Dockers' Union

Life & Labour, 190-
Second Series
Vol. III. Part V
Chap. I: Docks and Wharves

BOOK 1

R.COLL.U.
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The District Committee consists of one member elected by each Branch, every 6 months. The District Secretary is elected by ballot by members of Union in that district for 12 months.

It meets irregularly, at the request of one of the Branches. Not more than 7 meetings a quarter. District Committees enjoy Home Rule to a large extent. See Rule XIII. 6

Branch Committees do not meet regularly, but only when specially summoned, never more than 5 times a quarter except by special consent of the Executive. Powers are very limited. See Rules.

1

H.L.S.

Dock Wharf Riverside & General Labourers' Union.

Interview with Tom Mann (president). Sept 15/91

The Union is divided into Districts subdivided into Branches. There are four London Districts, with Committees & Secretaries.

(I) Up Town Warehouses, some fruit wharves &c. sec. F. Brien
(II). Wapping & London Docks. sec. Costello.
(III.) India & Mill Wall sec E.J. Moore
(IV). South side. sec. Pring*

* Pring does not give all his time to the work, and the organiser who knows most about it is Frank Foster.

There is a 5th District Victoria & Albert sec. Harry Slyter outside London proper. Formerly Tilbury formed a 6th district, but there are now few or no Tilbury men in the Dockers Union (some belong to another Union).

Each District is divided into Branches (about 9 or more to each) for list of which see Report. There are Branch Committees of 7 members & Branch Secretaries who however do not give all their time & are paid 5% on the receipts. No Branch may contain more than 500 members; the average is probably about 250.

55 branches
250
2750
110
13750

District Secretaries as a rule (though not always - see above)

give all their time and are paid a salary.

The Union is governed by

(1) An Executive Council of 8 or 9 members elected directly by the London Branches, grouped for the purpose. They are elected not by the Branch Committees but the Branches themselves, for ~~one year~~ 6 months. The Executive meets once a week & is the actual governing body. Its powers are defined in the Rules.

It is a good body, whose judgment may be relied upon, equal member for member to the Executive of the Amalgamated Engineers. Mann speaks very warmly of the Executive.

Present members :- † Stevens, Corn porter (Victoria)
† Yates (Monument Branch, Britannia)
Driscoll (Wapping)
* Atkins
Gregson,
Crawley (London Docks - {the only incompetent member})
Greens
.... (deal-porter).

† Very good men - Should be seen. They are also Branch Secretaries & would shew the books &c.

* At present has a temporary job as a sort of organiser. Is running a small strike about meal-hours.

As a rule no one giving all his time to the Union & paid a salary may sit on the Executive.

No executive Councilman is eligible as a Quarterly Delegate

get agenda sheet
? How many delegates

The Council meets once a week in London paid 2/- a member
The Election of the Council by Branches in groups is following the example of the Amalgamated Engineers.

There is an appeal from the Council to the

(2) Quarterly Delegates, a body elected by all the Branches, London and provincial. One ~~member~~ delegate per 3000 members

This Body has had 3 meetings, having been in existence a year. Formed to give satisfaction to the provincial members. It can over-ride the Executive. But practically it has been useless, and proposals will come before the Annual meeting next week & will probably be carried to abolish it and introduce provincial representation on the Executive & make it meet less often e.g. once a month. Incidentally this will throw much more responsibility on the officers which T. Mann regrets.

(3). The supreme body is the Annual Delegates Meeting elected (1 : 1000 members) by London & provincial Branches, meets in September. Last year in London: this year in Hull.

This is the only body which can alter the rules. They elect the officers.

Thus all Committees, Branch, District, Executive,

Quarterly, & Annual Delegates are elected direct by the members voting by Branches or groups of Branches. There is no indirect election by Committees. The idea is (1) that direct election is right in principle, as being more democratic,

(2) it brings home responsibility for the conduct of the Union more strongly to the individual members though in some branches very little interest is taken in the elections, & very few vote.

But in case of blunders the responsibility can be thrown more directly on the men themselves, & hence there is less chance of disaffection. All voting papers are sent out from the Central Office

At the Central Office there is a paid President (T. Mann, salary), secretary Bentillett (salary), a staff of clerks, cashier (Kay),

There are two "organisers" for London, T. Macarthy, & H. Orbell.

They give all their time to the Union and are paid.

Their duty is to adjust disputes & difficulties, and to do propagandist work. Thus while 3/4 of their time is as a rule taken up with the current work

How do they do this?

Of the entrance fee, 1s 6d (2/6 for adults & 1/9 juniors) must be paid on entrance, the rest within 6 weeks.
See rules 8, 9.
A "junior" is from 16 to 18 years of age.

Branch or District?

of settling disputes, running strikes &c, as soon as there is a lull it is their duty to extend the borders of the Union. They attend District & Branch meetings. District Committeemen receive 1s each for a meeting & the Secretary 2s. Branch Committees also paid (on same scale?) Executive paid ... a meeting.

Subscription is 3d a week for adults, 2d juniors. Of this all goes to Central Office & rent of Branches, after deduction for salaries, fees, postage.
Entrance fees 5/6 adults 2/9 juniors.
The question of arrears, of how to deal with those who fall behind in their payments &c &c is left to Branch District Committees, who deal with each case carefully. Those who actually fall out of the Union & require pay a fine (according to the Rules). The contributions vary very much from month to month according to fluctuations in trade, but as a rule members who fall behind through want of work are dealt with gently. (February is a bad month, the present month (September) is good)

In return for the subscription of 3d a week

the members get

(1) the advantage of an organisation with responsible officials to smooth over difficulties, negotiate for improvements in their condition &c.

(2) free legal assistance.

(3). In certain cases compensation for sacrifice in interests of the Union. Each case is treated on its merits by the Executive, & compensation is never granted except on almost unanimous request of District Committee, and then it is often refused. There is no claim on the part of members to such compensation.

(4). Strike (or "Dispute") pay at the rate of 10/- a week (adults) and 5/- juniors. (No one is entitled to strike pay or any other benefit who has not been 4 months in the Union & is clear on the books, but if ordered by the Executive to cease work he will receive strike pay. Rule 11)

The Rules provide that the Central fund shall be not less than £1 a member & shall be kept up to this amount by levies of 6d a month as often as necessary ordered by the Executive Council. As a matter of fact however

47c

levying has been a failure – only about one third of the members paying up.

The policy of the Union is to sweep in all dock labourers & get a monopoly of work. The extent however to which this is carried out in practice differs according to the chance of success. In some districts where the Union is strong enough they object to non-union employment, where they are weak they work alongside of non-unionists.

This in Mann's opinion is the case with most Unions, & to get an idea of the real policy of even a weak Union it is necessary to study what it does in a district (& there is usually one at least) where it is strong.

At present the Dockers do not enforce their monopoly (policy) much but work alongside of non-Union men.

Most of the District Secretaries, Executive Council, &c are men who have worked a long time at Dock & Wharf work, – not outsiders.

Mr. E. J. Moore, District Secretary, { No. 3 District. India and Millwall

H.L.S.

Thinks there are about 2200 "financial" members in his district but probably 500 on the books i.e. those who have fallen more than 6 weeks in arrear.
Some of these are really Union men who have got into temporary difficulties but a large number have practically fallen out since the change of Nov 4 last year when the inspection of Union tickets was stopped by taking on the men inside the gates instead of outside.
About the same time the Union men refused to become 'permanent' or 'registered' men & the Co. imported a large number from the Country. There are still 3-400 of these. ["Permanent" men are under a week's notice "registered" men 24 hours] They form a disposable body of men who can be drafted from Dock to Dock as seasons change, & consequently the lot of the "casuals" is made worse.
At Millwall almost all the men are Union men for Col. Birt allows the inspection of Union tickets inside the Docks. Formerly (before the Great Strike) the Millwall men were mostly permanent; now

mostly casual. (E.T.M. does not appear to think this a bad thing - at least he did not speak of it as a loss)

~~Some~~ Ex Union men who have fallen out are allowed to join again on paying entrance fee.

There are a few ex-Shipping federation men ~~at the~~ working at the docks. Difficult to say how many non-Union men there are altogether ~~partly~~ because they shift about, ~~and partly~~ But there is a large majority of Union men if we include all those who are on the books. (This of course is not a fair estimate)

A large number of the ~~present non-Union~~ men who have fallen out of the ranks of financial members were loafers unconnected with the Docks before the great strike. They turned up during the strike & took up a Union ticket, but some never paid up, & others only up to Nov. 4 last. He thinks there are many more men ~~wanting~~ seeking employment at the docks than before the strike, & that the irregularity of work is greater.

There are 10 branches in the Union. Each branch meets once a week. They pay contributions from 7 - 8 o'clock. Then any business. If a dispute arises they may settle it if they can: if not

A £6 Burial fund is to be proposed at Annual Meeting.

they pass it on to the District Secretary who calls a meeting of the District Committee. The Branch Committees only meet occasionally when summoned. Sometimes 200 (out of 230) turn up at a meeting at E. India Dock Branch.

Work at the India Docks is done at day work for the Companies. Arrangements had almost been completed with some Shipowners (Shaw and Savill) to work for them, when Cardiff dispute caused block in the Thames (last Spring) and the negotiations were broken off.

He hopes much from federation of waterside trades: thinks that the only chance of getting in all men is to complete federation & play into each other's hands (dockers refuse to unload unless the seamen are Unionists &c &c).

Propaganda meetings are held every Sunday outside E India Docks (11–1).

Times just now are very slack. – not more than 6s a week has been earned of late at E India Dock.

Dock Union men can be transferred into Gas-workers Union & back again. A little friction exists about difference of entrance fees.

H&C.S.

Mr. Kay. Cashier (Central Office).

A levy was tried last year of 1/6 a member in instalments of 3d a week, followed by a further levy of 6d a month.

Some good provincial branches paid up, but not one London Branch paid up in full; some hardly at all. Hence dissatisfaction grew up among those who had paid.

Levying is not suited to a trade so irregular as dockers. Kay thinks that the accumulation of a big Reserve fund is not essential. At the present rate they can afford to have 500 men permanently on strike, & this suffices for sectional strikes.

HLS 2a

Mr. Frank Brien district secretary No. 1 District (W. Lower warehouses). Sept 21/91

District extends from Queenhithe (n. St. Paul's) down to the Tea & Indigo Warehouses of the ~~London~~ St. Katharine's Dock (Western entrance).

It includes 40 or more Warehouses, chiefly Tea, Wool, fruit, Silk, Feathers, Indigo, Preserved meat & other Colonial produce, &c. &c. The warehouses are owned some by individuals some by companies (e.g. Nicholson's Wharf), the majority of whom belong to the "Dock, Wharf, Warehouse & Granary masters Association." (Sec. Mr. Bailey of the Dock House)

There are 10 Branches, a new one (Fruit-porters) having lately been formed (about six weeks ago).

The Fruit-porters formerly called "Serfs" had a grievance against the Fellowship Porters - a close corporation who had the preference in employment. The work was contracted for by the "Orange Gang" ~~"Orange porters Limited"~~ who take it from the brokers and employ other porters (at the same rate as they themselves are paid except a trifle for use of Knife) to do the work which they cannot do. The "Fellowship porters" have hitherto exercised what they deemed to be their right to preference

See text of this Agreement

so that the unprivileged "serfs" only got their leavings. Now the way this operated was this: the work is paid for at 1½ or 2d a package, but a package of Tomatoes weighs say 2 cwt or more, & of apples 3/4 cwt. Sometimes again one package has to be taken further than another. The privileged fellowship porters ~~had~~ could therefore pick & choose, waiting idle if the package was heavy, & claiming the job if it was light. The "serfs" at length rebelled & sent a deputation to the Dockers' Central office. Mr D. Cullen (Britannia, Fish Street Hill) was employed to search out the old rights of the Fellowship porters in the Guildhall Library & found that the privilege only applied to fruit or that could be meted with a measure, – not to packages of green fruit. ~~At~~ The serfs (re-christened "Fruit-porters") were formed into a Branch of the Dock Union, & they came out on strike for 14 days against the fellowship porters. The Orange porters Association then agreed that each & every man at the Waterside should take his fair turn, each man to get a permit to work from the Orange porters. The new system

payment by ticket, but as these tickets are cashed by publicans, a new grievance has arisen which it is hoped will soon be got over.

The Fellowship porters are standing on their dignity & refusing to work, pending a decision of the question.

They are a close body, getting their permit from the Court of Common Council, but as their history & the conditions of membership Mr. Brien is not clear. Commissioners Kerr & Mr. Bohun (of Temple) have decided against their claim to a monopoly of carrying packages.

Mr. Cullen can give a mass of information as to Orange & ~~Fish porters.~~ Fruit-porters.

There used to be a Fish porters' Branch of the Dockers Union. Thinks it has now fallen to pieces. The members expected everything to be done for them in a day. The Dockers offered to test their legal position & helped them in various ways, but they fell off. [Clem. Edwards is of opinion that the Branch is still going but is confined to No 3 District].

It is not quite clear whether the members of the Fish porters branch were the privileged men shutting against outsiders or vice versa. The

whole position of the Fish-porters & their licenses & privileges wants to be thoroughly investigated.] Brien thinks they were non-privileged men – i.e. not those who were retained by salesmen & got the preference of jobs, but still men with licenses from the Fish-mongers' Hall. Thinks there are 12 to 1400 licenses going; & the market is flooded. Brien contends for "the absolute right of buyers to have his goods carried home by whom he pleases" [– a queer doctrine for a Trade Unionist whose Union has in its day blocked the Carts not driven by Union men!]

There appear to be grievances about rent for barrows, "robbing money" &c.

=

The Tea trade becomes flat for three months together. Many tea-men work at painting in summer. Painters' Union object to this now unless they have a Painters' or Painters' & Labourers' Union ticket ~~otherwise~~

=

He is strongly of opinion that the strength of the Union is not to be measured by the Financial members only.

The hardest blow struck at the Union had been the rule of Nov 4th last which prevented inspection of tickets, by taking on men inside. Also rise from 2d to 3d a week caused a falling off. Men in his district did not pay up the levy.

Classes of workers divided as follows: –

Permanent men

Recommended men { A tickets / B tickets / C tickets

Unrecommended – casuals.

J.A. 1921.5

Sept. 21. 91

Mr. J. Ballard, Secy of Black Bull branch of Dockers' Union. His district is above ~~Southwark~~ London Bridge to St. Paul's, & the 4 principal wharves are Red Lion, Smith's (Queenhithe), Brooke's & Monument. Works in the tea department at Red Lion wharf, & is on the A. list.

His branch is composed mainly of men working in the district. Men usually join the branch near where they work. There are 308 on the books of the branch, 95 being financial. All those on the books have paid something this year, a new book being started annually. 770 members have passed thro' the branch since its formation.

About a year ago the late Secy of the branch was found a defaulter for £35, & was imprisoned. This shook confidence & led to a great falling off of members. Men who got permanent jobs also wd. not keep up their

payments, & others were too mean to pay unless under compulsion, & this they had been unable to apply in many cases since the new plan adopted by the employers in Nov. last. All these things brought the ~~Society~~ branch to a low ebb, but things were getting better now. The entrance fee had, on the application of the members, been reduced in this branch from 5/6 to 2/9, with good results. 8 new members have joined this quarter. Others are paying up arrears, & as in some cases (e.g. the tea dept at Red Lion Wharf) they are able to insist on all the men being unionists, there is prospect of the branch becoming stronger. There have been about 10 transfers from the branch during the year. The average age of members is about 35 years; they are nearly all Londoners. A proposal is now before the Dock Union Congress to give £6 on the death of a member; if this is

carried it will greatly increase the number of financial members.

Members are not reckoned as in arrears on account of not paying a levy.

In the tea departments there is fair work for 8 months in the year. During the slack time, some of the men go as painters labourers or get odd jobs as labourers in other ways. Many of the casual men belong to the Army Reserve. Most of the casuals are men accustomed to dock work, but there are several new faces among them.

The work is much more regular than it used to be. In some places there is regular work all year round; in other places the work might be better regulated if there was more room - there is not enough room to allow of the proper complement of men being employed on the work in hand.

In the colonial depts. men are all unionists; in Brooke's Wharf none are.

Mr. Ballard has great hopes from the federation of all trade & labour unions. He believes it wd. prevent strikes, & lead to the settlement of disputes by arbitration, as the federation wd. be powerful enough to compel the employers to accept arbitration. Also believes in eqn. 8 hour day. He seems to be an energetic little man. Sells 2 quires of the "Trades Unionist" weekly amongst his members, & is busy in getting contributions for a new banner, wh. is to cost £31. Has applied for subscriptions most impartially in all directions, sometimes with success.

No non Union men imported into his district. Most non Unionists now working there have been Union men. Permanent men mostly non-Unionists

JA
HLS

Sept. 22. 91

Mr. W. Green, Secy of Somerset branch of Dockers Union. Most of the members are day workers at Cutler St. warehouses, where he himself is employed, being on the B list. There are 250 members on the books of the branch, about 90 of whom are financial. Have had from 280 to 300 members altogether. 90 % of those in arrears are Unionist in principle, & wd. probably stand by the Union in a dispute. 3 new members have been made this year; none this quarter. About 20 have been transferred since the founding of the branch. He does not strike members off the books unless they die or transfer. They do not insist on arrears if men have been ill or out of work, & come to start paying up again. The branches adopt their own policy in these respects. A man can belong to any branch he chooses, but usually joins that most connected with his work. He

keeps the members up with their payments by looking them up & taking their subscription in the warehouse. Believes one of the chief reasons why men don't pay up is because of their having to take their money to a particular place at a particular time. The men in this branch are a more respectable & capable class than the generality. Most of them are permanent or list men. He did not approve of the instructions of the Union that members must not take permanent places, & when members asked his advice he favored their accepting permanent work; consequently they took it & remained in the Union. The branch meetings of the Union are poorly attended; there is not enough to interest the men. There ought to be more frequent meetings organised from the Centre; the men want continually educating & keeping up to the mark. There have been 2 levies of a shilling each made. The first

Levy was for the Australian strike, & the men paid up well, but the second one, wh. was for Cardiff, the men largely refused to pay, considering that they ought all to have been consulted before ordering a strike. His own opinion was that the executive shd. consult all the branch secretaries in a matter of this kind.

Many members dropped out when the fee was raised from 2d to 3d. He thought 1½d per week wd. be quite enough for the men to pay; there wd. be a great many more pay, & the financial condition wd. be better than it is now. [There have been about 6 deaths since the opening of the branch.] Funeral benefit as proposed wd. also have effect of largely increasing the subscriptions

At the Coutler St. warehouses raw silk, feathers & tea are the principle goods handled. Over 1000

Compare with our diagram

men are employed in the busiest time; about 500 in the slackest time. The silk comes pretty regularly through the year, but there are intervals of about 6 weeks between the tea & feather sales, wh. last about 3 weeks. About 100 are employed in the silk dept, of whom 40 are permanent; In the tea, about ~~40~~ 50 have regular work, & about 50 are taken on for the sales.

Practically all the men in the Cutler St warehouses belong to the Union; there are about 10 opponents (old hands who did not join the strike) & they have a warm time of it. It is of opinion that the permanent men become lazy & are more costly to the Companies!

The managers at Cutler St are friendly to the Union; any complaints go straight to the directors, & altogether they get along very comfortably. The permanent men get

4

24/- a week, & about a ~~fifth~~ tenth of them in the general depts & a fifth in the silk, get 2/- contingency money, for skill in handling certain kinds of goods. They work 48 hrs. a week, & must work till ½ past 4 to make up for dinner time before being allowed to charge overtime. From 4.30 to 6 they are paid at the rate of 6d hr.; after 6, 8d hr. The list men get 4/6 a day, & taking lost time probably average £1 a week for the year; after 4 they get 8d an hour.

The men who come in for the feather sales probably get 30/- to £2 (piece work) while the sales are on, & may average 15/- for the year. Men come in from other branches of work in the busy season.

Most of the men who are taken on at these warehouses are known to the trade. They don't hang about

for work like they do at the dock gates, but come at the regular seasons.

The only grievance the men have is the refusal ~~of the~~ to take any man on the permanent staff who is over 33. This had the effect of shutting out men who had been regular workers at the warehouse for 20 years, (including himself).

In this branch of the Union, just after the strike, when the blacklegs were compelled to join, they stopped some of them 3 weeks work & fined them £2!

The men in this Branch evidently pride themselves on not being as ~~other~~ "dockers" are.

Mr Green thinks that the slackness of work in the Summer months is due to the long days in the middle of summer, when each man gets through more work & hence there is not enough for all

He will send Mr. Cornwall, delegate to district committee, if we wish to see him.

The members nearly all work in the Uptown wool warehouses or Red Lion wharf.

J a 98a

Sept. 28. 91

Mr. Dewitt, Secy Commercial Rd branch D. U.

About 600 tickets have been issued since branch opened. There are 49 names for this year on books but only 13 financial. Things were at such a low ebb that he was just going up to the Central office to ask that this branch might be dissolved, & the members transferred. The officers had worked for nothing this quarter. Upwards of 70 members have been transferred from this branch, 24 this year.

No new members have been admitted this year. He strikes the names off every quarter of those in arrears, so practically there are only 13 members now.

The raising of the subscription had a very bad effect, & so also did the Cardiff levy. For the Australian strike ~~these~~ men paid up wonderfully

well, many of them giving 4/- or 5/- altogether, but the Cardiff levy caused great dissatisfaction. They thought it unjust & unnecessary, & coming at a very bad time of the year, made it more unfortunate. They passed a resolution not to pay it, but he nevertheless believes most of the men wd. have paid had they been able to do so. As it was, a few paid, & one or two were paying even now, in order to have their books clear. The effect on the branch was that in one week the payments of members fell from £1. 1. 10 to 8/7, & they had been decreasing ever since. [Books produced to show this] His opinion was that levies, unless in a benefit society, had very bad results.

The branch meets every Friday, from 7 to 9, for the purpose of paying subscriptions. If members are in arrear he reminds them when he meets them, &

occasionally writes to them.

In the first place, members usually join the branch nearest to where they work, but often transfer to that nearest to where they live, finding it most convenient.

Usual ages of members from 30 to 40; none under 20, & only 4 over 60. Very few old men in docks, but in his opinion they get their fair share of work, & are not left out because of age.

The members are mostly married. There is a small percentage of Irishmen, & one German. Only known 3 Germans in Wool Dept.

Change of system at docks had very little effect on union.

In the Uptown Warehouses (wool) about 50% are non-union men. The union & non-union men work on amicable terms, & this probably has the effect of keeping down the number of union members.

Compare with the diagrams

Have we particulars of these men?

In the busiest time about 4000 men are employed in the wool warehouses & this goes down to 100 in slack time. The 3 firms in this trade are Gooch & Cousens, London Wall Brown & Eagles (ft. Abi St, Backchurch Lane, & Hayden Sq.) & Cousens, Leman St. [Promises to send particulars of no. employed by each firm). Gooch & Cousens employ nearly all their men by the week, so that if a man is taken on he will have a week's work.

The work is in the wool dept., & is all day work. Pay is 5/- a day, from 8 to 6; an hour being allowed for dinner out of this; 8d an hour before 8 or after 6. The men are paid every night by the cashier. Each man on getting work receives a metal ticket with number on, wh. he gives up when paid.

Thinks the average earnings of the men for the year wd. be under 15/-

Had kept particulars of his own earnings for some years. One year his average was as high as 21/11, but that was quite exceptional. Usually it was from 17/- to 18/-, but he was fortunate in being able to go from one warehouse to another & get work. The wool men are a rather better class than the ordinary dock labourers. In the busy season many of them work from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. & Saturdays from 6 to 8, & earn about £2.10 a week.

The busy times are when sales are on. There is one at latter end of Jany, lasting from a fortnight to 3 weeks; one in March, about 3 weeks; one in May-June, about 4 weeks; one in June-July, about 4 weeks; one in Sept-Oct, about 4 weeks; & one in Nov., about a fortnight. Altogether ~~from~~ 4 to 5 months in year.

Some make enough in busy season to last them over slack time; some get work at other warehouses; a few go

into the workhouse, or come out a week before the sales commence again; very few, if any, get work away fm. waterside.

There was a strike in the wool dept. ~~[illegible]~~ after the great dock strike, for the payment of dinner hour money. This took place at the end of June, just as the sales were on. The men came out at the dinner hour, but the employers quickly conceded the demand, & called the men in again at 3. Since then the payment of dinner hour money had been maintained, though there had been disputes about it. In the wool warehouse where he had been employed for 12 years it came to the ears of the men recently that the employers intended to knock off the dinner hour money. The men called a meeting about it, & as a consequence it was not done, but one or two who had taken the lead (including himself as

the branch secy) were marked, & cd. get no work. He went to Mr. Ash, a member of the firm, & asked him how this was, & was told that if he & the other older hands wd. hold a meeting in the warehouse & agree to come back at 6d. an hour (without denying how many) there was plenty of work for them.

His own opinion (& he repeated it several times) was that they were not honestly entitled to the payment of Dunn's hour money, but that the agreement was that they were to be paid 5/- a day (not paid by the hour at all).

In his district the A, B, C. lists have now been done away with. According to the terms of these lists, the A men, if taken on, were to have a full week's work, & the B men a full day. But they sometimes found after they had

taken the men on that they had not a week's work for them. So they abolished the lists, & now only had preference men & casuals.

The list men were not such a good class as the casuals. Many of them were the blacklegs who had been taken on during the great strike; they were physically incapable, & the employers were glad to get their old hands back as occasion offered.

He expressed his strong disapproval of the strike at Heritage & Carron's wharf, & said he cd. have gone there & earned £3 last week.

Owing to his being boycotted at the wool warehouses, he has been almost entirely out of work for a fortnight, altho' this shd. be his busiest time. Had that day been working on railway at 5d an hour.

[24 - Don't this blacklegging]

Sept 30-1891 37 No 3. District

Mr G. Adams. G & A W.P. Blackwell Branch.

This Branch was formed after the strike; the employés of Messrs Turner, Blewitt & Co forming the nucleus. About 300 tickets have been issued and there have only been about 20 transfers since formation of branch.

At the beginning of 1891 there were 120 financial members on the books. The number was reduced to 62 by the negligence of the secretary [He had appropriated some of the funds and neglected to write up his books. Mr Adams was president of branch at that time].

Thirty new members have joined during 1891; most of these in the early part of the year: only one during July to Sept. quarter. The secretary's wrong doing caused a feeling of distrust.

About 60 members have been struck off during the year. Before the name is taken off book, a copy of printed notice is sent to the man. Secretary has all the addresses.

Raising the subscription had a bad effect. Members began to drop off.

The levies were paid. The Australian was paid

cheerfully. The Cardiff levy, they did not like so well but most of the men paid it. Being permanent men, they did not feel the pressure as others did. "They grumbled & paid"

Subscriptions are paid at the meetings.

The men mostly live in Poplar & Bromley They join the branch, irrespective of where they live – join with their companions – and afterwards transfer to branch near their homes. Most live near their work.

Most of the men are between the ages of 25 & 40. There are none under 20 & they have no junior branch. Only 4 members are over 60: they are permanent hands – grown up with the establishment

Majority of the men are married; probably about 10% of single men. All are English.

Most of the men in this branch are seed crushers and millers; only about 12 dockers. Most are employed at Turner Blewett & Co's. After the strike (14 days), ~~the~~ at T.B. & Co's when the men were successful, Messrs Stead another firm in the same trade raised their wages 10% and a month

later they obtained another 10% rise. After this Messrs Stead discharged the men & brought some men from Lynn (Walker's Oil Mills) to take their places. The secretary ~~(Mr)~~ of the union got these men to join. In the summer, work was slack and most of them were sent back to Lynn. This firm employs countrymen in preference to Londoners. Dan Murray then went to Hersch's Oil mills, got the men to join & then they struck. After 13 weeks the men were defeated & all dropped out of the Union. May be four still members of the Blackwall Branch.

Now the position is as under:-

Hersch's — practically non-union

Gibbs " "

Turner & Blewett About 20% unionists. This firm employs about 70 men without counting the carters.

The unionists beat the non-unionists well with the exception of two men. These, formerly belonged to the Union but left & then tried to make mischief with the foremen. They have been boycotted.

In Oil Mills, busy season is from October to April; slack during summer. None of the

men are paid off at slack times but the mill will work short time. It may run for a fortnight & then stop for a week; employing the gangs alternately. The practical result being that all the men get rather more than half time.

Work is of two kinds: one known as the Anglo-American system & the other the "Old Style. The men work 5 days, 6 am to 6 pm with 30 minutes from breakfast (8·30 to 9 –) and 30 minutes for dinner (1–1·30) or 11 hours work. On saturdays they work 8½ hours one week and 6 hours the next. Before the strike in 1889, the men only had 12 minutes for breakfast & 12 minutes for dinner, working from 6 am to 6 pm.

Wages before strike were 30/- "old style". Now the 'old style' workers get 32/- per week. Anglo American. Before strike 'Pressmen' had 30/- Moulders 28/- and Parers 22/-. Present rates are: Pressmen 35/-; Moulders 30/-; & Parers 24/-.

The work is done in 'setts'; each being 12 minutes and during this time the man has to make 8 cakes. If he can do it in less time

he has the remainder of the time at his disposal, except that during these 'waits' he has to mend the bags, sweep up the place etc. The work usually takes about 7 minutes for pressmen + moulders and 9 minutes for the parers.

As to overtime, different methods obtain. Hersch's have a special gang for seed work; at Turner & Blewitt's, the men do it after they have done their 12 hours. Both firms employ their men for loading barges after the 12 hours.

It is managed thus: the mill is worked two shifts and the men who are on night work work on for 6 hours in the morning. During the busy season (Oct. to April) they will do this twice a week probably.

Payment for loading is 6d per hour; before the strike 5d. For unloading barges, (seed) 6d per 100 bags – each weight 1½ cwt. Cotton seed, (which comes in bulk) the rate is 1d per ton. At this work the men can average 1/- per hour.

Including over-time the men average about 30/- a week all the year round: the overtime about makes up for the slack time. The 'parers' who

The 12 minutes for the 'sett' is necessary as the cakes have to be subjected to hydraulic pressure for 6 minutes at least.

over.

(continued from previous leaf.)

are lads, would not average more than 17/ a week.

Since the strike in 1889 there has been no other except that at Hersch's in January 1890.

Mr A. says these oil millers are fairly respectable steady men; slightly above the ordinary docker.

At Turner & Blewetts, there are 18 pavers, one to each machine. The mills are very hot; the seed being heated in steam "kettles" by steam being forced thro' the seed which descends into the 'kettle' from a hopper.

[Mr A. is an intelligent young man. He learnt shorthand, typewriting & book keeping and has given up the mill work. He is now employed as a clerk at 147 Fenchurch Street, where he can be found if any other particulars are wanted.]

Mr. Murphy, Lanchester Branch of Dockers Union - No. 3 district.

Total number of tickets issued is 739. 58 have transferred. Present no. on books is 573. 112 are financial. 27 new members made this year, 4 of them this quarter. None struck off this year.

Raising of subscription led to a large number falling off. Australian levy was well paid; but for Cardiff only 1/3 was ~~paid~~ collected. A general meeting was called, & the men, without passing any resolution, agreed to ignore it. These levies for trade purposes have a very injurious effect, but in the case of death a voluntary levy in the branch is willingly responded to. He instanced one man on the death of whose wife £4 was collected. Since that time (Jan. last) that man had never paid

one penny to the Union, altho' earning £2 a week.

Subscriptions are taken at a meeting held every Wednesday, pm. 8 to 10. Members are written to at end of quarter if in arrear. Keep addresses posted up.

Men joined the Branch as a rule in connection with their work, but some have since transferred to branches nearer home, or some on account of change of work.

Average age slightly over 30; none under 20 or over 60. There are some old men in Millwall Dock among the casual hands; they get their full share of work, being employed in the hold of the ships or in light labour about the warehouses.

The classification does not affect the members of this branch.

The men are mostly unmarried.

about two-thirds are English; the rest mostly Irish, with a few Scotch.

[The firms covered by this branch are Dell & Co., grindstone builders, near Limehouse Church; Hirsch's oil mills, Salmon's Lane; & Aberdeen Wharf; there are also a few members at Millwall & at the Regent Canal Dock. There have been strikes at each of the 3 first places. The grindstone cutters at Dell & Co's, 12 in number, came out on principle at time of the great strike, & on going back at the end of that strike demanded an increase in pay. (They are all pieceworkers - paid at so much a stone) Failing to get this they struck again, & were supported by the Union. After 9 weeks struggle they got their price, but since then they have nearly all fallen out of the union. Out of the 12, only 2 are

now members, & one has died. At Hirsch's, where 200 to 300 hands are employed, the men struck last Feby for an increase from 5½d to 6d an hour & payment of meal times. The men were paid 10/- a week by the Union & the strike lasted 7 or 8 weeks. They went back at 5½d, but were paid for meal times. Only 3 or 4 of these men now remain in the branch. At Aberdeen Wharf the hands came out at time of great strike, & 75 of them joined this branch. They got their 6d, & then all fell out. The men at the Aberdeen & at Hirsch's have been lost for want of supervision. The firms will not allow the organiser or any representative of the Union to enter their premises, & the men therefore cannot be approached.

Of Regent's Canal Dock men they formerly had 15 in the branch, now have 11. The Millwall Dock

members are all good unionists, the union ticket being recognised & encouraged here. All the other firms covered by this branch are dead against the union.

The new system of 4th Nov. last led to a great falling off of members. When the men found they cd. get work without having the ticket they in many cases left the Union.

As to nos. employed: The nos. at Bell's & Hirsch's vary little; at Aberdeen Wharf about 230 are employed at busiest time, & this falls to 50 or less. They are mainly non-union men, but some of those who come in fm. other parts at busy times are probably unionists.

The work at Aberdeen Wharf is general cargo from Aberdeen – cattle, grain, skins, dead meat, &c. There are no particular seasons of work,

the boats coming in every Friday & leaving every Wednesday. Thursday or Friday are usually the slack days.

It is all day work at the Aberdeen & at Hirsch's; piece-work at Bell's, & also at Millwall, with exception of clerks & weighers.

At Aberdeen the hours are 8 to 6 in summer & 9 to 4 in winter; at Hirsch's 7 to 5, & 7 to 3 on Saturdays; at Millwall 8 to 6, worked as near as light will permit through the year.

At Hirsch's there is very little overtime; at Aberdeen 3 late nights a week, usually till 10 (4 hrs.)

Payment, 6d. an hour from 8 to 6; 8d. before or after. Wages paid daily by cashier at Aberdeen; weekly at Hirsch's.

The average wages at Hirsch's wd. be about 25/-; at Bells the grindstone cutters wd. make about 36/-; as to average at the Aberdeen Wkg. he cd. not say.

He is himself working at Millwall Dock, grain-weighing or clerking (not permanent). There are 22 permanent weighers, who get 24/- a week & 4d for every 100 qrs (200 sacks) weighed, wh. wd. bring up their weekly average to about 30/- The number of casual weighers taken on varies greatly. They receive 6d an hour & 4d per 100 qrs., & wd. not average right through more than 16/- week.

The men travel from one dock to another, many going to Surrey Commercial Dock when work is slack at the Aberdeen.

He has great hopes from reduction of entrance fee & giving funeral benefit. Promises to write later on as to its effect on his branch.

Mr Fitzgerald Britannia Branch Ft's District Dockers Union

About 210 tickets issued. – 6 transferred. 170 on books at present of which 145 are financial at present time. There were about 150 financial last June. Have admitted about 62 new members this year, 12 since June. Only 2 have been struck off during the year. –

The extra 1d was paid freely by majority a few dropped out, who he considered only ticket holders & not real Unionists.

All paid the Australian levy freely. The majority have paid the Cardiff levy, would have all paid up willingly only they thought it was made too late, it should have been made at the commencement of the strike. — The secretary attends weekly to receive subscriptions; most pay monthly, but a few run six weeks. –

Most of the members live in the neighbourhood of branch, a few at Victoria Docks & North Greenwich. – Ages of members are 24 to 55 there are none under 20 & only 2 over 60 who usually get work as trimmers (shovelling up the Grain) @ 4/9 per day, – are not classified. – Nearly all are married. Mostly English about 20 to 30 Irish no foreigners. Lost about 55 members in consequence of alteration in Docks last Nov., who only belonged as long as it was necessary to have tickets; they were not (in his opinion) unionists.

Nearly are are Grain workers in Millwall Docks, where inspection of tickets is still carried on. – The only nonunionists at this work are the Trimmers in the South Dock. —

In slack time when they go to other dock work they will work with the nonunionists in accordance with the instructions in the rules. — Sometimes there are 50 to 60 gangs employed at grainwork, but in slack times only about 26. — The work is very heavy, & injurious on account of the dust, but men are attracted to it on account of the extra pay. — The work is piecework, except the trimmers; the hours are 8 to ½ past 5. Gangmen have to be in attendance at ½ past 7. the trimmers not till 8; they also take on men at 10 & 1 but at no other times. — Overtime is paid at ½ a quarter extra; & they sometimes get a bonus from the skipper of the ship, if he is in a hurry to get away. — Usual pay is 2/3½ per hundred quarters They are paid by the Ganger, employed by the company. Standing gangs, of which there are 26, earn on an average 23/- to 24/- Others from 14/- to 15/-. The busiest times are October to Xmas & the slackest February - March & April. In slack times the men get other dock work; none work away from waterside. There have been no strikes since 1889. —

The Grainworkers are devided in to 26 permanent gangs & 8 secondary gangs, & in the busy times the numbers are made up from other Dockers. This branch are nearly all Grainworkers & contains the whole of the secondary gangs. — Thinks the extra penny was a mistake. — He thinks the funeral benefit should have been £6 & not £4 & thinks the decision of £4 will cause dissatisfaction

Thinks the union with the Federation will be a good thing; & that they should have one ticket throughout endorsed either; Dockers Union, Gas Stokers &c. — He would have no waiting; that is if 40 men were wanted & there were 20 Gas stokers & 20 Dockers waiting, he would take on the Dockers & then the Gas stokers at once, without waiting ~~for~~ ½ an hour or more for other Dockers to come up, as is done now. — Thinks the reduction of entrance fee will be a good thing. —

C.B
21.11.5. J.a. 53

Mr. H. Styles, Secretary of No. 5 District (Albert & Victoria Docks) of the Dockers Union. For the first 6 mos. after formation of Union he acted as Secy for the whole District, & enrolled 5557 members. It is now divided into 11 branches, & has fm. 3300 to 3500 financial members. About 2500 of these are the original members; of the other 3000 original members, some have gone to other Districts & some to the provinces. The men move about a good deal. A few go to sea, & to these every facility is given for transferring to the Sailors & Firemen's Union, & for coming back to the Dockers Union when again working ashore. The subscription to the S. & F. Union is 3d a week.

Branch Secretaries re-number every quarter, & a man in arrears for the last quarter wd. be allowed 6 weeks before being struck off books. Last week commencing a new quarter, many paid up. Owing to number of applications fm. branches to District committee, they had now decided that each branch shd. deal with its own arrears. One delegate is elected fm.

each branch to the District Committee. At the recent election some new men came in.

He thought raising of subscription was good policy, & though there was a good deal of dissatisfaction at first, it was not seen to be necessary. Of the extra 1d, ½d was for federation, & ½d funeral benefit. Members did not fall off through the increase.

There were very few freemen of Thames at work in the docks, but a good many non-freemen. The members of the Union are ~~nearly all~~ mainly casual hands – only a few preference or permanent men. The latter only kept in while they had power to challenge the tickets.

They were not on friendly terms with the Permanent Labourers Union, as it tried to wean away their members. It is really an Employers Union. The subscription is 2d a week & there is sick benefit. It is more of a benefit society than a trade union.

There are only two classes in the docks now – permanent & preference men. The company are thinning out the number of preference men, not having work for them all now that the ship-

settled by a regular payment.

Mr. Styles believes that the only way to improve the condition of the men is for the Union to take the work direct from the shipowners, & employ their own men. He has prepared a list of the gear, &c., necessary, but the Union cd. not see their way to laying out the money.

owners are discharging their own vessels. The shipowners are employing union men, or rather the men are employed by agents who take the work from the shipowners. The dock companies will not now undertake the unloading of ships, & the permanent or preference men whom they employ are mainly engaged in storing the goods.

The lines run on the co-operative system in the Victoria Dock are the Johnson, Furness, Royal Mail, City, & Tyser. The Royal Mail & City lines employ a foreman & keep the work in their own charge. The men prefer this, because they are paid 7d an hour & 1/- hour overtime. The Tyser line also do the work under a foreman, & this being very cold work (frozen meat) pay 8d hour. The foremen keep the names of the men in a book, & call them out in order as required. Each has his own list & knows his own men & there is no chance of a man getting the preference for work in 2 lists. If any more are required when a foreman has exhausted his own list, they are picked out promiscuously

It does not believe in compulsory levies. Thinks it much better to call the men together & get them to voluntarily agree to give something.

The men in this district agreed to have a levy in case of death, & it was paid in the first few cases, but the deaths were so numerous that the men cd. not keep it up. They had 125 deaths last winter in 4 months.

Funeral Benefit. - The £4 funeral benefit now agreed upon will be paid out of general funds of union. It is nominally reckoned at ½d weekly or 2½ %.

Federation. - There are 34 unions in the new federation. He believes it will do away with a good deal of friction.

Strikes. - There have been several petty strikes. There was one in Nov. over a carman who had not a union ticket. It cost the union £139, but failed because Carmen's Union wd not take the case up. They paid the men on strike 3/- a day. There have also been disputes between the corn porters & their employers as to payment of dust money - now

from applicants. The City line usually takes on from 90 to 100 men for one of its boats, & the job will last about 5 days, working 10 hrs. a day, or 60 hrs in all. The men are divided into gangs according to number of holds, so that a gang knows when it has finished its hold there is no more work to be had on that job. This is a good way of arranging the work. The men seldom work after 6. The City line jobs are the longest, except in the case of vessels of 3000 tons working overside, when the work lasts 9 days. In this case the work goes more slowly, employing fewer men for a longer period. The City line has one boat every fortnight. The ship men working for this line get 5 to 6 days work in that time, the quay men 9 days.

As showing the way in wh. the men sometimes fail to make the best of the co-operative system, he mentioned a case where a gang of men were working on the Johnson line, & cd. not make the work pay at the price given. An agent took on the work at same price, employed same men, & made a profit of £25. 17. 3 on

weeks. As a rule, they cd. manage if provident. There is more regular work since strike; taking on of men by shipowners tends to more regularity.

Mr. Styles is a staunch abstainer, & says he has 500 ~~teetotallers~~ mostly of his making in the docks in his district. They belong to the Phoenix order.

Old men – are low down on foremen's lists, & get elbowed out of the lighter jobs by young men. A certain number of old men go into workhouse in winter; will keep their union cards & pay up when they get work again. Sometimes the branch will wipe off arrears in these cases. Their having been in workhouse does not go against them.

Levies – Total amount paid in his district for australian strike was just upon £1300. The men agreed to pay 3d for every day they were at work, & men who missed a day wd. sometimes pay 6d out of their next days earnings. The Cardiff levy, wh. was really to replenish the reserve fund of the union, was paid in his district as a rule.

one job, merely by overlooking the men & making them go faster. He paid the men 6d an hour. He had another job & also did well, & then disappeared without paying a plus he had promised.

The average number employed in the docks in this district is about 2000, & it rises to nearly 6000 in busiest times. Last week they were very busy; over 5000 must have been at work, & on some days they cd. have taken another 500 had they been forthcoming; but no notice being given that the men wd. be wanted, those waiting for work at other docks did not attend. Men wd. come fm. other parts if some notice was given. He thought if employers wd. give notice overnight that some extra work was coming on next day, it wd. be an advantage both to themselves & the men.

There are a lot of younger (single) men who, when they have worked about 3 days, & earned 15/- or 16/-, have got as much as they want, & take a rest. The older men, having a family to keep, work hardest. There are not many half-day men now, as there used to be. This is because there is no call between 10 & 1, &

only on special occasions one in the afternoon, in the docks where the union has influence. In Victoria & Albert, however, where they have free labour, they take men on at any time. If taken on in the morning a man must be paid 2/- at least, & though there is no rule as to this in afternoon, they have made such arrangements that it is usually given. A man must not work more than 24 hrs at a stretch unless the ship can be finished by 12 o'ck (28 hrs. altogether). He must then rest till next morning.

The 7d an hour now appertaining in many cases is in return for certain extras for handling dirty goods, &c., wh. are now abolished. Those working at 7d get an hour given for dinner; those at 8d are not paid meal time. Overtime at 1/- only extends before 6 a.m. or after 6 p.m., although ordinary working hours are 8 to 6. If men work all night they get 13/- for 10 hrs. actual work. As a consequence of these heavy wages there is very little overtime.

He goes every morning to the different gates at Victoria & Albert docks, to see that men have their union cards. If in arrears he warns them to pay up, & if they don't do so he blocks them. Very seldom has to do this.

He is able to take this course by arrangement with the foremen of the lines who employ union men. The lines, wh., though generally employing non-union men, will not let him examine cards or interfere in any way, are the Alfred Holt, P & O, British India & Hill. In these cases they manage to keep an eye on the men by means of those working there. The New Zealand & Shaw Saville lines employ all free labour, about 200 men.

Taken all round the men do not average more than 3 or 4 days a week, though some with the preferences may get fully 5 days. At one end of the scale are young men who won't make more than 3 days, at the other old men who cannot, & between are the bulk who may get 4 days.

The seasons of work have been largely done away with by steam in these docks. The tobacco workers have their season, wh. begins next month; these men do not move about much, but may do a little in other depts. in slack time. It is very rarely that a man from other depts. gets work in the Tobacco.

The longest period wh. the men in these docks usually have idle is 9 days, though some have 3 or 4