*, is a specialist newspaper for the shipping industry, published daily[50] in London and with a global readership. Their role in reporting the dispute, as the main specialised newspaper, should not be underestimated. Apart from providing the most thorough reporting of the dispute besides the website Labournet, it was often seen to be reporting against the interested of the employers. Eric Leatherbarrow, MDHC's communications manager, publicly complained about David Osler's reporting of the dispute in the paper, as one-sided (on the side of the dockers) (Leatherbarrow 10/10/1996). Whether David Osler had sympathies with the dockers' struggle is difficult to ascertain: as the main journalist reporting on the dispute his articles were never too friendly, nor were they full of animosity. It should be understood that the role of *Lloyd's List* is to provide a reliable source of information for the ***shipping industry***, and may sometimes place them in a battle of interests with the ***port management industry***. Associations of port users (mainly formed by ship owners) and port owners or managers often have very different and contradictory short-term interests. In the case of a labour struggle such as this one, the shipping industry felt an undeserving victim (as in the case of the *Neptune Jade* which has been considered in the thesis)

The abundance and ease of access that newspaper reports offer in this case could provide many colourful and interesting quotes by the actors in the event under scrutiny. However, this could easily become a challenge:

> "Apparently, factual reports are frequently compiled from press releases, with journalists checking the basic story and following up one or two points. Such reports invariably include quotes from persons involved in the story – 'Mr X said…' – and a researcher may wish to use these quotes as evidence about the person concerned. But it should not be assumed that those quotes are direct transcriptions of the named person's speech. The conventions governing the

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[50] Please note that *Lloyd's List* does not have a Sunday edition.

press release as a genre require the inclusion of quotes in the text of the release"
(Scott 1990, p. 146).

Bearing that in mind, press materials have been used with care. An initial chronology of the dispute was built using press material obtained by using the news search engine Lexis-Nexis. A chronological list of press articles related to the dispute can be found in the tables accompanying the bibliography.

Qualitative interviews

I have interviewed fifty seven people. The characteristics of the interviews varied greatly. In some cases the interviews were group interviews, where more than one person was being interviewed at the same time. In other cases, the interviews took place over many sittings or sessions. The way in which respondents were chosen was via non-random sample designs, including 'snowball sampling', where my initial contacts recommended other people for me to interview, and a certain degree of 'quota sampling', to ensure I had some representation from all the different groups (Burnham 2004). The sample of the interviews was as follows:

Shop stewards

1 Terry Teague

2 Mike Carden

3 Jimmy Davies

4 Jimmy Nolan

5 Bobby Morton

6 Billy Jenkins

7 Tony Nelson

8 Andy Dwyer

Rank-and-file sacked dockworkers

9 John Jenkins

10 Colin Mitchell

11 Billy Johnson

12 Billy Barrett

13 Tony Weedon

14 Peter Wharton (boatman)

15 Langan family (with Torside son)

16 John Deaves

17 John Farrell (ex-RDW)

18 John (unknown surname)

Women of the Waterfront

19 Cathy Dwyer

20 Sue Mitchell

21 Mary Pendleton

22 Trish (unknown surname)

23 Irene Campbell

24 Doreen McNally

25 Dot Langan

Port workers during and/or after the dispute

26 Drake's employee 1

27 Drake's employee 2

28 Drake's employee 3

29 Drake's employee 4

30 MDHC port operation worker 1

31 MDHC port operation worker 2

32 Boatmen shop steward 1

33 Boatmen shop steward 2

Transport and General Workers Union (relevant officials)

34 Peter Clee

35 Graham Stevenson

36 Eddie Roberts

37 Andrew Murray

38 John Farrell (ex-TGWU)

Employers

39 Drake's senior manager

40 Coastal Containers Ltd ex- senior manager

41 MDHC ex-senior manager

Support groups

42 Simon Pirani (London)

43 Michael Lavalette (Liverpool)

44 Dot Gibson (London)

45 Greg Dropkin (Labournet)

46 Chris Knight (London)

47 Bill Hunter (Liverpool)

48 Steve Higginson (CWU- Liverpool)

49 Dave Cotterill

International support

50 David Cockroft (ITF General Secretary)

51 Frank Leys (ITF Dockers' Secretary)

52 Sarah Finke (ITF Women's Officer)

53 Kees Marges (ex-ITF Dockers' Secretary)

54 Bjorn Borg (President, Swedish Dockworkers Union)

55 Peter Shaw (European Co-ordinator, International Dockworkers Council, IDC)

56 Ray Familathe (International Affairs Director, ILWU)

57 Julian Garcia (ex-president of the Spanish Dockworkers' Union and of the IDC)

The majority of the interviews were recorded with informed consent obtained at the beginning of the interview. They were semi-structured interviews. For the sacked dockworkers, the interviews consisted of four sections. The first section would cover basic information such as the length of time working in the docks, type of job they did there, employer and their relationship with the union. The second section would cover questions in relation to their personal experience of work. Thirdly, I would ask about trade union activities and how they may have changed over time. Finally, I asked them about the dispute and the solidarity networks built around it.

However, this more structured manner of interviewing was only useful during the first few interviews. As I became more familiar with the intricacies of the topic and the actors, my questioning became more specific to the actual person and their specific involvement and role. This distinction becomes evident as the length of the interviews appears to increase with time. Only one of my first ten interviews lasted just over an hour, the other nine were between 20 and 40 minutes long. However, as the research evolved, some interviews would even last four or five hours, and took shape as conversations, where the respondents were also interested in finding out more about my research and findings.

The more an interviewee becomes a directing source towards new evidence or respondents, the more her or his role becomes that of an 'informant'. This is an important distinction made by Yin (2009). Many of my interviewees became informants as they provided me with access to further interviewees as well as material that they had collected during the dispute.

Observation

I had the opportunity to observe three very important settings. First, I visited the Port of Liverpool on three occasions, and each of them involved observation of different aspects of the port. Secondly, I had the opportunity to attend a mass meeting of ex-registered dockworkers at the Dockers Club in Liverpool. Finally, I visited the offices of the three main trade unions or

federations relevant to the research, the Transport and General Workers' Union (their office in Liverpool, their North West office in Salford Quays and their headquarters in London), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF, in London) and the International Dockworkers Council (IDC, in Barcelona). These observations, explained in more detail below, are important as "assuming that the phenomena of interest have not been purely historical, some relevant behaviours or environmental conditions will be available for observation" (Yin 2009, p. 109).

Port of Liverpool

I visited the Port of Liverpool on three occasions. On all three, I had arranged the visit in advance and I was always able to access areas and situations which would have normally been closed. In fact, other researchers that have conducted fieldwork around ports point out how "land-based facilities like ports and dockyards also possess a restricted character, so necessitating good relations with gatekeepers in order to gain access" (Belousov, Horlick-Jones et al. 2007, p. 159). My first visit to the port was in November 2008 with the ITF Port Inspector. I was able to be driven throughout the port (including usually closed areas next to vessels). Additionally, I shadowed a labour inspection of a vessel.

ITF Port Inspectors carry out routine inspections on ships in order to make sure that basic ILO standards are kept for seafarers. The inspections include a visit to the facilities where seafarers live and checking that their wages have been paid, including any overtime they have done. During my visit, the vessel inspected was Greek, with a Polish flag and a Filipino crew. Their work and living conditions were acceptable compared to the pictures I had been shown of previous inspections. I was able, however, to have a brief view into the lives of those who work at sea. This was important as it helped me understand further the different types of workers who meet and work in a port. Having seen the port also helped me relate to the people I was researching as I could identify what they were talking about. The fact that it was a rainy, cold and windy November day also brought home the harshness of the elements that confront those working in a port. I came back cold, wet, with muddy boots and smelling of animal

ferments (one of the main imports going into the Port of Liverpool). It did feel like 'field' work.

Dockers Club

I visited the Dockers Club in Anfield twice, and The Casa, the social centre created by the sacked Liverpool dockers, many times over the course of my research.

Trade Union offices

The analysis of physical space is not something common in Political Science. It is more associated with other disciplines, such as Urban Studies or Geography and it is often overlooked by scholars in our discipline. I only started thinking about it later, during an interview, when the respondent brought up the issue of our location. The process of internal restructuring carried out by the TGWU during the 1990s, which has been analysed in the thesis, involved moving from offices in order to achieve cost-savings. It became evident that location and accessibility of trade union offices had become an issue in all the offices I visited (Liverpool's Jack Jones House, Unite's offices in Salford Quays and Unite's headquarters in London). In all three cases, accessibility to the inside of the building was impossible except by prior appointment. In the first two cases there were issues of limited access by public transport and limited car park facilities.

In this final section I want to offer a personal reflection of the research process. Reflection here means a pedagogical exercise designed to aid analytical consideration of the process as well as offering a transformative view of research. In other words, reflection is an integral part of the research process. Although many research methods textbooks in politics (Burnham 2004) do not give much thought to reflection, with the exception perhaps of ethical considerations, this has not always been the case. In *Methods of Social Study,* the Webbs give due importance to the way in which the researcher engages in the research process.

Firstly, the way in which the research is designed will automatically exclude certain answers, "the very terms in which the question was couched implied an answer of a particular kind, or at least excluded answers of some other kinds, about which we have not been thinking" (Webb and Webb 1932, p. 35). This means that unless the researcher starts with an open mind, rather than a rather narrowing and strict question, many issues will be missed. In other words:

> "let the question to which you wish to find the answer do no more than suggest to you the particular social institution that you will study, and study that completely, irrespective of whether the knowledge of fact that you are gaining seems to bear upon your original question or not. This, in our experience, is the best way, and perhaps the only way, to avoid the danger of exaggerating the importance, or even misinterpreting the significance, of the first 'promising' discoveries that you make, and of failing to recognise others factors against which you have, unconsciously, some prejudice" (Webb and Webb 1932, p. 40-41).

'It's men's talk love'

During my first week in Liverpool, in January 2009, fieldwork was advancing very slowly. From the original help and encouragement received by

one of the shop stewards, it seemed that, during that week, my work was not necessarily top of their agenda. However, for me that was a problem, every day being away from home involved an expenditure I could seldom afford. Hence, after an unsuccessful first day, where I went back to my hostel with no interviews completed or arranged, I was determined that the following days had to be more successful.

By the next day, I had managed to catch another shop steward, unaware of what I was doing at first until I explained myself, and so I completed my first interview. He then provided me with further contact details of other people. Interestingly, however, that pattern would continually follow. Most of the shop stewards would steer me towards interviewing people within their support network, rather than actual sacked dockworkers or even other shop stewards. At that rate, I felt, I would never complete my fieldwork. My first interview, before starting fieldwork properly, had been with Chris Knight. Knight is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of East London and I had interviewed him in October 2008. Knight had been instrumental in the coordination between the Liverpool dockers and Reclaim the Streets during the dispute. Knight had also given me the phone number of two of the shop stewards. One of them was my original gatekeeper. The other had not yet been mentioned by anyone else.

So, I decided to call him. He was very nice and agreed to meet me the next day. Things were looking up for me as the next day was Wednesday and I knew many dockers met on a Wednesday afternoon at the Casa. Besides interviewing him I would have the chance to increase the rather limited list of contacts I had at that point. The interview went well. Afterwards he mentioned he was going to meet 'his mates' (these were a group of sacked dockers sat a few tables away from us). So, I asked if perhaps I could join them so that I could have a chance to talk to them. I was told that it would have been inappropriate for me to join them as they were drinking alcohol and ultimately 'it was men's talk'. That was a further hurdle I had to overcome.

A topic is a topic to the researcher. It may be interesting, it may present a challenging puzzle to existing knowledge or it may bring issues of novelty to the way in which we understand certain concepts. But for those being researched, it is not a topic, it is their lives. No matter how obvious this may sound, it is something we often forget. Whilst I was designing my research strategy, completing the writing of chapters, my research area was just that, a topic. Once I got to Liverpool, reality hit home, and often, in a hard way. I, in a rather naive manner, expected that the people who participated in the events I was studying would also be interested in being studied. I expected that they would be proud of their historical significance. Although many of them are proud, there are few who appear to be able to reconcile the idea of historical significance with that of defeat. And in some cases the idea of defeat takes over the idea of historical significance. In such cases, the reactions to my requests for interviews stood in sharp contrast to the reactions of those who have negotiated the past in a different way. I have been placed in situations where I have felt very uncomfortable as it has been made evident to me that I have intruded in an area of their lives they would rather forget. In such situations, I have retreated promptly, avoiding further upset for the people I have contacted. I have often considered whether I should contact them again, but I have decided that it's best to respect their decision.

A further point which is important to consider is the 'celebrity' status that the dockers had achieved. In 2000, Jimmy McGovern and Irvine Welsh embarked on a project to do a film of the dockers' dispute. Many dockers were involved in the writing of the script, and yet many remain unhappy with the outcome. Often, in my interviews, Jimmy McGovern is quoted as having said 'don't let facts get in the way of a good story', in response to criticisms. As a film-maker, McGovern can afford, and possibly needs, to do so. In my case, entertainment is not the aim. However, this anecdote points towards a danger I soon became aware of. Many of my respondents had told their stories many times, and the stories may have got 'better' with time. The interview transcripts

that I had from Bill Hunter and Greg Dropkin, mentioned earlier, helped me identify such situations. Why let the truth get in the way of a good story?

A double-edged sword – Barcelona

A researcher cannot act as an external entity with almost no identity. Instead, who we are, where we are from, how old we are and how we look will affect the way in which we are perceived. This became evident during my fieldwork. It is not something I had given much thought to before I went to Liverpool, however, I do believe it affected the way in which the people I was researching interacted with me.

Dockworkers are usually part of close knit communities with strong 'occupational cultures' (Turnbull 1992). Additionally, 'scousers' appear to have a strong sense of difference and prize their difference as part of their identity. The dockers' culture is also a very 'macho' culture, set around hard physical work, heavy drinking and sports (usually football and/or boxing). I did not fit into any of the three. I was not part of their community, not just geographically, but occupationally. Many of the people who are engaged in oral history around Liverpool, and who the dockers are used to meet for interviews, have family links to their community. This was not the case for me. The first time I visited a working port was in November 2008, in Liverpool, as I mentioned earlier.

However, the two factors I thought would be my major obstacles, being a foreigner and a woman, actually helped. The summer before starting fieldwork (2008) I visited the headquarters of the International Dockworkers Council which are in my home city, Barcelona. I had arranged to meet Julian Garcia, the ex-president, and a man who had known the Liverpool dockers since the 1980s. Going to Liverpool after that meant that I was received positively, with positivity increasing the more they knew where I was from. Also, for example, being a woman also, eventually, allowed me to go to the pub with the dockers without drink being an issue, I was not expected to drink with them.

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Additional bibliographical materials (archival sources)

Documents consulted at the Modern Records Centre (MRC) – University of Warwick

Collection	Section	Series	Document Reference	Title
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	*The Record*	MSS.126/TG/ 193/1/75	T&G Record
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	*The Record*	MSS.126/TG/ 193/1/75	
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	*The Record*	MSS.126/TG/ 193/1/77	T&G Record
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	*The Record*	MSS.126/TG/ 193/1/77	T&G Record
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	*The Record*	MSS.126/TG/ 193/1/77	T&G Record
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	*The Record*	MSS.126/TG/ 193/1/77	T&G Record
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	*The Record*	MSS.126/TG/ 193/1/77	T&G Record
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	*The Record*	MSS.126/TG/ 193/1/77	T&G Record
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/1	Papers re end of dispute
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/2	Correspondence with Members of Parliament

Collection	Section	Series	Document Reference	Title
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/3/1/4/3	Correspondence with British trade unions and associated bodies
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/3/1/4/4	Correspondence with foreign trade unions and associated bodies
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/3/1/4/5	Papers re end of dispute
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/3/1/4/6	Press releases
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/3/1/4/7	Press cuttings
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/3/1/4/8	ITF circulars and correspondence
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/3/1/4/9	Mersey Docks and Harbour Company offers to sacked dock workers
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/3/1/4/10	General Executive Council Papers

Collection	Section	Series	Document Reference	Title
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/11	Transcripts of BBC Merseyside pieces on dispute
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/12	Regional Secretaries' Meeting papers, 10 January 1997
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/13	Bill Morris' letter to *The Guardian*
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/14	Papers and correspondence re KPMG and the proposed labour supply organisation
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/15	'Setting the Record Straight'
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/16	Pension arrangements for sacked dockers
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/17	Press cuttings re riots at London protest march, 12 April 1997
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/18	Correspondence re meetings with Mersey Docks and Harbour Company

Collection	Section	Series	Document Reference	Title
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/19	Draft KPMG report on the viability of a labour supply organisation in the port of Liverpool
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/20	Draft General Executive Council statement on Liverpool Docks
Papers of Bill Morris, Lord Morris of Handsworth, OJ (b.1938), trade union leader	Subject Files	Transport and General Workers' Union affairs	MSS.126/BM/ 3/1/4/21	Solidarity action: including correspondence with sacked Liverpool dockers
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	Docks and Waterways National Trade Group Committee	MSS.126/TG/ 820/1/13	Minutes (incomplete)
Miscellaneous Series	NA	NA	MSS.21/3446	Liverpool Dockers Support Movement: circulated documents
GCHQ Trade Union Campaign	Subject Files	NA	MSS.384/3/61	Solidarity action: including correspondence with sacked Liverpool dockers
Transport and General Workers' Union	Central Office Papers	Docks and Waterways National Trade Group Committee	MSS.126/TG/ 820/1/12	Minutes

Documents in the ITF archive on the Liverpool dockers' dispute

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
16/01/1996	Circular	Letter regarding the situation	Kees Marges (ITF Dockers Secretary)	To all Dock Workers' Affiliates	Circular No: 15.D.3/1996
23/01/1996	Email	Regarding a phone conversation between Bill Morris and Kees Marges	Kees Marges	David Cockroft	
30/01/1996	Fax	Thanking ITF inspectors	Jim Nolan	Kees Marges	
29/05/1996	Fax	Fund raising visits	Jim Nolan	General	
04/06/1996	Fax	Regarding a letter from the ILWU and the ILA requesting ITF's action	Mark Dickinson	John Connolly (National Officer, Docks and Waterways, TGWU)	SSD/AMD/E JT1203
07/06/1996	Fax	International Update	Jim Nolan	General	
12/06/1996	Letter	Regarding solidarity action taken by the ITF	D. Cockroft	Brian McWilliams (ILWU President)	SSD/DC/AM D/1235
12/06/1996	Letter	Liverpool Dockworkers International Support request	Jim Nolan	General	
12/06/1996	Fax	Notifying the ITF that the dockers' union in Oslo has transferred NOK 5000 to the Liverpool Dockers	Oslo Bryggearbeide res Forening	ITF	
19/06/1996	Letter	Regarding solidarity action taken by the ITF	D. Cockroft	John Bower (ILA President)	SSD/DC/AM D/1259
21/06/1996	Letter by Fax	Request to address the dockers' section of the ITF in the ITF's 100 years celebration conference	Jim Nolan	Kees Marges	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
24/06/1996	News story and update	Regarding ACL's withdrawal from the Port of Liverpool			
24/06/1996	Fax with news stories	Fax with 2 news stories sent to Cockroft before checking in at the Hotel Palace in Brussels	ITF House	David Cockroft	
10/07/1996	Email	Email regarding legal procedures against the ILA from the MDHC	Kees Marges	Katharine Reedy (ITF)	
11/07/1996	Circular	From the ITF to its affiliates requesting financial support for the Liverpool Dockers	To ITF Affiliates Organising Dockers and Seafarers	Kees Marges & Mark Dickinson	Circular No.: 152/D.29/S.5 4/1996
19/07/1996	Fax (date guessed)	Thank you for generosity and practical solidarity	Jim Nolan	Bro. David (?)	
24/07/1996	Letter by Fax	Arranging a visit to Belgium by the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards	Mark Dickinson (ITF Assistant General Secretary)	Fons Geeraets (President BTB)	ssd/ amd/ 1332
01/08/1996	Letter	Concern regarding some of the Liverpool Dockers' international activities	D. Cockroft	Bill Morris	
15/08/1996	Notification of financial aid	SEKO (Swedish union) has paid 1000 pounds into an account following ITF's circular No. 152/D.29/S.54/SS.19/1 996, in solidarity with the Liverpool dockers	Lars-Göran Holmgren (SEKO's National Secretary)	ITF	
21/08/1996	Fax - Press release	International Conference - 31 August to 1 September	Jim Nolan		
28/08/1996	Fax	Attached is a news story from Labournet (7 August 1996) critical of the ITF	D. Cockroft	Bill Morris	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
28/08/1996	Letter by Fax	Examples of the difficulties ITF affiliates are facing in their own ports	D. Cockroft	Bill Morris	
03/09/1996	Letter by Fax	Resolutions (x2) passed at the Liverpool Dock Workers' International Conference 31 August to 1 September 1996	Jim Nolan	Kees Marges	Resolutions attached
05/09/1996	Email	ITF tries to sabotage Mersey conference	Richard Flint FWD from Chris Bailey (Labournet)	Kees Marges	
05/09/1996	Email	Report on Dockers Conference	Labournet	Forwarded within ITF	
09/09/1996	Email	Giving the MDHC address and the fax number of the port operations managers	Mark Dickinson	Joan Hannah	
10/09/1996	Circular	Explaining the situation in Liverpool and requesting letters of solidarity to be sent to the MDHC	D. Cockroft	To all affiliated organisations	Circular No.: 186/ A.26 (1996)
18/09/1996	Fax/Letter	To the MDHC requesting the reinstatement of the sacked dockers	Shoshiro Nakanishi (President, All Japan Seamen's Union)	Gordon Wadell (Chairman of MDHC)	
18/09/1996	Fax	From Bob Baete with a fax he received the previous day from the sacked dockers	Bob Baete (National Secretary "Ports" Belgische Transportarbeidersbond)	D. Cockroft & Kees Marges	
25/09/1996	Email	Liverpool dockers and ITF, mention of Bob Baete	Kees Marges	D. Cockroft	
26/09/1996	International update	International solidarity w/ Liverpool dockers - from Antwerp and Zeebrugge	Jim Nolan	Sent as a fax from 01512070696 to the ITF	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
27/09/1996	Fax	Four letters supporting the Liverpool dockers from: Christian Trade Union for Transport and Diamond Workers in Antwerp (CVD), the Association of Flight Attendants based in Washington DC, the Asociacion Argentina de Aeronavegantes and the Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railwaymen's Union	Kees Marges	Bill Morris	D\F:\lorna\ks \27-9.1
27/09/1996	Email	ITF Inspector called Jack requests time off to help out Liverpool dockers, not allowed	Kees Marges	D. Cockroft	
27/09/1996	Email	Regarding Bob Baete and Bill Morris	Kees Marges	D. Cockroft	
28/09/1996	Article cutting		*Lloyd's List* article		
01/10/1996	Fax	Call for a negotiated solution	Randall Howard (General Secretary TGWU S.A.)	The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company	
03/10/1996	Set of letters	Response to circular 186/A.26 (1996)	Brian McWilliams (President ILWU)	David Cockroft	
05/10/1996	Article cutting	About recent demo in Liverpool	Socialist Worker		
09/10/1996	Email	Internal email (not v interesting)	Joan Hannah	David Cockroft	
09/10/1996	Letter	Morris thanks Baete for his support to the dockers and explains situation	Bill Morris	Bob Baete	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
10/10/1996	Article cutting	Letter to the editor complaining about the way David Osler has been reporting the dispute	Eric Leatherbarrow (Communications Manager MDHC)	*Lloyd's List* editor	
15/10/1996	Set of letters	European section of the ITF removing support, but at the same time sent a letter to the MDHC supporting international action and urging a negotiated settlement	Executive Board (W. Waleson, chairman) Vervoers Bond FNV	Terry Teague, another letter to MDHC another to Kees Marges	
21/10/1996	Fax	Letter from Nolan to Bill Morris regarding the ITF and the TGWU	Jim Nolan	Bill Morris	
21/10/1996	Fax	Fax containing a letter from the MDHC to international unions expressing support to the dockers	G. Mocho Rodriguez (Asociación Argentina Aeronavegantes)	Stuart Howart (ITF)	
21/10/1996	Letter	Letter from the MDHC to unions offering support to the dockers	P. T. Furlong (MDHC Managing director & Chief Executive)	J. Smeets Esq. (General Secretary, Vervoers Bond FNV)	
22/10/1996	Fax & email	Visit from Bowers to Britain, dockers request Kees to be in some meetings, frictions appear evident in ITF's internal email	Kees Marges & Jim Nolan	John Bowers & David Cockroft	
28/10/1996	Statement	Arhus dockers request the ITF to be more active in supporting the dockers	John Nielsen (Chairman of the General Assembly)	ITF	
28/10/1996	Statement	TGWU offering its commitment to "unfettered negotiations"	Graham Stevenson	David Cockroft	
29/10/1996	Letter & Cheque	Cheque for $7500 from CAW-TCA Canada	Jim O'Neil (CAW)	David Cockroft	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
30/10/1996	Letter	Thank you for a $7500 donation from CAW-TCA Canada	Jim Davies	L. Frampton	
30/10/1996	Letter	Thank you for a $2000 donation from the Federation of Transport Petroleum & Agricultural Workers	Jim Davies	T. Thomas	
02/11/1996	Fax	Request to receive more up-to-date information	Kees Marges	Bill Morris & Graham Stevenson	
07/11/1996	Letter	Contacting the ITF regarding Baete	Graham Stevenson	David Cockroft	
20/11/1996	Email	Set of emails regarding a move towards a more political organisation of dockworkers	Kees Marges	ITF affiliates (& particularly UGT)	
22/11/1996	Letter	Important letter explaining the ITF's position	David Cockroft	Tom Dufresne (President Canadian Area ILWU)	DC/jh
26/11/1996	Letter		Richard Flint	Bob Baete (Belgium) & Manfred Rosenberg (Germany)	RJF/agf/Press corresponde ce - Liverpool dispute
27/11/1996	Letter		Richard Flint	Alan Rusbridger (editor of *The Guardian*)	RJF/agf/Press corresponde ce - Liverpool dispute
29/11/1996	Letter		Jim Nolan	Bill Morris	
29/11/1996	Letter		Jim Nolan	Bob Baete	
02/12/1996	Set of letters	Bob Baete contacting the ITF	Bob Baete (BTB)	David Cockroft	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
02/12/1996	Set of letters	Nakamura contacting the ITF	Masahiko Nakamura (Representative ITF Japanese office)	Kees Marges	MN
03/12/1996	Set of letters	Correspondence between Morris and Nolan	Bill Morris	Jim Nolan	
03/12/1996	Set of letters	Correspondence between TGWU and Turkish unions regarding TGWU's support for the dockers	Bill Morris	Kenan Kaya (Press Publishing Graphical and Packing Workers' Trade Union of Turkey)	
03/12/1996	Email	Internal ITF email	Kees Marges	Sarah Finke and Richard Flint	
03/12/1996	Set of letters	Response to Jimmy Nolan	Bill Morris	Kees Marges	
03/12/1996	Set of letters		Graham Stevenson	David Cockroft	
03/12/1996	Documents		Graham Stevenson	David Cockroft	
03/12/1996	Email	The BBC and Dutch RTL broadcasted a report on Liverpool	Kees Marges	Sarah Finke and Richard Flint	
03/12/1996	Set of letters	TGWU's position	Bill Morris	Kees Marges	
04/12/1996	Email	Email about Graham Stevenson	Kees Marges	Sarah Finke and Richard Flint	
04/12/1996	Fax	Fax about the TGWU	Sarah Finke	David Cockroft	
04/12/1996	Email	Email with several email reports	Richard Flint	Joan Hannah	
05/12/1996	Fax and letter	Fax from Bob Baete with a fax he received the previous day from the sacked dockers	Bob Baete (BTB)	David Cockroft	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
05/12/1996	Fax	The TGWU requests a copy of the ITF letter sent to their affiliates	Graham Stevenson	Kees Marges	
05/12/1996	Fax	An attached anonymous remit from 'Region 1', asking for solidarity for the Liverpool dockers	Graham Stevenson	Kees Marges	
05/12/1996	Fax	Confirming the ITF's support of the dockers	David Cockroft & Kees Marges	Dockers' Affiliates and ITF Inspectors	
05/12/1996	Press release	ITF backs day of action	Richard Flint	Press release	
05/12/1996	Fax	Request from the ITF to the TGWU to check a fax before they send it off	Sarah Finke	Graham Stevenson	
05/12/1996	Fax	Calling on unions to support the international day of action	David Cockroft & Kees Marges	Certain Dockers' Affiliates	
06/12/1996	Circular	Encouraging unions to act on the day of action	Mark Dickinson (ITF)	ITF Inspectors & Co-ordinators	Circular n: 246/SS.42/1996
06/12/1996	Fax	Change to the date of the international day of action	Sarah Finke	Dockers' Affiliates	
07/12/1996	News clipping	Bill Morris' response in *The Guardian* to John Pilger			
09/12/1996	Email	Internal ITF email about Bill Morris, and *The Guardian* article	David Cockroft	Mark Dickinson, Sarah Finke, Richard Flint, Kees Marges	
10/12/1996	Email	Email (missing first page) about the issues between the British left and the dockers			
10/12/1996	News clipping	News story about British left and the dockers			

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
10/12/1996	Letter by fax	Thanking the ITF	Jim Nolan	David Cockroft	
12/12/1996	Letter by fax	Thanks to the ITF and a call for support in the January 1997 day of action	Jim Nolan	David Cockroft	
18/12/1996	International update	The final position on negotiations	Jim Nolan		
14/01/1997	Fax	Liverpool international day of action 20/01/1997	M. Chaffart, Secretary of CVD (Belgium Union)	D. Cockroft	
05/10/1997	News clipping and post-it	News story in *The Observer* by Jimmy McGovern			
09/10/1997	Letter	From Thamesport explaining they are not owned by MDHC and requesting all action against them to be stopped	Derek Peters (Thamesport Director)	David Cockroft	
09/10/1997	Letter by Fax	From the National Council of Dockers' Unions of Japan (Zenkoku-kowan) advising they will boycott the *Neptune Jade* in solidarity with Liverpool	Tetsuya Sakano (Chairman of Zenkoku-Kowan)	Merseyside Shop Stewards Committee, cc: Kees Marges	
09/10/1997	Letter by Fax and Post	Thamesport is worried about the action being taken 'around the world' against the *Neptune Jade*.	Mr Derek Peters (Director, Thamesport)	David Cockroft	
13/10/1997	Set of letters	File containing set of letters from TGWU, MDHC and the agreed offer sent to dockers to ballot	Mr Furlong (MDHC)	Bill Morris	
13/10/1997	Email	Explanation of the ITF's position regarding the boycotting of *Neptune Jade*	Kees Marges	Japanese email address, addressed to Mike	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
13/10/1997	Email	Regarding the Japanese boycott of the *Neptune Jade*	David Cockroft	Kees Marges	
13/10/1997	Email	Further explanation regarding the *Neptune Jade*	David Cockroft	Kees Marges	
14/10/1997	Facsimile	Letter from Thamesport requesting the ITF to stop Japanese dockworkers from boycotting the *Neptune Jade*	Derek Peters (Thamesport Director)	David Cockroft	
14/10/1997	Letters	Exchange of letters between the ITF and the ILWU, the ILWU complaints that no mention has been made of the Liverpool dispute in the ITF email bulletin, the ITF apologises and blames it on the TGWU	Brian McWilliams (ILWU)	David Cockroft	
14/10/1997	Letters	Exchange of letters between Thamesport and the ITF regarding the boycotting of *Neptune Jade* in Japan			
14/10/1997	Email	Regarding the boycott, it says that there were two Liverpool guys in Japan	David Cockroft	Kees Marges	
16/10/1997	Email	From Japan regarding boycott action of the *Neptune Jade*	Unknown (but from Japan)	David Cockroft	Sender: QWK11030 @niftyserve. or.jp
20/10/1997	Email	Cockroft has become aware the Liverpool dockers are planning to meet the ITF and he is not aware of it, as it would require the agreement of Bill Morris	David Cockroft	Jim Nolan	
20/10/1997	International update	The TGWU has 'imposed' a ballot, not including Torside	Jim Nolan	International supporters	

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
23/10/1997	Update	Ballot refusing MDHC's offer	Jim Nolan	International supporters	
28/10/1997	International update	Report of international solidarity action in Dublin	Jim Davies		
16/12/1997	International update	Request for international solidarity after a failed attempt at ending the dispute	Jim Nolan	International supporters	
27/01/1998	Fax	Letter from Morris to Cockroft explaining the dispute has ended	Bill Morris	D. Cockroft	
28/01/1998	Letters	Two letters, first from Morris to Cockroft, then back, explaining the Liverpool Dispute has ended	Bill Morris to Cockroft	Reply back	WM RC LRD & DC/jh
28/01/1998	Fax	From John Bowen (ILA) to the ITF containing the stoppage leaflet produced by the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards	John Bowen (ILA)	D. Cockroft	
29/01/1998	Circular	Circular explaining that the Liverpool dispute has ended	D. Cockroft and Kees Marges	All ITF affiliated unions representing Seafarers and Dockers	Circular Nº 22/S.6/D.5/1 998
17/03/1998	Fax	Fax with the ILO petition	Russ Bargmann (ILWU)	D. Cockroft	
01/04/1998	Email	From David Cockroft to the ILWU explaining why he doesn't think presenting a complaint to the ILO is such a good idea politically	D. Cockroft	Russ Bargmann (ILWU)	
14/04/1998	Fax	ILWU informing the Liverpool dockers that they will not be submitting an ILO complaint as they are unable to do so	Brian McWilliams (ILWU)	Jim Nolan and Bobby Morton (MPSS)	BMCW/lk (ncng52)

Date	Type of document	Explanation	From	To	Reference number/ Subject line
Unknown	Handwritten note	Note with a phone number from Sean Woods (Radio Liverpool) who wants an interview with the ITF			
Unknown	List of phone numbers	List of TGWU officials' phone numbers			

Lexis-Nexis news articles related to the Liverpool dockers' dispute 1995-98

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
30/09/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey strikers sacked after dispute closes terminals**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
02/10/1995	**Press Association**	Home News	**Dockers in Picket Protest**	Mark Thomas, PA News
02/10/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Liverpool dockers step up action**	Dick Rooney
03/10/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool port strikers reject new contracts**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent and Dick Rooney
04/10/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey dockers seek settlement**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
06/10/1995	**Press Association**	Home News	**Striking Dockers Sacked**	Mark Thomas, PA News
06/10/1995	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 1B	**Liverpool row forces lines to use other ports**	Janet Porter, Journal of Commerce Staff
11/10/1995	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Home Page, pg. 11	**Docks battle men to meet**	Martyn Halsall
11/10/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool dockers deadlock**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
18/10/1995	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 8B	**Maritime Briefs**	Wire and Staff Reports
24/10/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Mersey recruits new workforce**	Dick Rooney
31/10/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Liverpool suspends ro-ro decision**	Dick Rooney
04/11/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 8	**Labour hits out at Mersey dispute**	Dick Rooney
09/11/1995	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 12B	**Liverpool under scrutiny as some lines plan to re-turn**	Janet Porter, *Journal of Commerce* Staff

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
03/12/1995	*The Independent*	Britain, Pg. 7	**Pickets' last stand in Liverpool docks; A bitter industrial dispute reminiscent of the 1970s is being played out by the Mersey**	Decca Aitkenhead
07/12/1995	**Press Association**	Home News	**Untitled**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
07/12/1995	**PR Newswire Europe**	General and City News	**T and G demands talks over Mersey Docks Dispute**	Unknown
07/12/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Letter to the Editor: The facts of the Mersey Docks dispute**	Eric Leatherbarrow, Communications manager at the MDHC
08/12/1995	*The Guardian*	Home Page, pg. 4	**News in brief: TGWU support for Liverpool Dockers**	Seumas Milne
08/12/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Union calls for talks on sacked Mersey dockers**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
10/12/1995	*Manchester Guardian Weekly*	UK News, Pg. 10	**Dockers make last stand**	Martyn Halsall
11/12/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Mersey Docks faces fresh union action**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
13/12/1995	*The Independent*	News, Pg. 6	**Unions flex their muscles in pay disputes**	Barrie Clement, Labour Editor
13/12/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool threat over jobs**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
17/12/1995	**Press Association**	Home News	**Bid to end port dispute**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
19/12/1995	**Press Association**	Home News	**Dockers dispute talks adjourned**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
20/12/1995	*The Guardian*	The Guardian City Page, Pg. 17	**Flying pickets chase ships by plane; Workface/Dock workers step up casual labour dispute**	Seumas Milne

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
21/12/1995	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 6B	**NY, Montreal, Sydney Dockworkers rally in support of fired Liverpudlians workers target 5 lines resuming calls at UK port**	Janet Porter & Alan Abrams
22/12/1995	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 1B	**ACL pressed to support dockers fired in Liverpool ship line says it may leave European port**	Janet Porter & Alan Abrams
29/12/1995	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**ACL in threat to pull out of Mersey over docks dispute**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
09/01/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Fresh attempt to solve Liverpool docks dispute**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
10/01/1996	**Press Association**	Home News	**Sacked dockers picket port**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
11/01/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 1B	**Liverpool dockers accelerate campaign for global support**	Journal of Commerce Staff
11/01/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey dockers picket Sheerness**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
16/01/1996	**Extel Examiner**	Company News; Other	**Mersey Docks does not expect loss of ACL business: spokesman**	Unknown
17/01/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Mersey Docks**	Carl Mortished
17/01/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 1B	**Maritime Briefs**	Wire and Staff Reports
19/01/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 16	**ACL leaves Mersey Docks in suspense**	Andrew Guest, Marine Industries Correspondent
20/01/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Major raps sacked Liverpool dockers**	James Brewer
22/01/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 3B	**New Owner puts Thamesport back on the map in the United Kingdom**	Janet Porter, Journal of Commerce Staff
25/01/1996	**Press Association**	Home News	**Sacked dockers cash offer 'final'**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
25/01/1996	**London Stock Exchange Aggregated Regulatory News Service (ARNS)**	Trading statement	**Mersey Docks. Statement re Industrial Dispute, etc.**	MDHC
25/01/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey move**	Unknown
26/01/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Mersey dockers given final offer**	Carl Mortished
26/01/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Mersey docks**	Carl Mortished
27/01/1996	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* City Page, Pg. 36	**Liverpool Docks Strikers reject peace proposal**	Martyn Halsall
30/01/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 1B	**Fired Liverpool Dockworkers to vote on compensation offer**	Journal of Commerce Staff
31/01/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Sacked dockers set to reject Mersey offer**	John Prescott
08/02/1996	**Press Association**	Home News	**Docks deadlock as workers reject peace offer**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
08/02/1996	**Extel Examiner**	Company News; Other	**Mersey Docks & Harbour says regrets union's rejection of payments package**	Unknown
09/02/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Mersey Docks shares fall as offer is rejected**	Unknown
09/02/1996	*The Independent*	News, Pg. 2	**Docks dispute**	Unknown
09/02/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool dockers reject offer on payoff**	John Prescott
13/02/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Maritime, Pg. 1B	**Liverpool dockers seek ILA support**	Journal of Commerce Staff
13/02/1996	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Features Page, Pg. 17	**At last, a break in the storm against unions**	Paul Foot
13/02/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	**Liverpool dockers in port blockade plan**	John Prescott

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
15/02/1996	**London Stock Exchange Aggregated Regulatory News Service (ARNS)**	1995 Preliminary Results	**Mersey Docks. Final results**	MDHC
16/02/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Mersey Docks**	Carl Mortished
16/02/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Port dispute sees Mersey Docks slip**	Martin Barrow
16/02/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Front, Pg. 1A	**Liverpool dockers push global boycott**	Janet Porter, Journal of Commerce Staff
16/02/1996	*The Independent*	The investment column	**Mersey sails through strife**	Tom Stevenson
16/02/1996	*The Daily Mail*		**Pickets unload £4m from profit at Mersey**	Shirley Skeel
16/02/1996	*Lloyd's List*		**Mersey Docks profits down: Costs of capital expenditure and dispute settlement offer set to total £38m**	John Prescott
17/02/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Eastender inspired by spirit of Liverpool**	Christine Buckley
23/02/1996	*Investors Chronicle*	Pg. 72	**Company results: Mersey Docks & Harbour**	
23/02/1996	*The Independent*	Life, Page 6	**Pride and protest on the Mersey, Four hundred sacked dockers have fought for five hard months. Now they sense an unlikely victory**	Decca Aitkenhead
01/03/1996	**Extel Examiner**	Company News; Other	**Dockers union calls for fresh talks in Mersey Docks dispute**	Unknown
01/03/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	**Union seeks end to Mersey Docks dispute**	Sean Moloney, Shipping Correspondent

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
10/03/1996	*The Independent*	Real Life	**Sabotage their systems and steal their stationery...; ... Or why not try a spot of 'underperforming'? Or how about a good, old-fashioned strike? Alex Spillius reports that even in the downsized Nineties, disgruntled employees are discovering they still have the power to bite back**	Alex Spillius
13/03/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**New talks on Liverpool docks row**	Sean Moloney, Political Editor
14/03/1996	*The Guardian*	The Guardian Home Page, pg. 9	**US support for Dock strikers**	Martyn Halsall
17/03/1996	*The Independent*	Business, pg. 3	**Port takes legal action in US; More acrimony over moves by sacked Liverpool dockers**	Patrick Tooher
19/03/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool row escalates as union warns ACL**	Sean Moloney, Political Editor
21/03/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey dockers win ITF support**	Gerrit Wiesmann, Freight Markets Reporter
22/03/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**MDHC withdraws US injunction bid**	Gerrit Wiesmann, Freight Markets Reporter
26/03/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 16	**Mersey supporters in Drake protest**	Gerrit Wiesmann
28/03/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Fury over call to end Liverpool dock strike**	Gerrit Wiesmann, Freight Markets Reporter
02/04/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	**Mersey docks strike talks**	Gerrit Wiesmann, Freight Markets Reporter
03/04/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Fresh bid to end Mersey docks deadlock**	Political Editor

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
17/04/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Both sides entrenched in stand-off at Liverpool: No talks planned as seven-month port dispute shows no signs of ending**	Michael Murphy
20/04/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Merseyside dockers brief MPs**	Chief Correspondent
21/04/1996	*The Observer*	The Observer News Page, Pg. 3	**Dockers and Dons unite in wrath against Thatcherism's high priest**	Barry Hugill
23/04/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation, Pg. 4B	**Shot fired as dockers picket in Liverpool**	Journal of Commerce Staff
23/04/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	**Mersey scuffles result in arrests**	Julian Bray, Chief Correspondent
06/05/1996	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Features Page, Pg. 11	**Contracts that show no Mersey**	Paul Foot
08/05/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation, Pg. 2B	**Inside Talk - Alan Abrams Few companies making money off the world wide web**	Alan Abrams
15/05/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey strike peace bid**	Sean Moloney, Political Editor
21/05/1996	**Extel Examiner**	Company News; Other	**Mersey Docks to push for docks dispute resolution before Acas**	Unknown
22/05/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 14	**Owners welcome Mersey arbitration**	Ian Gronback
27/05/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Norse Irish moves to beat Mersey dispute**	Sean Moloney, Political Editor
06/06/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey docks vote on 'final offer'**	Sean Moloney
12/06/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 12	**Mersey dockers reject final offer**	Felicity Landon

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19/06/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey offer lapses after ballot refusal**	Political Editor
20/06/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Church bid to rescue Mersey talks**	Julian Bray
21/06/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Port of Liverpool loses ACL service**	Carl Mortished
21/06/1996	**AFX News**	Markets, Stocks	**London shares close lower**	Unknown
22/06/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Mersey Docks**	Unknown
22/06/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey Docks sacks 80 workers**	Julian Bray, Chief Correspondent
24/06/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey Docks to sue US longshoremen**	Anthony Poole
25/06/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation, Pg. 3B	**Mersey sues ILA over ACL's move from Port of Liverpool**	Janet Porter, Journal of Commerce Staff
25/06/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**ILA denies boycott plan**	John McLaughlin, New York Correspondent
30/06/1996	*The Observer*	The Observer City Page, Pg. 21	**Port to create 500 jobs**	Martyn Halsall
02/07/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 6	**Special report on Merseyside: Liverpool hits new high despite dispute**	Felicity Landon
02/07/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 6	**Special report on Merseyside: Port diversity and road costs help throughput**	Felicity Landon
04/07/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 14	**Mersey dispute closes companies**	Sean Moloney, Political Editor
09/07/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**£1.6m Medway- KPMG settlement**	Unknown
16/07/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation, Pg. 2B	**Four UK strikers bring their cause to Montreal Port**	Journal of Commerce Staff

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
16/07/1996	**The Globe and Mail (Canada)**	News, Pg. A4	**Quebec Montreal port hit by protest**	CP
16/07/1996	**The Gazette (Montreal, Quebec)**	News, Pg. A3	**Liverpool longshoremen target shipper: Disgruntled dockers tie up port**	Mike King and Katherine Wilton
23/07/1996	**Press Association**	Home News	**Container firm in port switch re-think**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
24/07/1996	**The Times**	Business	**Mersey Docks regains contract lost in strike**	Carl Mortished
24/07/1996	**Journal of Commerce**	Transportation, Pg. 2B	**ACL going back to Liverpool**	Journal of Commerce Staff
24/07/1996	**The Independent**	Business, pg. 18	**Dockers to continue Mersey campaign**	Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent
24/07/1996	**Lloyd's List**	Pg. 1	**ACL goes back to Liverpool today**	Andrew Grey
30/07/1996	**Lloyd's List**	Pg. 14	**Felixstowe confirms bid for ACL business**	David Osler
30/07/1996	**Lloyd's List**	Pg. 5	**Leading article: Mersey renewal**	Unknown
01/08/1996	**Press Association**	Home News	**New Union bid to end docks dispute**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
03/08/1996	**Lloyd's List**	Pg. 12	**Union call for new Mersey talks**	Andrew Grey
09/08/1996	**Investors Chronicle**	Pg. 50	**Tips of the Week: Mersey Docks - Mersey Docks is ready to rebound - Never sell on a strike is an old stock market adage that has been largely ignored in the case of Mersey Docks. Its current bout of industrial unrest has badly knocked the shares. The worst, though, looks to be over**	Unknown

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21/08/1996	**London Stock Exchange Aggregated Regulatory News Service (ARNS)**		**Mersey Docks. Interim results**	MDHC
22/08/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Dutch courage**	Carl Mortished
22/08/1996	*The Times*	Business	**Mersey losses force sale of Eurolink**	Carl Mortished
22/08/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation, Pg. 4B	**Liverpool cargo traffic sets record despite row**	Janet Porter, Journal of Commerce Staff
22/08/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation, Pg. 1B	**A year later, fired UK dockers still fighting to turn the tide**	Janet Porter, Journal of Commerce Staff
22/08/1996	*The Independent*	Business, Pg. 19	**Mersey Docks says dispute may drag on**	Tom Stevenson, City Editor
22/08/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey docks peace bid: New bid to end long and bitter industrial dispute as Liverpool port company reports slide in earnings**	Julian Bray
24/08/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 2	**Mersey Docks forecast is cut**	Andrew Grey
30/08/1996	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation , pg. 1B	**Briefs**	Wire and Staff Reports
05/09/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool strike due to 'unofficial elements'**	David Osler
28/09/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 2	**A year later and bitter Liverpool docks dispute festers on**	David Osler
29/09/1996	*The Observer*	*The Observer* News Page, Pg. 2	**Ravers join the Mersey Dockers' March**	Danny Penman
30/09/1996	**Press Association**	Home News	**Police injured in picket line clashes**	Mark Thomas, PA News

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01/10/1996	*The Independent*	Business, Pg. 18	**Market report**	Patrick Tooher
02/10/1996	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Society Pg. 5	**New Politics: Building a bridge in dock green; eco activists are broadening their horizons and joining striking dockers.**	John Vidal
02/10/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 16	**Liverpool picket violence deplored**	David Osler
04/10/1996	*Investors Chronicle*	Pg. 108	**Survey: Merseyside - Mersey Docks lays ghosts to rest**	Deborah Mulhearn
16/10/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Mersey strikers claim support action**	David Osler
07/11/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 14	**Docker 'fired at pickets'**	Unknown
13/11/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 12	**Crash cancels Mersey talks**	Unknown
23/11/1996	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Weekend Pg. 14	**They Never Walk Alone**	John Pilger
07/12/1996	*The Guardian*	The Guardian Weekend Pg. T94	**Last word: The Final Say: Weekend Letter: Union Dues**	Bill Morris
08/12/1996	*The Independent*	Sunday Review	**Thirty years that shook the world; In 1967, Ken Loach made a film about the Liverpool dock strike. This autumn, the director was back on Merseyside filming striking dockers.**	Decca Aitkenhead
14/12/1996	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Features Pg 5	**Today's marching orders; John Pilger reports on the continuing Liverpool dock strike which makes its presence felt in a London march today**	John Pilger

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
16/12/1996	*Daily Mirror*	Features, Pg. 1	**Save our jobs; Dockers take fight to London**	Unknown
17/12/1996	*Press Association*	Home News	**'Final offer' to sacked dockers**	Mark Thomas, PA News
17/12/1996	AFX News	Company News; Strikes, Wages	**Mersey Docks makes 'final' 28,000 stg offer to sacked Liverpool dockers**	Unknown
18/12/1996	*The Guardian*	The Guardian Home Page, pg. 6	**News in brief: New offer to dockers**	Seumas Milne
18/12/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey Docks boosts offer to sacked workers**	David Osler
19/12/1996	*The Guardian*	The Guardian Home Page, pg. 2	**TV Review: Loach keeps the fires burning**	Seumas Milne
19/12/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Mersey offer unlikely to end dispute**	David Osler
20/12/1996	**Press Association**	Home News	**Sacked dockers reject £28,000 pay-offs**	Mark Thomas, PA News
21/12/1996	*The Guardian*	The Guardian Home Page, pg. 4	**News in brief: Dockers reject 'final' offer**	Seumas Milne
21/12/1996	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey dockers reject 'ultimate closing' package**	David Osler
04/01/1997	*The Guardian*	The Guardian Weekend, pg. T63	**Lastword: The Final Say: Weekend Letter: Bill Morris**	Merseyside Port Shop Stewards
04/01/1997	*The Economist,* **U.S. Edition**	World Politics and Current Affairs, Britain, pg. 52	**Militancy on the Mersey**	Unknown

Date	Source	Page n./section	Title	Author
14/01/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Mersey docks battle leads to day of action**	David Osler
15/01/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Pg. 1A	**Dockers promise global stoppages**	Janet Porter in London and Bill Mongelluzzo in Long Beach, Calif.
15/01/1997	**Associated Press Worldstream**	Financial pages	**West Coast longshoremen to join international protest Jan. 20**	E. Scott Reckard
16/01/1997	*The San Francisco Chronicle*	Business, Pg. D1	**Protest may shut bay ports**	Ilana DeBare
18/01/1997	*The Guardian*	The Guardian Weekend pg. T78	**Lastword: The Final say: Weekend letter: Liverpool Docks Dispute**	Bill Morris
20/01/1997	**Monday, AM cycle**	Business News	**Dockers shut West Coast ports in sympathy with British longshoremen**	Unknown
20/01/1997	*Traffic World*	Pg. 35	**ILWU Supports Shutdown; One-day action at 5 West Coast ports to support dockworkers at Port of Liverpool**	Terry Brennan
21/01/1997	**Tuesday, PM cycle**	Business News	**Walkout stalls work at West Coast ports**	Unknown
21/01/1997	*The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon)*	Business, Pg. B16	**Dockers shut West Coast ports in sympathy with British longshoremen, the bottom line**	Staff and wire reports
21/01/1997	**CNN Newsnight**	News, Domestic	**Longshoreman strike in California in show of support for British Compatriots**	Don Knapp and Kathleen Kennedy
21/01/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 2	**Liverpool terminal disrupted**	David Osler
22/01/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Pg. 1A	**Just as expected, dockers walk out across the globe**	Journal of Commerce Staff

Date	Source	Page n./ section	Title	Author
22/01/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool protesters held**	David Osler
21/01/1997	*The Guardian*	The Guardian City Pg. 22	**Mersey militancy threatens Ford and Docks**	Seumas Milne
25/01/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Peace hope in Liverpool dispute: Sacked dockers offer labour supply co-operative proposal to Mersey Docks and Harbour Company**	David Osler
27/01/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Pg. 4B	**Fired Liverpool workers to form company that supplies dock labor**	Journal of Commerce Staff
31/01/1997	**Associated Press Worldstream**	International news	**Futile, protracted strike measures unions' decline in Britain**	Robert Seely
10/02/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Union in Mersey pool plan**	David Osler
11/02/1997	*Financial Times*	News UK	**TGWU seeks to end docks dispute**	Robert Taylor, Employment editor
19/02/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 5	**Letter: No tension between union and officials**	Graham Stevenson
25/02/1997	**Extel Examiner**	Company news, other	**TGWU 'anxious' to see progress in Mersey Docks talks**	Unknown
25/02/1997	**AFX News**	Company news, earnings	**Interview: Mersey Docks & Harbour in talks with union over labour supply company**	James Davey
25/02/1997	**AFX News**	Company News, earnings	**Analysts looking to edge up Mersey Docks & Harbour 1997 pretax forecasts**	Unknown
26/02/1997	*The Times*	Business	**Mersey Docks dispute costs group £800,000**	Sarah Cunningham
26/02/1997	*Financial Times*	Companies and finance	**UK: Mersey Docks hit by Eurolink costs**	Richard Wolffe

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26/02/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**New Mersey strike threat**	David Osler
27/02/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation, Pg. 2B	**Record traffic reported at Port of Liverpool**	Janet Porter
28/02/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 18	**Mersey Docks accused in pilotage row: MP's secret talks with firm's managers**	David Osler
12/03/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Editorial / Opinion Pg. 11A	**Dockworkers join forces worldwide**	Jack Heyman
02/04/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Mersey dockers may reject plan**	David Osler
03/04/1997	*Financial Times*		**Survey- Merseyside: Port of Liverpool: New-look docks sail to records**	Ian Hamilton-Fazey
12/04/1997	*Timber Trades Journal*	Pg. 4	**Mersey dockers reject latest offer**	Unknown
23/04/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 16	**Check internet for strike plans, warns lawyer**	Unknown
23/04/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 16	**Peaceful Mersey meeting**	David Osler
24/04/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 5	**Fax across the Mersey**	Monitor
01/05/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 5	**Unions are unlikely to rock the boat**	David Osler
15/05/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	**Liverpool dockers in talks with MPs**	David Osler
22/05/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 3	**Canadian dockers host deregulation forum**	Unknown
28/05/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**TGWU in port conditions push**	David Osler
NO ARTICLES JUNE 1997				
01/07/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 12	**Mersey labour study complete**	David Osler

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08/08/1997	*The Independent*	Business	**'No end in sight' for Mersey Docks dispute**	Andrew Yates
10/08/1997	*The Observer*	The Observer Home Pg. 10	**Uphill struggle for forgotten strikers**	Seumas Milne
14/08/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**African union joins Mersey dispute**	Dee Rissik, Africa Editor, and David Osler
15/08/1997	*Investors Chronicle*	Pg. 40	**Tips of the Week: Mersey Docks & Harbour - Sector: transport - Share price: 332p - Happy berth days - BUY**	Unknown
04/09/1997	*Daily Mail*	Pg. 27	**Gaddafi human rights prize for two dock strike wives**	Andrew Loudon
05/09/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation Pg. 13A	**'Sympathy' job action to shut W. Coast ports**	Bruce Barnard
08/09/1997	**Press Association**	Home News	**International strikes back sacked dockers**	Melanie Harvey, PA News
08/09/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool dockers predict solidarity**	David Osler
09/09/1997	*The Independent*	News Pg. 2	**Solidarity for sacked dockers**	Unknown
09/09/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Liverpool dockers boost**	Justin Stares
10/09/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 5	**Leading article: Rough justice**	Unknown
13/09/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**New study reveals fall in Liverpool ship calls**	David Osler
14/09/1997	*The Observer*	*The Observer features pg. T5*	**Local heroine**	Libby Brooks
19/09/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**New dispute threat at Mersey docks**	David Osler

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21/09/1997	*The Independent*	News Pg 10	**No going back at Liverpool docks; Pickets fight on despite two years of TUC and labour indifference**	Ros Wynne-Jones
26/09/1997	*The Mirror*	Features, Pg. 24, 25	**Heroes or fools? It depends on whether we still place value on dignity and collective support**	Brian Reade
27/09/1997	**Press Association**	Home News	**City at Standstill as thousands march for sacked dockers**	Maria Breslin, PA News
27/09/1997	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Home pg 5	**Sacked Mersey docks men vow to fight on**	Emily Sheffield
30/09/1997	*The San Francisco Chronicle*	Business pg C2	**Longshoremen Boycott Freighter, they honour picket line for Liverpool workers**	Ilana DeBare
30/09/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	**Police break up dockers' demos**	David Osler
02/10/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	*Neptune Jade* **bids to beat boycott**	David Osler
03/10/1997	**Business Times (Singapore Press Holdings Ltd)**	Business	**Neptune Orient Lines, NOL HD: US court orders dockers to work on NOL**	Unknown
04/10/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	**Thamesport quashes union claim**	David Osler
05/10/1997	*The Observer*	*The Observer* review pg. 3	**This article is written by the man who wrote Cracker, Hillsborough and The Lakes. If you're expecting the usual story of passion, grit and broken hearts, you're not trying hard enough**	Jimmy McGovern
07/10/1997	*Daily Mail*	Pg. 15	**Why the dockers are putting their shirts on Blair's sons**	Unknown
07/10/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 10	*Jade* **sails**	Howard Williams

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12/10/1997	*The Observer*	The Observer review pg. 2	**Letter: We haven't betrayed the dockers**	Bill Morris
18/10/1997	**Press Association**	Home News	**Union starts ballot over docks dispute**	Maria Breslin, PA News
20/10/1997	**Press Association**	Home News	**Dockers to vote on marathon dispute**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
20/10/1997	*Financial Times*	News UK	**Docks strike set for conclusion**	Robert Taylor
21/10/1997	*The Times*	Business	**Vote on dock pay offer**	Unknown
21/10/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**Mersey Docks peace hopes rise**	David Osler
22/10/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation, g. 14A	**Vote could put an end to strife at Liverpool**	Aviva Freudmann
22/10/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 5	**Leading article: Mersey hopes**	Unknown
23/10/1997	**Press Association**	Home News	**Bitter docks dispute has lasted two years**	Alan Jones, Industrial Correspondent, PA News
24/10/1997	*The Times*		**Final offer rejected by dockers**	George Sivell
24/10/1997	*The Times*		**Mersey Docks**	Unknown
24/10/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Transportation pg. 14A	**Former employees reject company's offer; The final settlement outvoted by 2-to-1**	Aviva Freudmann
24/10/1997	*The Herald (Glasgow)*	Pg. 15	**Solid support in a long campaign**	Duncan Black and Susan Carden
24/10/1997	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Home pg. 4	**Ballot win strengthens workers' quest for justice**	David Ward
24/10/1997	*Financial Times*	News UK	**Dockers stay on strike after offer rejected**	Sheila Jones and Andrew Bolger

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25/10/1997	*The Guardian*	The Guardian Home pg. 11	**Liverpool dockers furious over deadline for payoff**	David Ward
28/10/1997	**Press Association**	Home News	**Liverpool dockers take protest to Dublin**	Chris Parkin, PA News
28/10/1997	**Press Association**	Home News	**Sixty Liverpool dockers 'accept peace deal'**	Maria Breslin, PA News
29/10/1997	*The Mirror*	News, pg. 2	**Docks battle hits Dublin; sixty Liverpool dockers on strike accept £28,000 peace settlement**	Unknown
29/10/1997	*Journal of Commerce*	Editorial / Opinion Pg. 7A	**Japan ports revisited**	Jack Heyman
29/10/1997	*The Independent*	News pg. 8	**Striking dockers break ranks over pay deal**	Unknown
29/10/1997	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* Home Pg. 8	**Sixty sacked Liverpool dockers take cash pay-off**	David Ward
29/10/1997	*Financial Times*	News UK	**Striking dockers 'split on offer'**	Andrew Bolger, Employment correspondent
25/11/1997	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 14	**Cardiff hit by docker protest**	David Osler
24/12/1997	*The Guardian*	*The Guardian* features pg. 4	**Real lives: Turkey and scouse; As the Liverpool dock strike approaches its third year, the families involved are hardly in a festive mood.**	
20/01/1998	*Lloyd's List*	Pg. 1	**UK dockers bid to strengthen union**	David Osler