



Photo: Andrew Wiard

Liverpool dockers' epic battle

We fight for the movement

WE rejected the recent proposals from management because they were basically only a monetary offer and our avowed intention over the past fifteen or sixteen months has been to attain reinstatement in the port of Liverpool.

There was no statement or question of reinstatement in the offer. Another reason was that the people who originally set up the picket line, the former Torside workers, were not included in any way in the proposals from Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

We're throwing all our efforts into making the international dockers' general strike on 20 January a solid day of action and we are getting word back now from our international colleagues.

The New Zealand longshoremen and the Australians have declared they are going to come along with us, the West Coast of America as well.

The Japanese dockworkers are going

Liverpool docker Bobby Morton spoke to *Workers' Liberty*.

to close fifty ports in Japan on that day.

At the moment we have guarantees in Europe from Germany, Italy, France and we are working on Belgium to try and get them to come on board with us too.

We have had solidarity action from Israel in the past. We have sent faxes to them but they have yet to reply.

We have found that the day of action — and this wasn't intentional — does coincide with a push by employers on an international basis in the ports to privatise and deregulate. This gives us an opportunity to express what we want, and it also gives dockers an opportunity to fire a shot across the bows at their own employers with their own problems.

We have had magnificent support

from around Britain. The one thing that we don't have is solidarity around the ports because, since 1989, there has been no trade union recognition. We don't have any links with the rest of the ports. But from elsewhere in the country there is a great deal of solidarity.

People sent us messages of support, cards, everything over the Christmas holiday, and they made sure that our people weren't in a position where they could be starved over Christmas.

There are all kinds of action that could win, but the problem is getting people to come along with us, such as the Labour Party. If the Labour Party voiced their support that would be a major step.

Obviously if the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union instructed his members to support the dispute that would go a long way towards winning it.

If there are no ships coming into the

Karl Marx: Economic nationalism

Today economic nationalists champion "our" economy in Britain against the allegedly destructive domination of the European Union or of America. 150 years ago, the foremost American economist of the day, H. C. Carey, was protesting against the destructive influence on his national economy of... England. Karl Marx replied as follows.

ALL over the world, the harmony of economic laws appears as disharmony, and even Carey himself is struck by the beginnings of this disharmony in the United States. What is the source of this strange phenomenon? Carey explains it with the destructive influence of England, with its strivings for industrial monopoly, upon the world market.

As the commanding power of the world market, England distorts the harmony of economic relations in all the countries of the world.

What Russia is, politically, for Urquhart, England is, economically, for Carey.

The harmony of economic relations rests, according to Carey, on the harmonious cooperation of town and countryside, industry and agriculture. Having dissolved this fundamental harmony

in its own interior, England, by its competition, proceeds to destroy it throughout the world market, and is thus the destructive element of the general harmony. The only defence lies in protective tariffs — the forcible, national barricade against the destructive power of large-scale English industry. Hence, the state, which was at first branded the sole disturber of these 'harmonies économiques', is now these harmonies' last refuge.

Carey here again articulates the specific national development of the United States, their antithesis to and competition with England. This takes place in the naïve form of suggesting to the United States that they destroy the industrialism propagated by England, so as, by protective tariffs, to develop the

same more rapidly themselves.

All the relations which appear harmonious to him within specific national boundaries or, in addition, in the abstract form of general relations of bourgeois society — e.g. concentration of capital, division of labour, wage labour etc. — appear as disharmonious to him where they appear in their most developed form — in their world market form — as the internal relations which produce English domination on the world market, and which, as destructive influences, are the consequence of this domination.

The concentration of capital within a country and the dissolving effect of

this concentration present nothing but positive sides to him. But the monopoly of concentrated English capital and its dissolving effect on the smaller national capitals of other countries is dishar-

monious. What Carey has not grasped is that these world-market disharmonies are merely the ultimate expressions of the disharmonies which have become fixed as abstract relations within the economic categories or which have a local existence on the smallest scale.

Hence, where the economic relations confront him in their truth, i.e. in their universal reality, his principled optimism turns into a denunciatory, irritated pessimism. This contradiction forms the originality of his writings and gives them their significance. He is equally an American in his assertion of the harmony within bourgeois society, as in his assertion of the disharmony of the same relations in their world-market form.

From Grundrisse, p.886-7

port of Liverpool then the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company cannot function as a port authority, so where a number of shipping companies have been helpful to us we need to exert as much pressure as possible on the company. We hope the action on the 20th will increase that pressure.

We've been trying this for fifteen weeks; some companies did withdraw, albeit on a part-time basis, but if our international action is successful on 20 January then that type of action will be repeated, hopefully on a weekly or a monthly basis.

The shipping companies tend to be very impatient, and I'm sure that if there's disruption to their services, especially the lines that don't deal directly with Liverpool, then they will put pressure on Mersey Docks.

When the Women of the Waterfront group was founded, a number of our shop stewards — not all of them, but a number of them — were slightly sceptical of it, and didn't take it as seriously as they should have taken it.

We had a group mainly of housewives, without a political thought in their heads, coming together — that was 12, 13 months ago — and from there they've developed into a very highly politicised group. We wouldn't be able to manage the campaign without them.

They now go round the country and internationally in their own right as supporters of the sacked dockworkers. They're doing a wonderful job for us.

We have asked for a meeting with Bill Morris.

There was a fair amount of confusion reigning in the Merseyside area over the holiday when Bill Morris was alleged to have made a statement supporting the imposition of an independent secret postal ballot on our people, even though we've already voted not to take part in such a ballot because it doesn't include all of our members.

We want to sit down with Bill Morris, discuss the situation on the ballot and ask him how he intends, as a general secretary, to support us now we've rejected the company's ultimate final offer.

Our first message is one of thanks to all the people who've supported us in the past, and the second is a plea to them to continue to support us because, from a very small industrial dispute involving 500 people, it's become a great concern to the working class nationally.

We're aware that we're not just fighting for ourselves, that we are fighting for the labour movement, so we would ask everyone to continue whatever support they can give us, no matter how small.