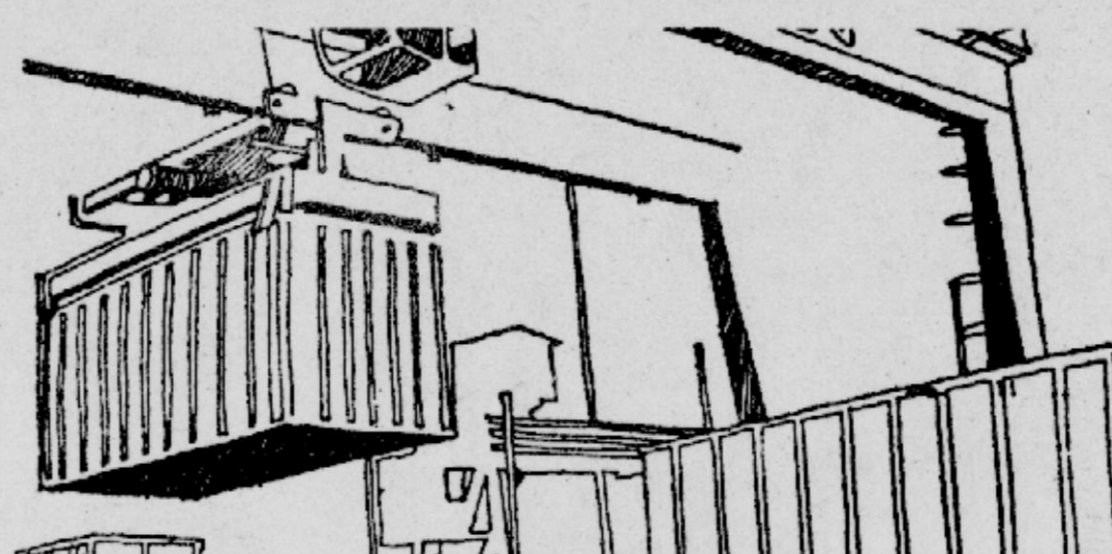


special...docks special...docks special...docks special...docks special...docks special...docks special...

LIVERPOOL DOCKERS are disillusioned and angry. It's now nine months since the Jones-Aldington committee promised to safeguard their jobs — and brought to an end a three-week strike.

But the Jones-Aldington report has failed to check the two main threats to dock jobs... and the threats are growing. Cowboy container firms (which take work away from the ports) are expanding fast. And at the backdoor ports — which undercut wages and conditions of registered ports — business is booming.

Here we examine the causes of the dockers' anger, and look at their plans to step up the fight...



Want a holiday?

WIN a trip abroad! Yes, it could happen to you... if you're a Labour or Conservative councillor.

In the past year Liverpool councillors have elected themselves to go on 36 trips to conferences and exhibitions — all expenses paid.

Top prizes were eight days in Israel for two, six days in Prague and nine in Frankfurt.

Plus consolation prizes of visits to Brighton, Scarborough, Paignton, Skegness, Torquay, Plymouth and Harrogate.

Conservative Alderman R.F. Craine MBE, JP hit the jackpot with seven free trips, closely followed by Labour Councillor Eddie Roderick with five.

Some of the conferences — particularly those on education — were quite modest affairs, attended by one councillor. But did two councillors and one official really need nine days to go round a fire prevention exhibition in Germany?

How dockers plan to beat the cowboys

CONTAINER COWBOYS are having a field day. Groupage container firms are expanding daily and more groupage depots opening up.

All those depots — most of them inland, but a considerable number actually inside port areas — are employing scab labour (unregistered dockers).

The biggest groupage firm on Merseyside is J.A.Irving's. Its depot has been moved out to Newton-le-Willows and the premises are being extended. The men unloading containers there are members of USDAW — on half the wage rates of dockers, and with much lower manning levels.

Since the blacking dispute last year groupage operators have increasingly tried to sneak containers through the Port of Liverpool by putting incorrect or inadequate information on the container documents.

Several containers were held up for nine months at the B & I terminal while dockers waited for proof that they weren't going to be unloaded by non-dock labour. And when the proof finally came several weeks ago and

the firm opened their containers, they found the cargo — a consignment of women's dresses — was well out of fashion.

Containers held for a record 16 months at Birkenhead are now being unloaded by dockers. The men refused to touch them or allow them out of the dock gates because they believed they were going to the premises of a back-alley container firm.

ICI, the owners of the cargo, tried to persuade the dockers to release the containers. But the dockers had proof that the containers were going to be unloaded by Masons of Bury, whose premises are an old airfield. In the end ICI agreed to let the dockers do the work instead.

A further 20 containers have been held for many months at the Seaforth container terminal.

The latest evasion technique is for firms to try and disguise groupage containers (which the dockers object to) as house-to-house containers (which the dockers allow).

It works like this: Shippers and importers approach a warehousing

company and lease space from them. They store their goods there and let the warehousing company load the containers when goods are needed.

They claim this represents an 'extension of manufacturer's premises' and that the container work qualifies as house-to-house. But the dockers won't wear the 'extension' ploy.

Greenwood's groupage depot near Warrington is another growing threat to Merseyside dock work. A handful of men there load and unload container waggons. A Libby's nameplate has now appeared on the front gate (to claim an 'extension' of Libby's premises). But it will take more than a nameplate to fob the dockers off.

UNREGISTERED PORTS

Many of the waggons carrying groupage containers head for the unregistered ports — the other thorn in the dockers' side. Felixstowe is setting the pace for the unregistered ports. It is expanding hand over fist.

In the autumn Felixstowe will open a giant new roll-on, roll-off berth to take container trailers directly on board special ships. New container services are opening up regularly at the port.

Felixstowe is now used by more than 50% of the North Atlantic container operators. And this year's expansion plans for the port amount to £8 million.

The P & O shipping line — which already owns one of the largest road haulage fleets in the country — has opened a new service, Eastern Roadways, running from Felixstowe. Action against the container pirates

What it means...

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CONTAINERS are loaded at a factory and sent direct to a customer who unloads them. The dockers do not object to these.

GROUPAGE CONTAINERS are loaded by transport firms at warehouses, old airfields and depots. The dockers claim this work because it used to be done on the quayside before containers came in.

COWBOYS are firms which handle groupage containers. They are notorious for their low pay and under-manning.

REGISTERED PORTS. All Britain's main ports are registered under the National Dock Labour Scheme which lays down certain conditions of work.

UNREGISTERED PORTS are small at present, but rapidly growing. Their wages are lower and there is less job security. Nearest to Liverpool are Mostyn (on the Dee), Holyhead, Glasson Dock (near Lancaster). Another, Felixstowe, is becoming a major threat to the registered ports.

has been continuing sporadically ever since the first blacking of Heaton's container lorries in March last year.

But the dockers admit that only concerted action by the National Dock Shop Stewards' Committee will effectively hit at the container firms. When one port acts alone, it just drives the containers to another registered port... or to an unregistered one.

The committee are now co-ordinating united action planned for the end of the summer. This time there'll be no blacking — the action will be official.

In line with the Jones-Aldington report, the dockers will discriminate against container firms. They will stop every single container and demand the proper documents to prove that it is not groupage container work.

If the documents aren't forthcoming the container will stay on the quayside. If it turns out to be groupage work the dockers will 'encourage' container firms to give them the work in accordance with the Jones-Aldington report.

That encouragement will be simple: Either the containers will be loaded and unloaded by dockers, or they will stay put.

WHERE have all the 'Challenges' gone? — That's what Liverpool corporation officials are asking about the latest issue of their costly public relations newspaper.

'Challenge' — lavishly printed in full colour — is supposed to tell people what wonderful things the corporation is doing, and every household in Liverpool should get a free copy.

But only 55% of those interviewed in a corporation survey could remember having had one.

On the other hand, some people say they got two copies. And a man in Anfield found six stuffed through his letterbox.

Distribution is done by two firms, each paid £500. Vernons do the city's outer areas and Around Britain Distributors do the inner areas.

DISABLED giant, friendly, own car, requires female companion, age 25-30 years. Replies: Box MM

MERSEY MAGNET

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Three gaping holes

THE JONES-ALDINGTON committee have left three gaping holes in their "safeguards" for dockers' jobs. The promised levy on container cowboys has not been enforced; the number of dockers has been reduced; unregistered ports have been allowed to flourish.

When they first saw the Jones-Aldington report, the docks delegates rejected it. So the report was amended.

The second version was little altered from the first, but it did contain the additional promise of a financial penalty — a levy against the pirate container firms such as Heaton's. That swung it for the docks delegates. They voted to accept the report and end the strike.

Nine months later the port authorities admit they won't put any levy on container firms. They say that with the exception of London they haven't the statutory power to discriminate financially against container firms doing 'stuffing and stripping.' London does have the power but is refusing to go it alone. As it happens, the chairman of the Port of London is none other than Lord Aldington.

None of the port employers on the committee said at the time that they wouldn't have the power to levy firms. And without the levy the report is toothless.

The union leaflet "Safeguard the Future" claimed major advances had been achieved for dock workers. The only advance was the abolition of the Temporary Unattached Register on which dockers — mainly in Hull and London — languished permanently on fall-back pay.

But there's another side to that coin. The Jones-Aldington committee proposed that the voluntary severance golden handshake should be bumped up to an inviting £4,000 maximum.

Using that inducement 8,500 jobs were lost — slashing Britain's dock labour force by 20%. On the credit side, the committee did manage to obtain a puny 200 extra jobs in container work... an increase in dock jobs of around 0.5%.

The committee also hinted that unregistered ports would be stopped from undermining the registered ports. Their hints have proved worthless.

All that is left among the tattered remnants of the Jones-Aldington report are the empty phrases urging port authorities to encourage the creation of more work for dockers, and the pathetic suggestion that the problems in the industry can be solved by "sensible agreements between port employees, unions and non-port employers."

TILLOTSON'S SIT-IN...

Management sit it out

DURING the six-week sit-in at Tillotson's printing works which ended in May, workers discovered a confidential plan of action drawn up by the management.

It contained details of the possible consequences of declaring 26 women redundant at the factory in Commercial Road, Everton.

The management plan foresaw two alternative solutions to a sit-in — complete closure of the plant or a return to work after a limit of five weeks, on management terms. The second of these was what actually happened.

VISITS TO WORKERS' HOMES

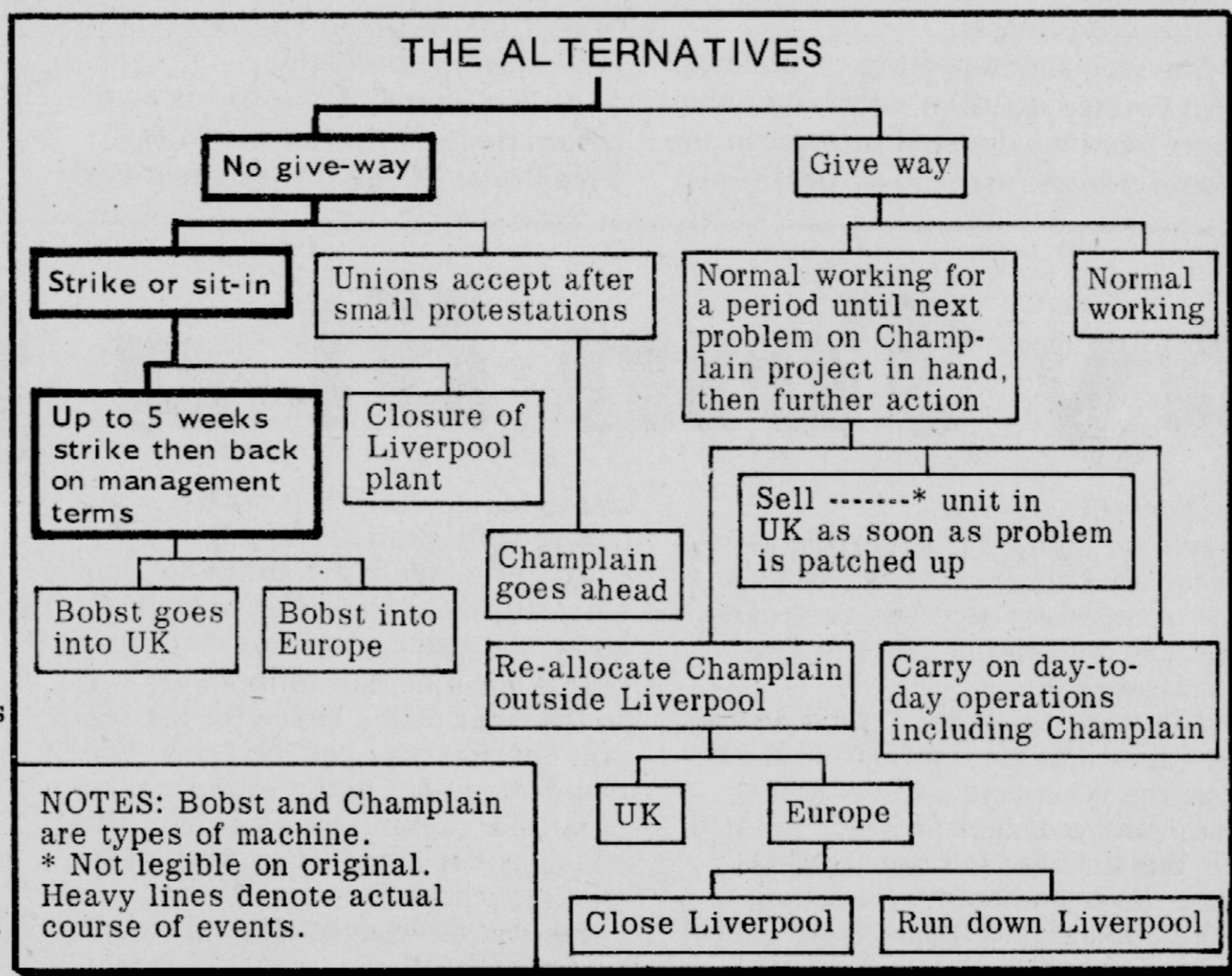
After the management had secured the 26 redundancies by personal visits to workers' homes during the sit-in, a settlement was drawn up between the union (SOGAT) and management. Eventually it was accepted by the workers. Although the chapel (shop floor) committee refused to recommend it, the union's area officials managed to push it through.

This was a remarkable feat, as almost identical proposals had been rejected by 85% of the vote at a mass meeting only two weeks earlier.

It seems SOGAT officials were worried about the threat of a complete closure of the plant. They also claimed they could no longer pay those sitting in if the dispute continued.

Apart from the reinstatement of four chapel officials, there was little in the settlement to suggest it was anything other than a complete victory for the management.

Except, perhaps (and this is what the workforce assumed) that jobs



PLAN OF ACTION. This was one of several documents found in a secretary's drawer in the management's offices

previously done by those made redundant would not be touched by the remaining staff on the return to work.

It was, however, difficult to identify the actual jobs of those made redundant.

The redundancies affected only female workers who, because of productivity deals over the years, could be moved around different departments according to the workload.

The result is that production is

now much the same as before, though manning levels have fallen.

One job that was easily identified was that of the desk girl who made out labels and tickets. For a week work piled up as workers refused to do the now 'redundant' job.

When the factory's SOGAT chapel refused to co-operate, the management took their case to a higher level in the union — and got the vacancy filled.

The management did fail for once when they tried to keep girls working

on machines from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. without a break to make up for those off sick.

Production in the glueing department shows how little effect the redundancies have had on output. Nine girls lost their jobs and two replacements were brought in from another department. The result: Loss of production on only one machine.

The Tillotson's group, with carton packaging, newspaper and printing interests, were taken over in August 1971 by St Regis International, a wholly owned subsidiary of the St Regis Paper Co of New York.

Since the takeover, profits in their newspaper and printing concerns alone have tumbled from £104,000 in 1970 to £311,000 in 1972.

There is no doubt that St Regis expected a dispute, as their plan of action shows. Also, they were well prepared for it. They built up stocks by giving plenty of overtime and then watched it all go according to plan.

A decisive factor in ending the sit-in was the management threat to build a new plant with an £860,000 machine outside Liverpool. But now, in spite of getting very much their own way, they still plan to send the new machinery elsewhere.

Negotiations between management and union representatives should be completed by the end of June and more 'surplus' labour is likely to result.

Tillotson's workforce has fallen from 700 to 400 over the last five years. Perhaps the one positive result from the sit-in has been that the workers have learnt a great deal about management and unions — maybe enough to prevent their numbers dwindling even further.