

**Hull and London  
Port Workers' Control Groups**

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**THE  
DOCKERS'  
NEXT  
STEP**

**(New Revised Edition, 1969)**

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**The Institute for Workers' Control**

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# THE DOCKERS' NEXT STEP

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*"The Dockers' Next Step: An Anti-Devlin Report"* was first published in 1966. It was the product of the general workers' control movement, then just gathering its first ideas together in a series of national conferences and pamphlets, and of the dockers' own particular concerns. Dockworkers from Hull, London and Bristol, and from several unions, took part in its preparation. It has been used by dockers' seminars at national workers' control conferences in 1966 and 1967 and later documents published from those conferences have drawn upon it. In 1968 following the establishment of the *Institute for Workers' Control*, (which exists to encourage and service local and industrial groups of workers dedicated to workers' control) a series of port conferences in Hull and London, with the participation of Boston dockers, and fraternal interest from Bristol and Southampton, took place. Permanent local groups of the I.W.C. have been formed in the two major ports concerned, and their discussions have led to the publication of this revised edition of

### *The Dockers' Next Step.*

In the space of two and a half years the demand for workers' control of the port industry, originated by small groups of dockers, has been taken up by increasingly representative bodies of the industrial workers, and has now won the support of significant sections of the port workers' trade unions. The increased tempo and urgency of the campaign is based on real and ominous developments in the industry, which are described in the following resolution carried by a meeting of docks members of the T.&G.W.U., N.A.S.D.U. and the N.U.R., from Hull, Boston and London, in Hull on November 10th 1968

"This meeting of port transport workers, consisting of registered dockers of Hull and London, NUR dock members, and the waterways section of the T.&G.W.U., declares:

- (i) that it is totally opposed to the dilution of the proposals for the full nationalisation of the port transport industry, with workers' representation, promised by the Labour Party in the 1966 election. It deplores the omission from the programme of legislation announced last month, of any reference to port nationalisation.
- (ii) that present developments in the industry, particularly the growth of inland container bases, and port outlets for container traffic outside existing dockland, threaten to undermine Dock Labour Scheme and Trade Union control over the industry. For the purposes of port nationalisation, and of workers' control of the industry, all such developments must be incorporated as an integral part of the port transport industry.
- (iii) with these demands, approach should be made to port workers and their unions in all major ports, to secure their support for a national campaign. This campaign should

embrace dockers of all unions, and workers in ancillary industries, merchant seamen, lightermen, waterways workers, etc.

(iv) in pursuit of these aims, the campaign should

- (a) instruct its representatives to lobby M.P.'s — at Westminster through a committee of port workers, and locally through docks branches of unions sending delegations to interview their local M.P.s. Union branch delegates at local Labour Parties should insist upon M.P.s' support for this campaign, and consider the withdrawal of an M.P.'s mandate if he should fail to do so.
  - (b) reproduce the workers' control pamphlet, "*The Dockers' Next Step*" for mass distribution in the ports and the Labour Movement.
  - (c) seek the support of trade union branches for the work of the Institute of Workers' Control, which can assist in the communication of the portworkers' demands to the wider trade union movement through its publications and conferences. Branches should consider affiliation to the Institute.
  - (d) send representatives of portworkers to the next national conference of the Institute for Workers' Control in March, 1969 at Sheffield, where the aims of this campaign can be reported to a wide cross-section of the trade union movement.
- (v) that it believes the case for workers' control and public ownership of the port industry rests on grounds of the democratic tradition of the trade union movement, and the need to prevent wholesale redundancy which would follow the break-up of the portworkers' present controls in the industry. It believes this case will command widespread sympathy and support amongst fellow trade unionists everywhere, as being a part of the fight for security, standards of life, and democratic rights in industry, which are the common aims of all who work for a living."

It is clear from this resolution that portworkers were angry and fearful at the threatened betrayal of promises made to them by the Labour Government, regarding public ownership and workers' participation. That they were right to be so, is made clear in Appendix I and II to this pamphlet. They strongly believe that this betrayal is linked up with the growing concentration of private firms in the field of containerisation and inland freight terminals. The threat of a major rationalisation, at the expense of workers' security and control, faces them. They are determined that this



threat shall be met and defeated, and that this should be done, by taking "The Dockers' Next Step".

There is a further reason for this campaign. Regardless of whether the industry is publicly owned or not, the Government and private interests are demanding that port workers abandon the carefully built and hard-won positions of control and bargaining strength which they have established at the local and ship-side level. The National Modernisation Committee has now launched its proposals for Phase 2 of the Devlin recommendations. These, if carried through, would mean the abolition or severe modification of the piece-work system and the substitution of Measured Day Work.

This is what the National Directive of the Committee, issued on 5th December 1968 spells out. Workers in many industries have seen their shop-floor control of earnings and conditions attacked in similar ways in recent years. George Cattell was brought into the Department of Employment and Productivity and then on to the Docks Modernisation Committee by Barbara Castle, from a top manager's position in Rootes Motors, to carry out this kind of strategy in dockland. Measured Day Work, Work Study, Job Evaluation, are *not* scientific measuring rods; they are employers' devices designed to take away the power of workers to *negotiate* over changes in work methods, conditions and pay. They are designed to break up the traditions of port workers' solidarity and mutual support in times of trouble. Dockers need a programme to combat this attack, which is based on their *common* interests. The programme must stress that dockers will not accept "responsibility" for changes in their industry, unless and until it is truly theirs; that is, there can be no responsibility without power.

Therefore, to keep their bargaining powers, dockers must be prepared to take *new* powers. To meet the combined weight of government and the new, powerful blocks of employers now being formed, they need to form their own united power, for workers' control.

This is why the *Dockers' Next Step* has been revised and is here presented afresh to the workers in the industry.

We urge all docks union branches, committees, shop steward groups, etc., to study this programme, to adopt it, and prepare to implement it. Failure by the Government to give the full powers of port workers' representation promised in the 1966 election programme means that the workers must prepare their own "shadow government" for the industry. As a first step, we propose that dock and port workers should, following the *Dockers' Next Step*, *elect their own port workers' councils*, as a sign of their serious intent in this matter. In doing so they will merely be insisting that the promise of fully effective workers' councils in the ports, made in the Labour Party document of 1966, should be carried out.

# Chapter 1

## Summary

### The Dockers' Next Step

Our alternative is based on the demand for Industrial Democracy. Let us make quite clear what we mean by this.

Industrial Democracy does **NOT** mean:

- Union leaders (retired or otherwise) sitting on Directors' Boards without any responsibility to the industry's workers.
- that workers' directors are given fat cheques, free meals, and other perks, to hob-nob with the employers, in return for keeping their secrets from the workers.
- that workers' directors or trade unions should meekly agree to "share responsibility" for redundancies, speed-up of work etc.
- that workers and unions should accept "participation" as a "reward" for getting rid of real union control and workers' rules on the job.
- that managers merely "consult" workers after they have made decisions.

Industrial Democracy **DOES** mean:

- that Workers' Councils, or Workers' representatives, should be elected by and from workers, to whom they should report back all their proceedings.
- that workers' representatives and Councils should be instantly recallable by those who elected them.
- that all the books, all the commercial secrets, should be open to the inspection of workers' representatives.
- that trade union freedom is preserved and extended, not curbed by restrictive rules against shop stewards, or strike action.

## OUR MAIN PROPOSALS FOR THE DOCKS.

### 1. A National Ports Authority

All ports and container installations to be brought under public

by the Government, *subject to the right of the Portworkers' Council* (see below) *to veto any appointment.* The Council should also have the right to demand the dismissal of a member of the Board on the grounds of his subsequently contravening the rule about business connections.

The N.P.A. should present its Annual Accounts and Report to Parliament. In addition, the Portworkers' Council must be given *the power of continuous supervision over the N.P.A. Management at both national and local levels.* This requires, *not* direct representation on the N.P.A. *nor* participation in or responsibility for its decisions, but *full access to their meetings, minutes, deliberations and accounts.\**

The Portworkers' Councils should have the power to report to Parliament, to port-workers, and the public, any criticisms of, or proposals relating to, the work of the N.P.A. In conducting their inspections of the N.P.A. the Councils should have absolute discretion in calling on the assistance of technically qualified persons as advisors —preferably from the Trade Unions. *These supervisory powers reinforce the principle of accountability which, as nationalised industries are now operated, is inadequately applied.*

**\*NOTE:** The *ultimate objective should include direct Workers' Management of the industry, at national as well as local level. The proposal above is therefore to be regarded as a first stage towards this goal.*

## Chapter III

### Port Workers' Councils and Port Labour

We propose that the N.P.A. assumes the role of sole employer of dock labour and that it should have the power to bargain about wages and conditions with the trade unions which organise port labour. It would replace the National Port Employers' Association on the National Joint Council for the industry. It would determine the basic pay structure at national level and at local level would negotiate over piece-rates, bonuses, etc. All port workers shall be fully employed with a guaranteed basic wage.

The national and local assets, offices, staffs and functions of the National Dock Labour Board should be taken over by the Portworkers' Councils (the present 50% workers' representation would be replaced with 100% Workers' Councils). This would eliminate the idea of joint control, at present embodied in the National Docks Labour Board, and also the idea of the monopolist employer — the State — occupying a 50% position in the National Docks Labour Board and thus allowing the power to slip out of the hands of the trade unions.

## Chapter IV

### The Functions of the Local Portworkers' Councils

These would include:

1. The hiring and firing of individual workers, subject to an agreed appeals procedure.
2. The promotion of foremen and gangers and other specialist grades.
3. The employment of safety inspectors responsible to the Councils.
4. The day-to-day allocation of dockers to ships, and in general the disposal of the work-force in the port. The officers of the Council would receive day-by-day requisitions from the Port Authority's local office, specifying all port work required. The Council would have the responsibility of carrying out the work.
5. The health, welfare, recreation and educational functions now carried out by the Dock Labour Boards would be taken and radically improved.

The financing of the Portworkers' Councils functions would be through a levy on the National Port Authority.

## Chapter V

### The Composition of Local Portworkers' Councils

These should consist of between 20 and 30 members, depending on the size of the port. They should be elected by a ballot of all trade union members in the port. Nominations for the seats on the Council should be made at specially convened meetings of the trade union branches: only trade union members in the port would be eligible for nomination. They should hold office for two years, one half of the Council retiring every year. They should be subject to instant recall by those who elect them. They should be part-time Councillors, continuing to work at their docks occupations. No trade union officer or member of a trade union negotiating committee should hold office as a councillor at the same time. Nominations should, if possible, exceed the number of vacancies at any election by 100%. The port or group should be divided into docks or sections for the purposes of the elections, and electoral sub-divisions worked out on that basis, so that all sections or docks and all occupations in the port are represented. Separate representation should be arranged for workers who are regularly mobile between docks. The details of these arrangements should be worked out by the trade unions concerned on the basis of these general principles.

The Councils should report to mass meetings of port workers, every half year, and to trade union branches after every Council meeting. The local Councils should be vested with the management and custody of the present local Dock Labour Boards' fixed assets, offices, equipment, etc. They should become the employers of the present N.D.L.B.'s full-time staff, with normal powers of appointment and dismissal. The managers of the Dock Labour Boards should become *ex-officio* members of the Portworkers' Councils without voting rights.

Meetings of the Councils should be held regularly, as often as possible, and certainly once a fortnight. They should have powers to form sub-committees — for stevedoring, for discipline, safety, health and welfare, education and training, and for study of the accounts and conduct of the Port Authority.

## Chapter VI

### Regional or Estuarial Authorities

We agree with the Labour Party Study Group's Report on Port Transport, (published in 1966) that there should be an intermediary level of administration and control in the industry, between port and national Boards. The Regional Boards should be established to co-ordinate the plans and traffic, labour policy, etc., of the ports within each major estuarial and coastal region. Some of the major planning functions of the National Ports Authority should be delegated to these Regional Boards. They should also be charged with responsibility for liaison with inland road and rail transport in their regions, to evolve a co-ordinated transport and industrial location policy. They should be composed of two equal elements —

- (i) technically qualified full time appointments, made by the Minister of Transport, subject to the right of veto by the local Portworkers' Councils in the region in the same manner as is proposed for the National Port Authority appointments;
- (ii) representatives elected by and from the local Portworkers' Councils in the area covered by the Regional Board. They would be subject to the same obligations to report back, and to the same right of recall, that should apply to the members of National and local Portworkers' Councils.



## Chapter VII

### The National Portworkers' Council

This Council should be vested with the assets, and take over the employment of the staff of the National Dock Labour Board. It should be responsible for co-ordinating and supervising the work of the local Portworkers' Councils, for receiving regular reports from them, particularly on their supervisory work in connection with local Port Authorities. It should assist the local Councils in all their various functions.

Half the Council should be elected by annual ballot vote of the trade unionists in the industry. Fifteen councillors should be elected in this way, and a further fifteen should be delegated, one from each of the major Port or Regional Workers' Councils in the country. It should be the task of the unions concerned to prepare an electoral procedure which gives proper representation to the different ports and Regions.

An annual delegate conference of portworkers convened by the trade unions, should receive a Report from the National Portworkers' Council, for approval, amendment, or rejection.

In addition to its work in the field of self-management of port labour, the national Portworkers' Council should have *full access to the deliberations and accounts of the National Port Authority*, with right to report to the trade unions and to submit reports to Parliament on its findings.

Obviously, in a field so barren of previous example in British nationalised industry, these purely constitutional proposals for elections, nominations, etc. cannot claim to be perfect. Whatever may be evolved however, two principles seem to be necessary. First, that there is a maximum degree of accountability of councillor to his constituents — which means that his report back must be ensured and power of recall established; and second, that the trade unions play the principal role in the conduct of the elections.

## Chapter VIII

### Conclusion

We submit this report to the labour movement in the hope that it will arouse the maximum degree of discussion, not least in the trade unions concerned in the industry, as well as in the Labour Party at all levels. We should like to see Labour Parties in the port areas engaging in discussion and forming their opinions upon it. We should be delighted to receive comments in writing — either favourable or critical. Without extensive debate, critical amendment where necessary, above all maximum militant pressure, industrial and political, it will not leave the drawingboard. But we do claim that this report represents something more than an abstract blueprint. We have tried to relate our ideas closely to the actual contemporary situation — a crisis situation — in the docks industry. We have tried to relate them also to the strong current running in the direction of industrial democracy. We have tried to draw on the whole great tradition of the demand for workers' control in the British Labour Movement. We believe that the militant tradition of dockland, which has often found expression through unofficial actions in recent years, could, in harmony with the evolving political-industrial radicalism of the portworkers, give an explosive power to the ideas in the report.

# Appendix I

## Dock Workers' Control Groups Statement on the Government's White Paper on "The Re-organisation of the Ports".

Hull & London. February, 1969

To all Port-Workers, Trade Unionists and members of the labour movement.

Brothers,

We have waited two-and-a-half years since the election of 1966 for the Government to announce its plans for nationalisation. They have at last produced a White Paper, "The Re-Organisation of the Ports", which explains their intentions. It is both too late, and too little. We reject the proposals, and call upon all dockers and trade unionists to do likewise. We wish to explain our reasons, and to list again the demands for full nationalisation and workers' control of the ports.

We reject the White Paper because:

1. It limits the nationalisation to ports handling over 5 million tons. This leaves out some of the newest and fastest growing ports, such as Felixstowe, which will be used against the public ports in competitive ways. Yet the private ports will continue to receive grants and aid from the government, the vitally important container port of Harwich is also excluded from the government's scheme.  
The Minister of Transport has said that, even if a growing port in future tops the 5 million ton mark, this will not automatically bring it under the nationalisation measure.
2. The White Paper proposes that at first, only labour employed by the port authorities will be brought into the scheme; this is about 15,000 dockers. The private port employers *may* only be taken over after a year's delay, and even then, they would have a right of appeal against being brought out, which would mean further delays. The Tories may be back in government by then, and would stop further acts of nationalising port employers.
3. Private firms which handle their own raw materials, or which use a port employer which they have financial control of, will not be taken over.
4. Private stevedoring is not to be prohibited from starting up

## Appendix II

Extract from Statement adopted by the T.&G.W.U. Finance and General Purposes Committee, on the Government's White Paper,

“Re-organisation of the Ports”, on February 6th, 1969.

### Workers' Participation

The 1966 Labour Manifesto pledged itself to “extending the present valuable experience of joint participation”. This White Paper says “there must be effective worker participation”, and also “all employees in the industry, including those in the residual private sector, should benefit from the arrangements for participation”, and says that it is “essential to continue for registered dock workers generally statutory provision for joint control of those matters at present dealt with by the National and Local Dock Labour Boards”.

The detailed proposals fall far short of any extension of workers' participation, and may in fact seek to limit further that which already exists.

The document (para 29) merely refers to “more extensive participation” on the basis of “effective machinery for negotiation and joint consultation”, and (para 31) promises only to establish effective machinery on lines similar to that included in the 1968 Transport Act.

As far as the constitution of the N.P.A. and its subsidiary authorities are concerned, the only reference is to appointing people who have had wide experience or shown capacity in “the organisation of workers”.

Three major points have to be made in this connection:

1. There should be no ambiguity about the representation of labour interests on the N.P.A. and its subsidiary boards. In our view it is absolutely essential that representatives be drawn from unions directly involved in the industry.
2. The opportunity has not been taken in this White Paper to make a decisive advance in worker participation along the lines of local joint control committees (involving representatives of all sections of port employees) on such matters as safety, promotion, operation of equipment and labour, overtime etc. The proposals of the Labour Party Study Group

### Appendix III

1. Extracts from the speech by Brian Nicholson, T & G Docks shop steward convenor, London, at the Workers' Control Meeting held in Hull, November 10th, 1968 and attended by portworkers from Hull, Boston and London.

"The future of the docks depends upon who controls them, and what we need to do is to examine the priorities.

Priority number one, in my book is:- TO MAKE FELLOW DOCKWORKERS REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT THEY ARE TO THIS INDUSTRY, NOT JUST AS WAGE EARNERS OR AS TRADE UNION TICKET HOLDERS, WITH JUST A LICENCE TO WORK, BUT TO REALIZE THAT THEY ARE WORKING TOWARDS SOMETHING WHICH WILL BE THEIRS, AND WHICH WILL BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY.

Priority number two is:— NATIONALISATION, PUBLIC OWNERSHIP — NOT JUST THE WORN-OUT ORTHODOX TYPE, BUT NATIONALISATION WITH FULL WORKERS' CONTROL.

We must not be lulled into a state of complacency. A revolution is taking place in our industry, a silent revolution in which we, the workers, have no say. We must match this revolution with our knowledge, our thinking. "Throw a few crumbs and keep the boys happy", is still their slogan. "Keep them happy and keep them divided", whilst the employers cut the industrial cake. What is this revolution, in which you and I, the workers, can only be the casualties? Containerisation is only a part of the story, what of L.A.S.H.?

What of the European Barge Carrier System? Containerisation can only succeed if there is no competition, and both L.A.S.H. and the E.B.C. systems are competition, as is also Air Cargo, now being developed, all affecting our industrial life NOW.

Rumour, threats, worker against worker, port against port — these are still the main weapons in the employers' armoury. We cannot treat our industry in isolation, we must recognise others working in industry, and realise that their problems, their fears, are the same as ours, whenever we read of yet another merger or closure.

Effective trade unionism, at the place of work, is, I know, a major part of the answer. Effective trade union leadership can put

us along the road to complete industrial democracy: we should know more about company finances, labour turnover, future plans, investment. The company's books should be open to the workers — they should be *our* books. Jack Jones said recently: "Those who invest their lives in business have a bigger right to a say than those who merely invest their cash." We must continue to fight for more industrial democracy, to obtain higher living standards, efficiency, security. Don't be misled: we *can* control and run industry. It takes 95% commonsense, and 5% expertise: we can command both these things, more than amply. £17 fall-back is not enough to make us complacent: a man can starve on £17. He is spiritually starved: he has no role, no significance, and no means of self-expression.

The acceptance of decasualisation, by the trade union activists, (and I stress: *activists*) was only an interim measure. Without these people decasualisation could never have got off the ground. We accepted decasualisation because we believed it was a step towards that *political* commitment made to us by the present government. I accepted decasualisation because for over forty years the trade unions have been struggling for better conditions — better overall standards of living for all, not just the few. I do not accept decasualisation as the last word on industrial security. Security which is dependent on the private employer is the wrong type of security. It is based on favourites, the now super-blue-eyed boys, and it keeps those who now control the industry in office. It will take us back, in a short space of time, to the haves and the have-nots. I was taught to believe that those who control the means whereby I live, control my life. We must continue to protect those less fortunate, who through illness and age cannot protect themselves, and see that they get a decent living standard. We must improve our specialist knowledge of this industry of ours.

Lastly, a word to those in power. Yours was the promise, ours is the action; not action to harm those we work *with*, but those whom we worked *for*, in election after election. Docks constituencies have always been the plum, safe seats."

2. Extracts from the speech by Walt Greendale (Hull Docks Shop Steward, and Hull Dock Group of the Institute for Workers' Control), at the Hull Workers' Control meeting, November 10th, 1968.

"Nationalisation will mean redundancy if carried out as now proposed by Richard Marsh, who intends to limit the number of ports to be nationalised. According to the newspaper, *The Port*, two hundred London lightermen have accepted severance, with the prospect of several more lighterage firms offering severance schemes

in the near future. The same paper tells us that a total of 480 men have accepted severance from the Port of London Authority.

Doesn't it stand to reason that under nationalisation with the present employers occupying the top positions in the industry, as they have done in other nationalised industries (steel, coal, rail, etc.) that this reduction in labour would be carried out *without* even a voluntary severance scheme? The present modernisation scale in London alone, will call for much less labour than at present, unless we act *now* to formulate a policy of sharing the available work, a policy in which *we* have the last say on whether anyone goes.

When the government nationalised the coal mines, the miners had begun to show militancy to get a fair living from their industry. The government, to counteract this, then formulated their power schemes which relied on oil, natural gas, etc., which they left in the hands of the private employers. This has so weakened the miners' power that they now accept redundancy almost without protest. Is this what we want to happen to the docks and rivers?

When the government nationalised the railways they left the road transport mainly in private hands, and then concentrated on a run-down of rail traffic, again to the advantage of private operators. Is this what we want to happen in the docks?

Brothers, I have tried to show what has happened in other industries that have been nationalised. It sounds as if I am against nationalisation — and I am, under the present system. In none of these industries has the worker any say in the running of his industry. Can you imagine the position in Hull if dock employment was nationalised? It would mean that all the registered men who work in the warehouses, all the registered lightermen, all the men who work in the timber yards, in fact any work not actually on the docks, would either have to come back to work in the docks themselves, or declare themselves to be no longer dock workers. If they came back into the docks the private employers would replace them with unregistered men, and our own men would just swell the numbers of men inside the docks, looking for work, which in many cases would be denied them. If they cut themselves off from the docks, they would lose the militant backing on which we have always prided ourselves. Therefore, if the whole of the port transport system is not included in the nationalisation (and this includes rivers, wharves, lighterage, container depots and container transport) then we shall find ourselves frozen out.

Others will speak about what has been happening in the non-scheme ports, like Bridlington, Whitby and Scarborough, and of the growth of the timber trade to uncontrolled harbours like New Holland in Lincolnshire. We must fight now to ensure that *all* ports, throughout the country, come within the scope of nationalisa-



tion. If they don't, the private employers grow even richer at our expense.

A lot of you have been asking me recently for more details about the Institute for Workers' Control. Others will speak of this in more detail, but I would just like to explain that it is not a political party, but a means whereby we can assemble together, and meet with workers from other industries who are also demanding a say in the running of their lives.

We have to put pressure on to the various M.P.s to get what we want, and we need the lightermen, the lorry drivers, the men who work in container depots, all over the country, to assist in this, and to make sure that we are heard with one voice. This is why we want to work in the I.W.C., as there we can meet these other workers to discuss our various problems.

In June 1966, the Labour Party Study Group made proposals that the only way to solve the problems of the docks was by:

1. public ownership of the port transport industry, and
2. a major *extension* of the industrial democracy which already exists, i.e. the 50% of the Dock Labour Boards.

I say, let's hold them to their promises!"

### 3. Nationalisation of the Docks.

by Brian Barker (T.&G.W.U.) and

Jim Thompson (Hull I.W.C.)

November, 1968

A matter of great concern to port workers today is the future ownership and organisation of their industry. Is it to be nationalised, and if so, when, and what sort of nationalisation is to be adopted? It seems clear that no one wants the old kind. In April 1967, Barbara Castle was saying that national planning of the ports was a matter of life and death for the nation and that not a moment should be lost. Indeed, a working document which contained various alternative proposals all involving at least partial workers' control was being circulated by the Ministry of Transport a month or two later. Of course, various important ancillary industries, closely linked with the docks, were omitted. Lighterage, towage, transport onto the docks, inland packing sheds for the new containers, were to be left largely to the tender mercies of private enterprise. Even so, the reaction of "industry" — that is to say, the tiny minority which constitutes upper management — was predictable. Nationalisation, they said, was unnecessary, and would be inefficient. It would be run

by state officials rather than by officials from private companies. The "brilliant" enquiries of Rochdale and Devlin were enough to enable the "necessary" mass redundancies to be carried through. Indeed, it was asserted that regional port authorities would make sackings more difficult, presumably because a system of small independent undertakings could adopt different timetables and cut down smaller groups of workers separately. Indeed the problem was one that had to be faced resolutely — just as the change from carthorses to lorries had been faced! When commercial worthies like Glasgow Chamber of Commerce turned their attention to the workers' control aspect, it was to oppose the involvement of port workers, root and branch. It was however, conceded that trade unionists who had no connection with the docks and who would presumably know little about them, just might be considered for the Boards! Oddly enough, more protection was needed for port-users. Presumably this meant that they needed to be protected from themselves, since they usually form a sizeable part of the present boards of most publicly owned ports. To cap everything, the C.B.I. and the British Shipping Council came forward with a prize piece of nonsense. They thought that "regional authorities were illogical because each port had different tides, silt and navigational problems. They would at best only delay investment decisions."

But where did the investment come from and where is new investment to come from? Mr. Gifford of the National Ports Council was last year defending the spending of £150,000,000 on conventional port development, despite the container revolution. Also last year, Mr. Finnis, chairman of the British Transport Docks Board, was telling us of £25,000,000 spent by the B.T.D.B. in the previous four years, and £89,000,000 to be spent in the following five years. This year, in another sum, he spoke of £28,000,000 spent on the Humber ports alone since 1949. Where does it all come from? From the people, as always, but this time quite directly, in the form of public subsidy. And who benefits? As ever, private enterprise. And if public regional authorities, "only delay investment decisions", the independent ports obtain grants direct from government almost with no questions asked. Fantastic? Close inspection of the development of some of the smaller East Coast ports suggests otherwise.

Meanwhile, what has happened to that "life and death" matter of 1967, which was to be completed by 1st January 1970? Well, the robber barons huffed and puffed a little, Barbara Castle went off for penitential union-bashing, Richard Marsh moved in, and perhaps sometime we shall have a watery White Paper. A little while ago Jack Jones was asking: "Whose Country Is It?" The sorry tale of docks nationalisation must cause us to ask as well: "Whose Government Is It?"



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