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FACULTY OF ARTS
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WORKING CONDITIONS AND LABOUR RELATIONS IN SOUTHAMPTON'S PORT INDUSTRIES BETWEEN THE WARS

by R.F. EWER

Doctor of Philosophy - 1987

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

HISTORY

Doctor of Philosophy

WORKING CONDITIONS AND LABOUR RELATIONS IN SOUTHAMPTON'S PORT INDUSTRIES BETWEEN THE WARS

The port industries under consideration are shipping, dock and harbour services, and shipbuilding and repairing. In Southampton the most important of these was shipping, and in particular the transatlantic passenger trade. The transference from Liverpool to Southampton of the major portion of this trade created considerable interest in the great liners, and overshadowed the contribution made by those who manned the ships and provided the back-up services in port. Less attention has since been given to the related industries of cargo-handling and ship-repairing, which, in Southampton, were dependent upon and influenced by the passenger trade.

This thesis aims to redress the deficiencies in the literature and show that, whilst the concentration of passenger shipping provided certain benefits, it also inhibited development in other ways. Because the pattern of employment was largely determined by the regular schedules of transatlantic shipping, it was different from ports where employment was determined by the flow of cargo vessels. Consequently, in Southampton labour problems such as casualism and under-employment were emphasised, even where unemployment was less severe. This was true of all three trade groups.

The framework of employment and labour relations is described because it is essential to an understanding of the labour situation and the problems which were inherent in port industries between the wars, and the effect on them of the economic climate of those years.

In order to assess the position of Southampton, five comparative major ports, covering passenger and freight shipping, are examined in relation to the effects of cyclical and seasonal fluctuations. The extent to which ports with a strong passenger influence differed from those where that influence was absent is also considered. The themes traced are employment levels and conditions, wages and earnings, trade disputes and the interaction of workers, employers and trade unions.

The conclusions drawn are, broadly, that the passenger and South African freight tradesmade their own significant contributions to the Port of Southampton, but that insufficient advantage was taken of the opportunities they offered to improve employment conditions. The port contributed to the national economy, and more should have been achieved for port labour, both locally, where it was possible to negotiate individually, and for the national good, where collective agreements were concerned.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
AMWU	Amalgamated Marine Workers Union
ASW	Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers
BOT	Board of Trade
BSU	British Seafarers' Union
DWRGWU	Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union
EAENF	Engineering & Allied Employers' National Federation
EETPU	Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union
FEST	Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades
IMSG	Imperial Merchant Service Guild
LJC	Local Joint Council
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MMSA	Mercantile Marine Service Association
NASOHSPD	Nat. Amal. Society of Operative House & Ships Painters & Decorators
NFBTO	National Federation of Building Trades Operatives
NCPLE	National Council of Port Labour Employers
NJCDL	National Joint Council for Dock Labour
NMB	National Maritime Board
NSFU	National Sailors' and Firemen's Union
NTWF	National Transport Workers Federation
NUFW	National Union of Foundry Workers
NUGW	National Union of General Workers
NUS	National Union of Seamen
NUSSCBB	National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers
P & O	Peninsula and Oriental
PEA	Port Employers' Association
PLA	Port of London Authority
PLC	Port Labour Committee
PRC	Port Registration Committee
PSA	Port Sanitary Authority
RMSP	Royal Mail Steam Packet Co.
SCESEA	South Coast Engineering and Shipbuilding Employers' Association
SEF	Shipbuilding Employers' Federation
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UOPA	United Operative Plumbers' Association
UPA	United Pattermakers Association

INTRODUCTION

The period selected for study has not been chosen because the inter-war years represent a specific development or have any particular claim to stand on their own. They form part of a wider period of change, for example, the increasing trend of amalgamation, federation and rationalisation in industry, commerce, employers' organisations and trade unions - the search for an economic system which could deal with world fluctuations in currency values and repetitive trade cycles - the polarisation of world political views - the steady decline in Britain's staple industries and the growth of new industries linked to an expanding technology - the development of manufacturing industries in former markets for finished goods - the growing awareness of society's needs in terms of education, leisure, nutrition and the alleviation of poverty. The continuity of these broad movements was interrrupted by two world wars and the intervening years form a convenient span of time in which to examine some of the developments within this general period.

From before the first world war until air travel robbed it of its trade Southampton was famed for its shipping and great passenger liners. Less attention has yet been given to the passage of life as it affected the many local men and women who looked to the port for their livelihoods, and who contributed to the prosperity of the town with their labour.

In the period between the wars effort was put into expanding the port's capabilities, not only for passenger liners, but also for imports and exports, and ship and yacht building. Unfortunately, progress had to contend with economic difficulties which resulted in high national unemployment in which shipbuilding was grievously affected, and shipping and associated services suffered a severe set back.

Between the wars Southampton ranked fifth in the U.K. in terms of value of freight trade, but the tonnage and value of its imports and exports were far behind those of London and Liverpool. The most important part of Southampton's economy was its passenger shipping which made it one of the busiest ports in the world for the employment of seamen, particularly those in the Catering Department, which included all persons not engaged in the Deck and Engineroom Departments.

The volume of passenger shipping was largely responsible for the level of employment in another port industry - that of ship-repairing.

Southampton's mercantile ship building output was confined to small vessels and yachts during the interwar period and its contribution to naval tonnage was also modest, even taking into account vessels built for foreign governments, but the work of the shipyards on repair work kept many men employed throughout the depression years and occasionally required reinforcements from outside the port in other years. Some two thirds to three quarters of shipyard work between the wars was repair and overhaul of ocean-going liners and passenger ferries operating on the continental and Channel Island routes.

In looking at the economic situation the aim of this study is to see to what extent the dominant influence of Southampton's passenger shipping affected employment levels and conditions, wages and labour relations. For example, were seasonal and cyclical trends in Southampton's port industries similar to those in ports where the type and volume of trade were different? Busy entrepot ports which handled the large freight-carrying ships and dealt with enormous tonnages of goods spread over extensive dock areas were notoriously top heavy with surplus dock labour. By the same token a port such as Southampton with shipping which required enormous crews of intermittently employed seamen might have been flooded with surplus seamen.

Passenger shipping, by the nature of its scheduled and seasonal sailings, created its own pattern of casualism and seasonality. These employment problems existed elsewhere and in other industries, but they were increased where seasonal specialisation was a feature of a port's shipping. In providing a style of sea travel unequalled in the world, both in luxury and magnitude, Southampton became a port dominated by less than full time employment, even without suffering extreme economic depression, because its employment pattern was adapted to suit the transatlantic sailing schedules which favoured part-week working.

The decline in shipbuilding was universal between the wars and inevitably included Southampton's small shipbuilding industry. This was coupled with the equally significant decline in its ship-repairing industry, caused by the alteration to shipping in the port, which reduced expenditure on luxury class maintenance, thus lowering the overall volume of ship-repair carried out during the early 1930s. It was the second largest group of insured workers in the port who looked to the shipyards for support and their dependence on passenger shipping meant that they were affected by the world economic circumstances which reduced the numbers of sea-travelling public.

The issues of registration and decasualisation of dockworkers are examined here bearing in mind the facts that Southampton's dock labour

requirement during these years was small and that, despite the port's shipping being more closely tied to regular arrival and departure schedules than most ports, its transatlantic emphasis produced a heavy seasonal bias. Sectionalism among local dockworkers did not cause serious problems, partly because the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union (DWRGWU) had attracted the majority of the organised port transport workers before 1921, and partly because the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), formed in 1921, succeeded in taking over the organisation of the DWRGWU in the port and also managed to prevent local National Union of General Workers (NUGW) members from becoming registered dockers.

The development of craft guilds and trade unions played a part in establishing subsequent attitudes and behaviour of workers in the port industries, not only in their relations with management and government, but also in their own wider associations. By the end of the 19th century a more dynamic, but less exclusive style of unionism had become established in which the new unions accepted lower contributions but looked for larger memberships. Financial benefits in these unions were fewer, but their greater drive towards improving conditions began to create a feeling of class solidarity and the belief that socialist opinions freely expressed could assist in the emancipation of the lower paid, non-craft workers. The former moderate approach of dialogue with management gradually gave way to militancy used as a weapon to gain not only higher wages, but also long term improvements in conditions.

With this attitude the DWRGWU was formed to organise the labouring class of London dockers,[1] and the successful outcome of their 1889 strike to obtain the "dockers' tanner" gave a boost to all lower paid, unskilled workers.

Industrial strife in the port industries reached a climax in the years immediately preceding the first world war. From 1910-1914 many disputes arose involving the skilled shipyard workers and marine engineers, the labourers in docks and shipyards and the seamen. The seamen's leader, Joseph Havelock Wilson, was the first seamen's representative to confront the Shipping Federation and take a firm stand against the shipowners. After the declarion of war the pressure maintained by Wilson against the Federation was sufficient to give the fear that merchant shipping could be disrupted by the union with disastrous results to the nation's supplies and troop transport. When, therefore, the Admiralty took over control of the mercantile marine it was considered necessary to include trade union

representatives on the Board set up to regulate the supply and distribution of vessels and seamen.

The years of unrest which preceded the war failed to bring significant gains at the time, but workers demonstrated their ability to put up a relatively united front which provided them with useful experience and caused an average of 18 million working days per year to be lost by the policy of direct action.[2] Under war conditions a change of attitude with an increase in co-operation between government, management and labour was required if the war effort was not to be jeopardised, and this eventually resulted in a small measure of government control of industry and a temporary industrial truce.

One of the first problems the war brought to British ports was a shortage of labour which followed conscription and the initial surge of volunteers to answer the call to arms. The government took steps to deal with these shortages by declaring essential industries to be reserved occupations, whose workers were to be exempt from military service. Shipbuilding and port transport were included. The Mercantile Marine had first call on conscripted men after the Royal Navy and the Royal Flying Corps,and they were followed by the manpower needs of shipbuilding and coal mining.[3]

To help with the avoidance of labour shortages which occurred in some docks, despite surpluses remaining in others, and also to assist with the administration of war exemption certificates given to those who were still required in the docks, a Port and Transit Executive Committee was set up in 1915 under the chairmanship of shipowner Sir Norman Hill. The committee was given power to divert shipping to U.K. ports which it selected in order to improve the utilisation of shipping space and available labour. The emphasis on management and government in the constitution of the committee rendered it remote from labour and not the best vehicle at that time to maintain stable relations.

Neither the workers nor the unions were gratified by the government's next move to solve the uneven labour distribution problem, which was the formation of a Transport Workers' Battalion in January 1916 which included in its ranks both experienced and inexperienced dockers who were not being regularly employed, as well as men who were new to dock work. The Battalion men were far more mobile than the pre-war dock labour force which was by tradition specialist and static, and the Battalion was used mostly in the ports which had a register of port transport workers. The Port and Transit Executive Committee supported the introduction of registers as created by the Port Labour Committees in 1916.

Their purpose was to enable identification of dockers who were of military age and whose work was essential. The scheme received the backing of the trade union leaders because equal representation with PLCs strenthened their political standing and helped consolidate organisation. Thus, registration was the result of military conscription. However, the Transport Workers' Battalion was resented by unions and men because it created a potential strike-breaking weapon and presented a constant threat to men who were unwilling to change the habit of a life time. The traditional employment pattern for a large proportion of dockworkers had been to work as much time in a week as was necessary to earn their basic requirement, and having achieved that they were liable to absent themselves from the call stands. Once in competition with regularly employed Battalion men the civilian docker was obliged to remain at work in case he should find himself replaced. As a result of this intrusion into the work pattern the docker became more conscientious and more ready to accept work outside his usual activity. This fundamental adjustment was maintained to some extent after the war and the increased mobility was a valuable move in the direction of regularising employment.

Registers of dockworkers were required to facilitate the award of military exemption certificates, but it was also found that registration assisted in directing men to specific call stands, thereby making better use of available manpower. However, in 1916 to improve labour distribution around individual ports and enable the collection of data regarding labour requirements and attendance of dockworkers the Board of Trade (BOT) appointed port labour committees in 32 ports, including Southampton. The BOT's aim, and likewise that of the government, was to increase productivity and maintain co-operation between labour and management in order to minimise industrial disturbance, but the system was subsequently used during the interwar years as part of the decasualisation effort. The early stages of the war had increased the demand for labour, at the same time as decreasing the number of men attending calls, and for a while regular employment was the norm. With the introduction of the convoy system of shipping labour demand once again became spasmodic, with busy and slack periods, and insecurity of earnings and intrusion by the Transport Workers' Battalion again brought about an element of unrest and a degree of agitation by workers. To improve the turnround of shipping and maintain stable relations additional labour representatives were appointed to the Port and Transport Executive Committee and to the port labour committees. At this time the NTWF put forward a scheme involving a

regular percentage payment to all dockers, who were to be registered through the unions. Partly owing to the expense of the scheme and partly because it did not help to solve the immediate problems of labour distribution no attempt was made by government to negotiate on the scheme. However, it was destined to reappear in various guises after the war.

The war helped to define what a decasualisation scheme might mean to interested parties, and registration of dockworkers set out a method of calculating and recording the supply of and demand for labour. Neither registration nor the effects of the war resulted in a method of permanently regularising labour, but at least they brought about an awareness that greater understanding and consideration of workers' interests and welfare could be beneficial to the stabilisation of labour relations and the growth of productivity. By the end of the war the experience of registration and greater regularity of employment placed the industry in the best position so far attained to find a permanent solution to the problem of casualism. That it called for an even greater degree of co-operation between the parties concerned and more dialogue between them than had taken place during the war was to remain a stumbling block. Even the relatively smooth labour relations which existed in Southampton did not achieve decasualisation for the port, nor a solution to the surplus labour, which was the real crux of the issue, nor did it succeed in radically changing the views of either side. In other ports where the labour forces were much larger and relations were often more abrasive, it is likely that even less progress was made towards modifying attitudes. Throughout the period the government was singularly ineffective in its contribution to the issue.[4]

Wartime employment levels to meet the increased productivity demands in the port industries resulted in wage advances and in particular to the closing of the wage differentials between the skilled and unskilled. Higher wages and improved conditions did not automatically lead to industrial contentment, however, and aided by the strengthening of trade unions through increased membership and larger combinations, labour leaders were encouraged to seek new social reforms, more financial rewards for workers, and greater participation for themselves in the direction and control of labour. Militancy was by no means confined to union members, and by the end of the war trade union leaders were in danger of losing control of their rank and file whose demands were being echoed and reinforced by their non-union colleagues. Shipyard workers and dockers in particular demonstrated

their growing self-assurance. Merchant seamen no longer had a militant leader,[5] but in any case they were under Admiralty control and were subject to naval discipline which effectively put an end of any ideas of labour revolt. For them the benefit of joint representation on the National Maritime Board, or at least the increased wages which it procured for them, added spice to their sense of loyalty to crew and devotion to duty, which together with their spirit of heroism and their seabound isolation from the labour movement, ensured a stable and conscientious force which rendered invaluable service. Its losses to enemy action were heavy in the early stages of the war, and these were made good, as far as possible, by conscripts. Before the war ended loss of life at sea had been considerably reduced and less strain was placed on manpower resources.

To ease the labour shortage in engineering and shipbuilding women workers were introduced together with unskilled workers to replace craftsmen who had joined the fighting services. This process of dilution, as it was known, went much against the wishes of union leaders until they were granted the right to assist in the organisation of dilution, and extracted certain promises of restoration to standard practice at the end of the war. From amongst those who opposed the practice of dilution, and who were already more revolutionary in attitude, the shop stewards movement was formed. These left wing radicals who had been leaders of pre-war industrial action saw themselves as an alternative to union leadership. They were frequently branch leaders and spokesmen who voiced their opinions forcefully and with an air of authority, and yet, they were not necessarily representing majority local rank and file opinion. The grass roots apathy in branches of port industry and engineering unions, which allowed the shop stewards movement to flourish during the war, was also a feature of post war unionism where the shop stewards became members of the communist party and often obtained official positions in branches through lack of opposition. In the changed post war conditions, however, the shop stewards movement itself lost its effectiveness and faded out.

The wartime demand for ships and labour doubled world shipbuilding capacity, strengthened the unions' position and increased their members - a situation which was to continue for some months after the war while outstanding orders were completed and war repairs were carried out. The delay in shipping caused by port congestion and the shorter hours worked in shipyards after the war which extended construction completion time by as much as two thirds, also prolonged

the boom conditions. When orders for new ships were reduced over a very short period the boom died, and as with the port transport industry, there were insufficient jobs for returning servicemen. During the war Southampton was a major depot for war damage repairs and salvage undertakings, and with ship construction work for the Admiralty then at a busier level than previously more men were employed in Southampton shipyards than in normal circumstances and more than could hope to find work at the end of the war. The out-of-work donation, offered as a conciliatory stop gap, was inadequate fulfilment of expectations. Although the donation was given to civilians as well as servicemen, the situation generated a wave of national resentment which manifested itself in an unprecedented level of direct action in the immedidate post war years.

The brotherhood experience of trench warfare, no doubt, contributed to the solidarity of the post war strikes, but the war had also increased trade union determination and given a boost to the self-assertion of the labour movement as a whole. The unskilled had proved their worth and ability and in general workers thought that the gains made in wages, conditions and status should continue to be increased in peacetime. Employers, on the other hand, particularly in shipbuilding and shipping, intended that the system of private enterprise with the economy based on supply and demand should be returned to without the addition of government interference or trade union participation in managerial affairs. There were, however, some employers of dock labour who believed that responsible trade unions could be used beneficially in controlling labour and preventing strikes. This idea was reciprocated by a few trade union leaders, particularly by Ernest Bevin, who regarded co-operation and negotiation with management and the MOL as a more effective method of achieving his aims for the TGWU.

Thus the period covered by this study opened with the problems of industrial and labour readjustment to the changing conditions of peacetime life after the dislocation and distortion of war. It resulted in unsettled relations and serious fears of an uncontrolled flood of labour in certain occupations. The mercantile marine, disrupted by the reduction of trade during the war, could not incorporate the men no longer required by the Admiralty; shipbuilding and engineering contracted through the run-down of munitions' and war requirements and were not able to absorb all the returning men whose jobs had been filled by inexperienced workers, now requiring work of a semi-skilled or similar nature; and the port transport industry was incapable of utilising all those who were already registered as

civilian dockers without the addition of returning servicemen and Battalion men who wished to retain their status as dockworkers.

The trade union leaders had already discussed the end-of-war return to casualism in the docks; so had some officials in the Ministry of Labour, (MOL) and they were anxious not to lose the benefit of the wartime regulations which had reduced numbers to a manageable level. However, the model scheme of issuing tallies and keeping records which a joint advisory committee set up by the MOL had hoped to institute was short lived in most ports. Southampton employers kept records of employment levels for a short time, but they soon lapsed and there were no records available (except for 1920) when the MOL made an enquiry into the port's activities in 1924. The Port and Transit Executive Committee ceased to function after the war and the PLCs gradually fell into disuse until they, too, were no longer effective in many ports, including Southampton. Unemployed seamen were plentiful in Southampton and even those in employment were ready to respond to a strike call initiated in Liverpool in 1921. The port's shipyard workers, for whom regular employment ceased during 1920 and 1921 became a volatile work force with sectional interruptions and trade disputes until the dis-quiet eventually erupted into a major stoppage in 1924.

Although Southampton suffered less from the immediate post war congestion problems in the docks than London, Liverpool and Hull, for example, there was a work shortage for dockers and seamen due to another reason - this was the restriction caused by Admiralty control and the use of shipping for the repatriation of servicemen. However, the port eventually returned to commercial business and its operation in the context of the interwar years became comparable with other U.K. ports.

Chapter One describes the ports selected as comparators, explains the themes examined and details the course of the discussions.

1. In 1889, a year of considerable activity in new unionism, Benjamin Tillett founded the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union and was its General Secretary until the amalgamation with the TGWU.
2. A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965. p.40 n1.
3. ibid. p.97. It was found necessary to conscript men in reserved occupations.
4. Most of the information on the port transport industry during the war is taken from Gordon Phillips and Noel Whiteside, Casual Labour The Unemployment Question in the Port Transport Industry 1880-1970. (Chapter IV). Oxford. 1985.
5. J. H. Wilson's dislike of the Shipping Federation was overshadowed by his intense anti-German attitude. However, with the formation of the National Maritime Board he had achieved his aim of joint representation with ship owners in the control of seafaring labour and he was content to negotiate and co-operate with employers hereafter.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY.

Plan

OF THE

SOUTHAMPTON DOCKS

1930.

OCEAN DOCK
15½ Acres

INNER DOCK
10 Acres

OUTER DOCK
16 Acres

EMPRESS DOCK
23 Acres

RIVER TEST

RIVER ITCHEN

60 Feet L.W.O.S.T. FLOATING DOCK

25 Feet L.W.O.S.T. TRAFALGAR DOCK

18 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

40 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

35 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

30 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

32 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

26 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

27 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

25 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

28 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

23 Feet O.N.T. 13'6" L.W.O.S.T.

18 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

14 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

20 Ft. L.W.O.S.T.

15 Ft. L.W.O.S.T.

10 Feet L.W.O.S.T.

8 Ft. L.W.O.S.T.

Limit of Company's Maintenance Dredging

600'-0"

700'-0"

500'-0"

400 Feet

450 Feet

800 Feet

600 Feet

WHITE STAR ROAD

CENTRAL ROAD

TRAFALGAR ROAD

CUNARD ROAD

ROYAL ROAD

QUEEN'S ROAD

DOCK ROAD

JETTY

COAL BARGE DOCK

Gauge of Spring Tides 13 Feet.

Numbers 1 to 51 indicate Berths

Scale of Feet

GEORGE R. NEWCOMBE.
Docks & Marine Manager.

PRO: RAIL 648/64 M Bc1929

PART I

THE FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER ONE

SOUTHAMPTON AND THE COMPARATIVE PORTS

In order to look at Southampton in its broader context, rather than in isolation, comparison has been made with certain other ports so that its port industries can be considered as part of the national architecture within the national economy. The selection of ports for use as comparators was influenced by criteria related to the approximate size of the labour forces concerned, the authorities and companies which provided employment, and the main types of trade developed. The ports broadly encompass the geographical regions of England and the principal industrial area of Scotland, which together served an extensive area of the U.K.

London and Liverpool were selected because these two great ports were the only ones with a comparable measure of passenger shipping. The transportation of passengers was an important factor in determining the number of seamen able to find employment in a port because passenger liners required larger crews than freighters. The larger the liner and the more passengers carried, the larger the crew. No ports other than London and Liverpool engaged seamen on a similar scale to Southampton. Both London and Liverpool also included ship-repair amongst their port activities, together with a limited amount of shipbuilding. In the area of dock labour London and Liverpool were so much larger than Southampton that numerically they were in a different category in employment terms. However, the administration and operation of dock labour by employers was generated by the head offices of the shipping lines situated in London and Liverpool, and by the Port of London Authority (PLA).

No passenger liners called at Hull and its continental passenger transport was small, but it had a similar type of administration to Southampton, being a railway-owned port. It was a major port and offered good representation of the northeast in that it was a busy commercial port as well as a shipbuilding district. The operation of the docks was comparable with London in some respects, but closer to Southampton in the numbers employed.

The Port of Bristol, although really a complex of three dock systems under one administration, was a major port, albeit a small one, which offered comparisons not only with shipping, but with dock registration and employment, and with ship-repair work.

As one of the features to be examined is the effect of passenger shipping and ship-repairing on Southampton's local economy in time of

depression, compared with ports which were more concerned with cargo shipping and shipbuilding, it was essential to select a port from one of the principal shipbuilding districts, but one which was also involved in other port industries. Glasgow was the most suitable because it offered a degree of comparison in foreign-going passenger transport, and an interesting dock employment situation, as well as the comparison of the Clydeside shipyards.

Each port is briefly introduced below, followed by a resumé of cyclical trends in trade and employment.

Structural, administrative and economic features.

Southampton stands at the confluence of the Rivers Test and Itchen, and has served as a waterway since Roman times. Being only eighty miles from London, with good rail connections direct from the docks, and within easy reach of the continent, it was well situated to develop twentieth-century passenger traffic. The double high water tidal phenomenon[1] and short tidal flow gave the port considerable advantage in not having to construct dock gates to retain deep water for large vessels. The channel required little maintenance to keep it free from silt, and the largest vessels of the day were able to manouevre in Southampton Water. This easy, time-saving accessibility of berthing, together with the proximity of Cherbourg and available land travel to London, which was faster than completing the journey by sea, made Southampton the first choice of discerning passengers travelling between England and North America. It also brought the shipping lines with the big liners to Southampton.

The southern port attracted the North American services from its early development in the mid-nineteenth century, when interest in emigration was strong, following the end of the American Civil War. First the continental lines based in European ports used Southampton as an additional calling port, then from 1893, when American Line transferred from Liverpool, it became a terminal port for transatlantic passenger crossings. With the arrival of the White Star Line in 1907, which amalgamated with the American Line, development for the reception of big liners began in earnest. The channel was deepened, the swinging ground[2] was widened, and new docks were constructed. The Outer and Inner Docks which had been built for sailing vessels in 1842 and 1851 respectively were unsuitable for large vessels. The entrance to the ten acre Inner Dock was too narrow even for the grain ships of the 1920s, and was

the only non-tidal basin in the complex. The Empress Dock was constructed in 1890 and the Ocean Dock in 1911.

The Ocean Dock was a larger construction than the Empress, having an entrance of 400 feet against 165 feet, with 1,590 feet of quay against the 850 feet of the Empress Dock.[3] An enormous floating dock was specially constructed in 1923 to accommodate the large liners which were already based in the port, and provide facilities for their repair and overhaul. The New Docks (which became the West Docks) were started in 1926 and were opened officially in 1934, together with the King George V Graving Dock, the largest in the world at that time. When the New Docks were completed Southampton offered five miles of deep water quay, as well as six dry docks for repairs and overhauls. Until the 1930s dock extension (New Docks) the port was often hampered by a shortage of berthing space which prevented the adoption of the port as a base by any freight companies.

More than thirty shipping lines eventually used the port, the main lines being shown below grouped according to the routes they chiefly sailed.

North America and Canada

Cunard Steam Ship Co. *
White Star Line *
Canadian Pacific Ocean Services *
United States Line
International Navigation Co.
CGT (France)
Norddeutscher Lloyd (German)
Hamburg-Amerika (German)

Central and South America

Royal Mail Steam Packet Co.*
Royal Mail Line *
General Steam Navigation Co.
Elders and Fyffes
Rotterdam Lloyd (Holland)

Middle East

Anchor Brocklebank

Far East

East Asiatic Co.
Holland-Africa

South Africa

Union Castle Line (also Australia) *
Shaw Saville & Albion
Lamport & Holt

West Africa

Ellermans

New Zealand

New Zealand Shipping Co.

Australia

Australian Commonwealth Line
Orient Line (also Far East)

Continent of Europe

Southern Railway Co.*
Norwegian Steam Ship Line

Cruising only

P & O Line

Troop Transports

British India
Bibby Line

* Lines based in Southampton.

A number of these Lines also sailed additional routes.

There were also several coasting, towing and ferry companies operating from the port, as well as pilot launches and dredgers.

In the Southern Railway-owned port the Harbour Board, constituted by the Southampton Harbour Act of 1913, had six members elected from among the foreign-going and coasting vessel owners. Additional members were appointed by the Admiralty, War Office, Trinity House, Board of Trade, County Council, Itchen Urban District Council (until its adoption by Southampton in 1920), and traders and water frontagers. Seven members were also appointed by the Borough Council, three by the Southern Railway Company, and two by the Chamber of Commerce. The Harbour Board was responsible for pilotage, navigation and lighting buoys, dredging, and the administration of the Town Quay which handled coastal shipping. The Board was divided into a number of standing committees with representatives from shipping lines, business interests and trade unions.[4]

Southampton had developed a moderately busy shipbuilding industry during the days of sailing ships in the nineteenth century. The industry continued into the twentieth century, but by this time had become dependent upon Admiralty contracts and ship-repairing. It was ship-repair which employed the greater proportion of labour, with the development in this field being due to the number of passenger liners using the port, and the volume of work needed on this type of vessel. The continued use of the port by the Admiralty for troop transportation after the war provided some seasonal work on ship conversions, to the benefit of ship-repairers.

London and Liverpool docks were far more extensive than Southampton. The former had five dock systems occupying a 26 mile stretch of the River Thames, with 650 acres of water and 35 miles of quay; the latter, with 38 miles of quay, including the 10 miles at Birkenhead, and 658 acres of water, was an impressively laid out port along 7 miles of the River Mersey. Both, however, had the disadvantage of a tidal range which necessitated flood gates and impounded docks. Liverpool's passengers were provided with the floating George Landing Stage, a half mile long pontoon platform with ten bridges and a convenient rail connection. It was not until 1929-30 that a larger dock entrance and an elaborate floating landing stage for passengers were constructed at Tilbury, the docks used for passenger liners in the Thames. London was not in competition for the North American trade as were Liverpool and Southampton, and the giant liners did not use Tilbury Docks.

These three major ports each had different administrative systems which were the result of local developments. Southampton Docks had been in the ownership of the London and Southwestern Railway Company (after-

wards the Southern Railway Company) since 1892, and port trade, transport, employment and revenue were either wholly or partly under the control of one organisation.

The Port of London Authority(PLA) was created in 1908 following a Royal Commission Enquiry to terminate the unsatisfactory competition which had existed between the docks in the complex. The PLA was a Public Trust which undertook responsibility for goods and labour within its area, but many quays, wharves and warehouses remained independent. The ocean-going shipping lines operating from Tilbury were not under the jurisdiction of the PLA.

Another Public Trust, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board (1857), was the controlling organisation of the Port of Liverpool, and it had, in fact, been the model for the PLA, but all the docks at Liverpool, Bootle and Birkenhead formed a single unit, including passenger shipping. It was the distance of Tilbury from the Pool of London which made the Thames complex a unique case. Liverpool was not only a single unit administratively, but the overhead railway which travelled the whole length of the dock systems, made it a single unit physically, except for Birkenhead, which was linked by ferry until the construction of the road tunnel.[5]

Two inter-war development projects undertaken at Liverpool were the building of the Gladstone Dry Dock, opened in 1927 to facilitate ship-repair, and the three mile Queensway Tunnel under the Mersey, opened in 1934, to provide a road connection between Liverpool and Birkenhead.

Non-profit making Trusts were also the administrative systems at Glasgow. The Clyde Navigation Trust and Greenock Harbour Trust were the most important of seven authorities. The two main docks with only a 13 feet tidal flow, similar to Southampton, were tidal basins, open at all times. The King George V Dock with 20 acres of water was added in 1931. This northern port tended to be the end of the route for a number of shipping lines, and ships often called with part cargoes in order to pick up additional freight without unloading. In consequence, exports exceeded imports, which was not the case in the other five ports considered. Being on the west coast its distance from Europe restricted short sea trade. The traditional trading area was the West Indies, but during the late nineteenth century this route was superceded by Canada and North America. It was the main Scottish emigration departure point, and it suffered a marked decline between the wars owing to the constraints imposed by the U.S. immigration authority.

The Lanarkshire coalfields had influenced the industrial development of Glasgow and it was one of the principal U.K. centres of shipbuilding.

Clydside shipyards were affected by the reduction of orders for new naval vessels between the wars, having previously specialised in war ships. Its three dry docks enabling ship-repair work to be carried out compensated a little, as this side of the industry was furthered by its end-of-route situation.

London and Liverpool shipping required ship-repair facilities to enable speedy attention to their passenger and mail contract vessels, as well as to the millions of tons of freight shipping using the ports annually. Birkenhead was an active and successful shipbuilding district on the Mersey (Cammel Laird), but by the inter-war years London's shipbuilding industry was devoted to rivercraft and vessels of very small tonnage.

No twentieth century sea development was possible at Bristol City Docks, but some additional warehousing, primarily for tobacco, and the flour mills were built between the wars. The impounded docks at Avonmouth had become the docks extension for Bristol when steam ships grew too big to pass through the old harbour entrance. The Port of Bristol had once been second to London in importance of trade and shipping, but with the nineteenth century steam boom it gave place to Liverpool, and its former passenger shipping was reduced to little more than those who travelled on the banana boats. Nevertheless, Bristol between the wars was still a major port and its three dock systems at Bristol, Avonmouth and Portishead, which had been under the control of Bristol Corporation since 1884, together provided some 200 acres of water and extensive quayage, as well as the potential at Portishead to develop the oil and phosphate trades. Bristol's trading connections spanned the world and also offered a useful destination point for coasting and short sea traffic. Its ship-repair industry was restricted to freighters and coastal shipping.

Kingston upon Hull had similarities with Southampton, Bristol and London. As at Southampton a Dock Company was formed in the early nineteenth century because the town's lack of industrial development did not provide sufficient local capital for the necessary dock extensions. However, again as at Southampton, the Dock Company sold to a Railway Company, in this case the LNER, in 1893, owing to the shortage of working capital.

Hull's similarity with Bristol was its river situation. Just as expansion at Bristol was limited by topographical restrictions, Hull's site on the River Humber was also a restriction. As Bird points out "the development of Grimsby, Goole and Immingham on the Humber, as well as Hull, denotes that one port could not develop continuously to overcome all

the problems of location." If this had been possible it might have been as the Thames and Tyne, "one long line of continuous port."[6] No development took place in Hull after 1914, and whereas Bristol Corporation extended its boundaries to take in Avonmouth and Portishead so that different trades operated from the three dock systems, Goole became a competitor for Hull's coastwise traffic.

It was also the restricted river conditions which brought about the similarity with London. Owing to the narrowness of the Humber the construction of short quays served by lighters was a favourable method of working the docks. Ships could be unloaded overside into lighters, which could then take goods to the many wharves and warehouses, or direct to riverside industrial plants, or other vessels for transhipment. The system was employed at London because of the "hidden" arrangement of the docks and to ease the conveyance of cargoes to and from vessels. This method of operating docks tended to result in rapid congestion of the river in the event of any hold-up in normal working, a problem which similarly affected London and Hull. A further similarity was the development of militancy among dockworkers and lightermen.

An Act of Parliament formed the Humber Conservancy Board in 1908. Its representatives were from the Board of Trade (BOT), local ship owners, commercial organisations, municipal bodies, the railway, Aire and Calder Navigation and Hull Trinity House.[7]

Hull had no passenger liner trade and the major trading areas were the Scandinavian and Russian ports. With 200 acres of water, 12 miles of quays, 600 acres of open storage, 7 miles of river frontage, 2 cold stores and good railway connections, it was a major port which increased its import trade between the wars and was recognised as Britain's third largest trading port. Its shipbuilding industry was somewhat low key compared with other northern shipbuilding areas, but it was well in excess of Southampton's.

Since the English ports under consideration were primarily concerned with shipping, which involved seafaring and dock employment, comparison has also been made with the region defined by the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation (SEF) as the northeast coast. By this they meant the Tyne, Tees and Wear ports which drew on shipbuilding as the main component of employment. Comparison was often made with the area by Southampton ship-yard workers, despite the disparity in the volume of new tonnage output. The shipbuilding and ship-repairing centre of East Cowes (Isle of Wight) is included with Southampton because of the local relevance and because it was also affiliated to the SEF, but the fishing industry of Hull,

although of paramount importance to Hull, had no counterpart in Southampton and has, therefore, been excluded.

Southampton was chiefly a transhipment port, there being little industry calling for the supply of raw materials in the immediate hinterland. The main distribution was of fresh and chilled produce and dairy products, wool and timber. Tobacco and grain were also imported for local use, and Rank Flour Mills were opened in 1934. "Most of Southampton's fortunes are derived from sources found in and around any large town, such as retail distribution, building and estate development, and in consequence it shows a smaller proportion of very large and large fortunes than in other ports where manufacturing or import and export houses run by local men are prominent. In the sense here implied, Southampton is a gate for traffic and wealth, rather than a point of its origination."[8] Southampton's combined imports and exports between the wars never equalled its 1913 total. Bristol, on the other hand, imported considerable quantities of raw material for use in its own well-established industries, and its total imports nearly doubled between 1913 and 1937.

Glasgow was not in such a fortunate position. Its linen and cotton industries had already declined by the first war, and of its exports, upon which it largely relied, coal was the chief commodity, and this also declined between the wars. Probably no large area suffered so severely from the effects of economic recession in the 1930s. Glasgow was "one of the worst concentrations of persistent unemployment in Great Britain in the twenty years prior to the second world war."[9] The depressed shipyards seemed to breed depression in the shipping industry as well, and although its trading area included a large part of Scotland the port declined in the 1930s.

Hull's port industries were an important source of local employment, as were Glasgow's, and its trade covered the midlands, eastern and north-eastern industries, as well as its own. It was a distribution centre for manufactured and part-manufactured goods, and it also imported considerable quantities of raw material for its own factories.

London and Liverpool between them handled more than half the U.K. imports and exports for distribution throughout the country and for transhipment. London was an international market and the PLA not only handled and stored merchandise, it also undertook the inspection of goods, reported on quality, and supplied samples. Both ports had wide-ranging foreign, short sea and coastal shipping trades, and their dock labour employment was on a vast scale compared with Southampton.

Table 1. Distribution of Trade (Money Value) of the U.K. as an average of 1924, 1926 and 1928

Port	%	Port	%
LONDON	31.3	GLASGOW	4.2
LIVERPOOL	25.5	SOUTHAMPTON	3.9
HULL	5.5	SWANSEA	1.3
MANCHESTER	5.1	OTHERS	23.2

Source: D. Caradog Jones, Survey of Merseyside, Vol.II, p.157.

Annual statements of trade for 1924, 1926 and 1928, relatively good years in shipping, expressed as an average in terms of money value, show the distribution of trade and the large proportion of it which was derived from London and Liverpool shipping. (See Table 1.)

Table 2. Principal Commodities, Industries and Manufactures in Selected Ports.

PORT	COMMODITIES Exports and Imports	INDUSTRIES/MANUFACTURES
LONDON AND DISTRICT	Grain, meat, tea, wool, timber coal, food and drink.	Ship-repairing, boat-building, engineering, leather works, clock-makers, furniture, clothing, paper manufacture, food processing.
LIVERPOOL	Grain, oil, sugar, wool, mineral ore, iron and steel, molasses, cotton, chemicals, textiles, vehicles, paper, wood pulp, meat, tobacco.	Flour milling, sugar refining, shipbuilding and repairing, paper manufacture, chemical and tobacco products.
SOUTHAMPTON	Wine, fruit, vegetables, dairy produce, grain, timber, wool, hides and skins, artificial silk, tobacco, meat.	Shipbuilding and repairing, engineering, cable manufacture, tobacco products, car assembly, flour milling.
HULL	Raw materials, food, drink, tobacco, wool, cotton yarns, manufactured goods, timber.	Chemical products, timber, food and drink processing, vegetable oil, ship-repairing, iron and steel, fish curing, paint, flour milling, fertilizers, cement manufacture.
GLASGOW	Coal, iron ore, minerals, timber, grain, oil, manufactured goods.	Shipbuilding and repairing, engineering, chemical products, carpets, hosiery, tailoring, furniture, rubber manufacture.
BRISTOL	Grain, cereal products, animal feed stuff, oil seed, nuts, provisions, meat, fruit, tobacco, wood pulp, cocoa.	Flour milling, tobacco products, paper manufacture, confectionery, aircraft manufacture, boot and shoe manufacture, ship-repair.

Source: David J. Owen, The Origin and Development of the Ports of the U.K. (1939) pp. 76/7, 86/7, 95, 137/38, 285. Additional information taken from the 1983 edition of Enclycopaedia Britannica under respective port headings, and contemporary local press.

Whereas Glasgow received more exports to ship than imports to

distribute, in Southampton, Bristol and Hull the reverse was the case. Southampton in particular found it difficult to attract export business; one reason for this was the scarcity of goods produced locally, or in the neighbouring hinterland. The list above of the principal commodities and industries in each port serves to show the similarities of the types of trade carried out, if not the size of the industries. Several of the commodities were imported by most of the ports in the period considered, for example, grain, tobacco, wool, timber, food stuffs. Grain and tobacco were processed locally in most cases, and other common industries were shipbuilding and repairing, engineering and chemical products. Southampton's main engineering works were the railway workshops at Eastleigh, outside Southampton County Borough. Aircraft manufacture is not included in the list for Southampton, but it was a growth industry during the 1930s. Some of the industries listed for London also included factories which were close to the boundary of Greater London.

The Main Trends in the Volume of Shipping.

Port labour, whether dockworkers, shipbuilders and repairers or seamen, depended upon the volume of shipping for employment. Ports were capable of encouraging business through speed and efficiency of service, or of discouraging it through exhorbitant charges and inefficiency. However, the volume of shipping was also subject to considerations outside the control of individual ports, and the inter-war years saw some changes of fortune in all port industries.

In the following brief examination of the main trends of each port selected, foreign and coastwise trade have been separated because of the different types of shipping and employment opportunities they provided. The movement of passengers to and from the continent has also been separated from foreign-going passengers, but inward and outward journeys have been shown as single totals. As a general rule imports exceeded exports, and the outward movement of passengers exceeded the inward movement in national totals during the 1920s, with the reverse being the case in the 1930s.

Foreign Trade. (See Appendix 1a).

The BOT definition of Foreign Trade is any vessel landing or embarking from abroad, or to be taken

abroad. Therefore, Home Trade shipping is also included.[10]

London averaged by far the greatest amount of foreign-going shipping in the four pre-war years examined, but during 1911 and 1912 its total foreign trade decreased. Labour troubles amongst dockworkers and seamen during these years might have been responsible for some shipping dislocation, but Liverpool was not without labour troubles, and yet increased its vessels and net tonnage in each of the four years. The other four ports experienced some disturbance and decline in foreign trade shipping during either 1911 or 1912, but the volume of shipping in Glasgow and Bristol was very small compared with London. (See Table 3).

Table 3. Number and net tonnage of vessels arriving and departing in selected ports, shown as the average of 1910-13.

Port	No. of Vessels	Net Tons
LONDON	19,027	24,527,751
LIVERPOOL	8,214	22,185,875
SOUTHAMPTON	5,765	11,371,871
HULL	10,262	8,237,254
GLASGOW	3,670	7,306,160
BRISTOL	1,680	2,545,496

Source: Annual Abstract of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K.

Industrial relations were extremely abrasive in a number of industries during 1911-12, including mines, railways and ports, and the situation did not contribute towards stability and growth. 1913, however, experienced improved relations and trade, and Table 4 indicates that Southampton had made the largest increase in the number and tonnage of vessels entering the port. London and Glasgow increased their net tonnage, but the number of vessels did not equal those of earlier years. Bristol's vessels were well below the 1911 total, but equalled 1910.

Post war trade began to be resumed in Southampton midway through 1919, but the port was still under Admiralty control and ships were only released piecemeal for reconversion to passenger liners after their use as troop carriers and supply ships. Ex-servicemen returning to the port in search of employment created labour problems which were difficult to ameliorate during this transitional period.[11] It was not until 1921 that shipping lines were again able to operate regular, although not full, passenger services, by which time the post war boom had collpased and shipping had fallen into the grip of a sharp recession. 1921 was

Table 4. Number and net tonnage of vessels in selected ports. Percentage increase/decrease of 1913 over 1910.

Port	Vessels %	Net Tons %
LONDON	-3.5	+2.1
LIVERPOOL	+2.5	+10.5
SOUTHAMPTON	+4.4	+32.2
HULL	+3.2	+10.3
GLASGOW	-1.7	+14.2
BRISTOL	-0.05	+11.0

Source: Calculated from Table 3.

another year of particularly antagonistic labour relations, and although dockworkers were not involved in a dispute, there was the threat of combined action from the revitalised triple alliance of Mines, Railways and Docks Trade Unions. There was a shortage of coal in 1921 due to a stoppage of work by miners, and this took its toll of shipping because not all large liners were converted to oil fuel at that time, and there was still a great demand for bunkering coal. As well as the labour troubles in the coal industry, which reduced output and increased prices, there were additional increases in ships' running costs, such as insurance, dock charges, pilotage, stores and wages. The cost of building ships also increased, along with the cost of transporting goods in them, and orders had fallen - indeed, many were cancelled. This co-incided with a reduction in the demand for freight shipping, and further obstacles in the form of trade restrictions imposed by certain foreign governments. It was not a good year for shipping, and it held little hope for the immediate future.

Foreign-going vessels decreased in each of the six ports in 1921 and all except Bristol recorded decreases in net tonnage. It was not until 1923 that significant improvements were recorded. Hull was an exception; between the wars it did not reach the total number of vessels which had called in 1913, and only marginally increased its net tonnage, despite the increase in imports referred to above. Liverpool, which had fared so well before the war, lost its large liners to Southampton, and its decrease in 1921 was greater than London's. In the following two years it almost doubled the number of vessels calling, and then remained around that figure for the rest of the period, while its imports decreased around one per cent annually. Vessels in an out of London continued to increase until 1927, and then decreased generally from that level.

In volume of shipping London and Liverpool were in a class of their own, and although Southampton took third place for net tonnage, even in

1928, the year of Southampton's maximum tonnage, it only recorded 23.3 per cent of London's vessels. Southampton's increase in vessels and tonnage was continuous from 1922-28. In most years Hull exceeded Southampton's annual foreign-going vessels, but as Hull's passengers were continental travellers, and most of its shipping was freight, the net tonnage was approximately half that of Southampton. Like Southampton, Glasgow did not equal its total 1913 shipping until 1923, but after 1925 it declined in volume for the rest of the 1920s. There was very little change in Bristol's shipping volume between 1923 and 1930.

Table 5 shows a comparison between ports for certain years, with the percentage differences against 1913. The upward movement which occurred in most ports during the late 1920s was not sustained into the 1930s, except in London, and by 1932 the depression decline was evident.

Table 5. Comparisons of vessels and net tonnage for selected ports in 1913, 1921, 1927 and 1932, with percentage increase/decrease against 1913.

Port	1913	1921	%	1927	%	1932	%
LONDON							
Vessels	19,073	18,360	- 3.7	30,853	+61.7	29,132	+52.7
Net Tons	25,129,064	24,603,051	- 2.1	38,696,626	+54.0	41,063,727	+63.4
LIVERPOOL							
Vessels	8,309	6698	-19.4	13,826	+66.4	13,439	+61.7
Net Tons	23,263,471	18,991,463	-18.3	26,195,600	+12.6	24,674,686	+ 6.0
SOUTHAMPTON							
Vessels	6,039	4,403	-27.0	7,128	+18.0	5,400	-10.5
Net Tons	13,326,252	8,927,247	-33.0	19,505,364	+46.3	18,308,144	+37.3
HULL							
Vessels	10,835	8,214	-24.2	7,493	-30.8	6,901	-36.3
Net Tons	9,055,565	6,590,618	-27.2	9,440,484	+44.2	8,571,036	- 5.3
GLASGOW							
Vessels	3,697	2,217	-39.8	4,747	+28.7	4,059	+10.0
Net Tons	7,904,948	5,825,747	-26.3	8,844,258	+11.9	7,705,529	- 2.5
BRISTOL							
Vessels	1,681	1,426	- 9.8	2,331	+38.6	2,170	+29.0
Net Tons	2,662,638	3,025,248	+13.6	4,358,723	+63.7	3,983,384	+49.6

Source: Annual Abstracts of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K.

Shipping in London and Bristol was least affected by the 1921 slump; Southampton and Glasgow experienced the largest decreases. By 1927 the increase in the size of Southampton's vessels was apparent. The increase in the number of vessels was at a much slower rate, and by 1932 had decreased, while the tonnage remained considerably greater than in 1913. The reverse situation in Liverpool indicates the annual increase in

freighters and smaller ships, and reduction in passenger liners. In 1932 London and Bristol again recorded the maximum gain over 1913, while foreign-going shipping through Glasgow and Hull was steadily decreasing.

A comparison between 1927 and 1932 shows the extent of the decline which occurred in all ports. (See Table 6).

Table 6. Comparison of foreign-going shipping in selected ports between 1927 and 1932 showing percentage decreases.

Port	% dec. (Vessels)	% inc./dec. (Net Tons)
LONDON	- 5.6	+6.1
LIVERPOOL	- 2.8	-5.8
SOUTHAMPTON	-24.2	-6.1
HULL	- 7.9	-9.2
GLASGOW	-14.5	-12.9
BRISTOL	- 6.9	-8.6

Source: Calculated from Table 5.

Southampton's decrease in 1921, both in vessels and tonnage, had been sharper than that of London and Liverpool, and in net tonnage showed the largest decrease of all six ports. It was Southampton again which experienced the greatest decrease in vessels calling between 1927 and 1932. This decrease represents the cancelled sailings brought about by the reduction in North Atlantic passenger traffic at the beginning of the 1930s. Decreases in London and Liverpool were of a much smaller measure, which suggests there was less fluctuation in the number of cargo vessels calling. (This does not imply that cargoes had not decreased).

Of the smaller ports Glasgow shows the greatest loss between 1927 and 1932. Both Glasgow and Hull reached their peaks in foreign-going shipping early in the 1920s, therefore the reduction in ships and tonnage in 1932 is not being compared with the near maximum year, as in Southampton. Bristol's overall pattern of trade showed a steady increase, but on a small scale. Unlike the other two smaller ports, calling vessels reached maximum in 1930, the same year as Liverpool, and these two ports would have shown greater decreases if compared with 1930 instead of 1927.

The general trend of ports during the 1930s shows a recovery period after the depression, but the upwards movement was rather slower than had been the case in the second half of the 1920s. The increase in the tonnage of vessels and the number of ships entering and departing between 1932 and 1938 can be seen in Table 7.

The peak year of the 1930s was not identical in all ports. It

occurred in London and Bristol in 1938. Trend similarities were shown consistently throughout the period by the largest and the smallest ports examined. In Liverpool, 1937 was the maximum year for vessels, while Southampton recorded its highest annual tonnage in that year, but its peak in vessels came a year earlier. Glasgow reached its tonnage peak in 1938, otherwise the best years were in the early 1920s for both Glasgow and Hull.

Table 7. Comparison of foreign-going shipping in selected ports between 1932 and 1938 showing percentage increases.

Port	% inc.(Vessels)	% inc.(Net Tons)
LONDON	13.6	12.9
LIVERPOOL	3.7	14.1
SOUTHAMPTON	3.8	26.1
HULL	4.1	18.7
GLASGOW	-0.4	27.3
BRISTOL	9.5	31.9

Source: Calculated from Appendix 1a.

The percentage increase of each port between 1921 and 1938 is indicative of the increase in the volume of shipping, bearing in mind that 1921 was the lowest point since 1910 (excluding the war years) for all ports except Bristol.

Table 8. Comparison of foreign-going shipping in selected ports between 1921 and 1938 showing percentage increases.

Port	% inc.(Vessels)	% inc.(Net Tons)
LONDON	48.1	74.5
LIVERPOOL	108.0	48.3
SOUTHAMPTON	27.3	158.7
HULL	-12.5	54.8
GLASGOW	82.3	68.4
BRISTOL	66.8	73.7

Source: Calculated from Appendix 1a.

The relative position of each port in 1921 needs to be taken into account when analysing Table 8. Liverpool and Glasgow made exceptionally good increases by 1938, but they had been very poor by their own standards in 1921. In the case of Southampton's net tonnage increase, this is a reflection of the increased size of ships and the number of times the big ships called at the port. The increase in the number of ships using the

port was not great but the proportion of them which could be classed as giants increased. The tonnage in 1921 was well below the pre-war level, but in this case there was an extenuating factor brought about by the closure of the port to merchant shipping during the war. Not only did Southampton have to re-establish its trading links and reconvert its liners, it was also obliged to wait upon Admiralty clearance before resuming mercantile sailings. The low tonnage in 1921 is not, therefore, necessarily a true measure of its potential as a commercial port, even in the post-war slump. For example, the tonnage growth in 1922 exceeded 1913's total by 3,000 tons, even though the number of vessels was still below pre-war totals. As soon as full sailing schedules were in operation in 1923, there was a 4 million ton increase in foreign-going shipping. However, the combined totals of imports and exports remained far below the pre-war level, so that although there was re-newed vitality in passenger traffic, freight lost during the war was not regained until later - if at all.

Bristol showed the similarity with London which has previously been observed. Apart from 1931-33 Bristol increased its vessels and tonnage almost every year. Its shipping seems to have been less influenced by the cyclical fluctuations which afflicted most other ports. Its industries were not those most affected by the trade depression, and the diversity of its imports kept it remarkably stable. Its volume of shipping, however, was very small. The 1938 total was approximately half that of Glasgow, and only 8.7 per cent of London's vessels and 12.2 per cent of net tonnage.

Hull did not equal its pre-war total of vessels, nor did it fulfil the promise of increased tonnage which seemed likely in 1923, and it was the end of the next decade before it approached its peak tonnage again. Although Hull ranked as the third busiest port it is not surprising that it was some 20 per cent of the national total behind Liverpool at the end of the 1920s, and only slightly ahead of Manchester and Glasgow.

Southampton, on the other hand, despite substantial increases in vessels and tonnage, was well down the scale in terms of the value of its trade distribution. Southampton's contribution to the national economy in foreign trade was passengers.

Coastwise Trade. (See Appendix 1b).

London and Liverpool showed their superiority by dominating pre-war

coastal as well as foreign-going shipping. However, London again declined in 1911 and 1912, possibly due to the same cause as the foreign trade decline, which it was suggested above might have been adverse labour relations. Hull and Glasgow also declined in those years, and Liverpool and Southampton declined in 1911. In Bristol the net tonnage was lower from 1911-13 than 1910, but the number of vessels increased steadily - an increase which continued after the war.

As with foreign trade, 1921 showed a very steep decline, but there were two exceptions. One exception was Southampton. (See Table 9). The port's coasting vessels used the Town Quay which was under the jurisdiction of the Harbour Board. There was no restriction on the use of the Quay in 1921, and the increase in trade from 1913 suggests that Southampton was much less affected by the post-war slump in coastal shipping than other ports. Coastwise trade is the only BOT category which can accommodate the Southern Railway Company's Channel Island service, and this was an important part of Southampton's total business. In pre-war days many of the coasting vessels were colliers, but the demand for bunkering coal in Southampton dwindled with the change to oil fuel and the advent of motor vessels. Conversion to oil was not completed by 1921 and coal was still required for some large liners as well as most of the smaller vessels. In the early 1920s there was still a moderate trade in coal, but it was an area of Southampton's port work which declined between the wars.

Table 9. Number and net tonnage of coastwise trade vessels arriving and departing in selected ports for the years 1910-13 (average) and 1921.

Port	Average of 1910-13		1921	
	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons
LONDON	21,932	7,989,888	17,798	9,486,732
LIVERPOOL	24,228	4,414,991	17,235	5,531,848
SOUTHAMPTON	10,832	1,502,526	16,179	2,049,035
HULL	5,888	1,303,350	3,338	1,377,214
GLASGOW	16,100	2,982,622	9,899	2,833,620
BRISTOL	9,808	1,173,114	12,452	2,987,838

Source: Annual Abstracts of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K.

In foreign trade in 1921 Bristol had shown the least decrease in the number of vessels calling and had increased its tonnage against the trend of other ports. In coastal trade Bristol joined Southampton in again increasing vessels and tonnage. Hull's totals for the pre-war average

and 1921 were disappointing in view of the poor figures established for foreign-going shipping. Glasgow, on the other hand, was the third busiest coastal shipping port before the war, and still exceeded Southampton's tonnage in 1921, despite the large decrease.

Table 10. Comparison of coastwise trade vessels and net tons for selected ports in 1921 and 1927 with percentage increases/decreases.

Port	1921		1927	
	Vessels % inc/dec against 1913	Net Tons % inc/dec against 1913	Vessels % inc/dec against 1921	Net Tons % inc/dec against 1921
LONDON	-16.7	+17.6	+36.9	+46.3
LIVERPOOL	-28.6	+22.6	- 3.9	+ 3.5
SOUTHAMPTON	+47.5	+23.5	+36.4	+35.6
HULL	-41.6	+ 6.0	+51.8	+63.7
GLASGOW	-35.4	- 3.8	+34.3	+23.2
BRISTOL	+25.4	+72.0	+ 9.6	+15.6

Source: Calculated from Annual Abstracts of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K.

The percentage differences of 1913 against 1921, and 1921 against 1927 are shown in Table 10 to illustrate the movement of coasting trade during the 1920s. Notable features are the weak trade in Liverpool in 1927, and recovery made by Glasgow and Hull after 1921. Coastwise traffic was not attracted to Liverpool in the 1920s except for an untypical year in 1922 which increased the pre-war totals and was way ahead of the years on either side. Since Southampton showed the largest increase in 1921 perhaps the southern port stole Liverpool's coastwise shipping as well as the big liners. However, London also increased coast trade in every year except 1926. Bristol's increased tonnage suggests that larger vessels were using the port after the war because the number of vessels calling did not increase correspondingly. Coasting vessels usually entered Bristol City Docks, and a quantity of coal was shipped through the port.

All ports, except Southampton, showed a marked reduction in vessels in 1926, which was almost certainly due to the miners' strike, rather than the General Strike. By that year coal was already in decline in Southampton, the bulk of the requirement in the port being for the vessels of the Southern Railway Company and Union Castle Line.

The size of Glasgow's coastal vessels increased, but the general trend was downwards, with some 10,000 less ships calling in 1938 than in 1910, the minimum and maximum years respectively. The general trend in Liverpool was also downwards, but otherwise this class of shipping showed

little evidence of the trade depression, or of the fact that it was severely handicapped by competition from the railways.

* * * *

The changing fortunes of the three large ports evidenced by cyclical trends were broadly similar, but in volume of goods handled Liverpool and Southampton moved in opposite directions. Liverpool's import trade gradually decreased between the wars,[12] while Southampton's slowly improved.[13] Overall, the least variation in shipping was found in London and Bristol, both of which increased their trade and recorded steady increases in vessels and tonnage. Although Hull's foreign-going shipping made little gain, by the late 1930s tonnage at least showed signs of improvement, and foreign trade was always supported by its coastal shipping, despite competition from Goole and Immingham.

The fluctuations which affected passenger and freight shipping may have been influenced by different factors because the trends suggest that Southampton, with mainly passengers, experienced severe but short-lived depressions, while cargo ports, and those which combined passengers and cargo, but with a greater emphasis on cargo, were subject to trade cycles of a more prolonged duration, whether upwards or downwards.

In due course a more detailed examination will be made of the employers' declaration that Southampton was unfairly disadvantaged in the post-war resumption of trade owing to its enforced closure and the subsequent loss of its markets. Judged against its greater decline in foreign-going shipping in 1921 compared with other ports, and the considerable increase in the less disturbed coastwise traffic that year, when most other ports suffered a sharp set-back, there are grounds for concurrence with the views of Southampton's port employers. However, in the second inter-war slump Southampton, with Glasgow, again experienced the worst regression, and this time the war was not responsible. Therefore, the causes of both contractions need to be examined in relation to other port factors such as the trends in passenger traffic, employment and local conditions.

The Movement of Passengers

London, Liverpool, Southampton and Glasgow are the only ports considered with regard to foreign-going passengers.[14] (See Appendix 2).

From 1909-1913 Liverpool's share of the U.K. foreign-going passenger traffic was 40-45 per cent inward and 53-49 per cent outward. In the prewar years Southampton's share was less than 20 per cent both inward and outward.[15] Total foreign-going passengers in 1920 amounted to 721,584. The 1921 total of 605,090, echoed the slump seen in foreign trade shipping. It also began the reversal of Liverpool's and Southampton's share of the U.K. traffic. All ports'passenger totals were down in 1921, but whereas Liverpool fell from 46.8 per cent to 42.8 per cent of the U.K. total, Southampton rose from 24.9 to 27.9 per cent. This process continued unchanged until 1937, by which time Southampton's share of foreign-going passengers was 47.6 per cent. In 1938 it dropped back a little to 43.9 per cent, but Liverpool's share was only 16.3 per cent. Between 1920 and 1938 Southampton's annual total passengers increased by 13 per cent, which is one of the most striking features of the industry, because in the same period the U.K. annual totals fell by 35.8 per cent. Furthermore, foreign-going passenger totals given in the Board of Trade Journal do not include either passengers travelling on pleasure cruises, or passengers arriving on troop carriers during the troop movement season.

The Board of Trade figures for passenger movements can be found in Appendices 3a (Foreign-going) and 3b (Continental), which show inward and outward totals separately. The combined totals for the first four years' foreign-going passengers are given in Table 11.

Table 11. Total passengers arriving and embarking at selected ports in the U.K., together with the U.K. totals and percentage of U.K. total. (Places out of Europe).

YEAR	LONDON	%	LIVERPOOL	%	SOUTHAMPTON	%	GLASGOW	%	U.K. TOTAL
1920	115,394	15.9	337,923	46.8	180,088	24.9	46,097	6.3	721,584
1921	98,344	16.2	259,144	42.8	168,944	27.9	42,175	6.9	605,090
1922	111,388	19.6	188,707	33.2	173,457	30.5	42,749	7.5	568,086
1923	119,923	16.4	221,235	32.8	218,419	32.4	79,434	11.7	673,794

Source: Board of Trade Journal

Passenger transport was depressed in all ports in 1921 and 1922. The following year, which had shown improvement all round in foreign trade, recorded the maximum inter-war total in Glasgow, while London and Liverpool remained below their 1920 totals, and Southampton made a very substantial increase and equalled Liverpool's percentage of the national total. 1923 was the year in which the port began to operate complete and regular passenger services.

The U.K. totals show that outward bound passengers exceeded incoming passengers during the 1920s when enthusiasm for emigration was keen. This situation was reversed during the second decade of the period, 1931-1936. However, the North Atlantic-dominated routes from Southampton and Liverpool continued in the manner of the 1920s.

The course of foreign-going passenger traffic generally was similar to foreign trade shipping, with a peak at the end of the 1920s, followed by depression and a recovery which left total passengers still far below 1929 and even further below 1920. Southampton's outward and inward passengers increased considerably in 1936 and 1937, and slightly less so in 1938. 1936 co-incided with the start of service by the Queen Mary which had the capacity to carry more passengers than any other vessel.

1929 appears to have been the peak year for passenger transport in all ports, and by looking at the percentage decreases against this year one can see that London's sailing routes were certainly less affected by the depression than the others. (See Table 12).

Table 12. Comparison of percentage decreases against 1929 in foreign-going passenger totals.

YEAR	LONDON	LIVERPOOL	SOUTHAMPTON	GLASGOW	U.K. TOTAL
1931	-17.4	-39.5	-25.8	-43.8	-30.7
1932	- 7.9	-31.7	-24.3	-41.0	-26.3
1933	-19.3	-53.3	-44.4	-67.8	-44.0
1934	-15.5	-53.3	-39.0	-58.7	-40.0
1935	-11.6	-58.7	-27.7	-58.4	-37.2
1936	- 3.4	-55.7	-5.4	-52.3	-26.6
1937	-10.5	-53.7	+1.7	-49.5	-23.9
1938	-10.6	-58.0	-15.6	-49.0	-31.6

Source: Calculated from the Board of Trade Journal Statistics.

As shipping lines and passengers responded to the advantages of Southampton for transatlantic crossings by large liners, Liverpool's passenger totals continued to decline. The decline in Glasgow's shipping was as much due to the economic decline of the region itself, of which the reduction in shipping was part. Glasgow's inward passenger totals showed less change over the period, and indeed, in the generally poor years 1930 and 1932 exceeded all other annual totals of incoming passengers for the port by a considerable margin. From 1931 outward bound passengers numbered less than a third of the 1920s totals. The trough of the passenger depression was 1933, except in Liverpool, which did not follow precisely the same pattern as the other three ports. By 1935 London and Southampton had made substantial gains and travellers to and from all parts of the world showed their willingness to use these ports. The improvement is not reflected in the U.K. total for 1935

to quite the same degree because of the influence of the poor ratings from Liverpool and Glasgow. Glasgow and London maintained their 1936/37 improvement into 1938, but Southampton in particular showed signs of the on-coming trade recession which was halted by the second world war.

Unlike foreign-going passengers, continental passenger transport had a rather slow start after the Great War, and it was 1926 before the 1913 U.K. annual total was overtaken. However, it was very much a growth industry and appears not to have been subject to the trade cycles which affected world shipping.

Continental passenger traffic was dominated by the Southern Railway Company in the port of Dover which in 1925, 1937 and 1938 handled more than a million passengers annually. Southampton in second place was a long way behind. The largest share of the market obtained by Southampton was 14.6 per cent in 1932, which was the worst trading year for the Railway Company's Marine Department,[16] and in which Southampton's own continental passenger numbers were down on the previous year.

London and Hull also carried passengers to and from the continent, but there was strong competition from Harwich for the eastern trade. It was the eastern ports which recorded the greatest drop in passengers between 1913 and 1920, as can be seen from the percentage decreases below.

Dover	-16.8%	Hull	-60.7%
Southampton	-16.5%	Harwich	-44.0%
		London	-79.0%

Neither London nor Hull competed successfully with Harwich, but fewer passengers travelled to and from the northern countries of Europe, or by the eastern route. Harwich recorded its maximum total passengers in 1938, but the 375,827 passengers only represented 13.2 per cent of the national total. Hull's passenger trade declined from 1920 onwards, except for small improvements in 1923 and 1926. London's maximum totals in 1931 and 1932 were also its maximum share of the market, and at 7.4 per cent of the U.K. total this was one area of port trade in which London was not a leader. In all cases except Harwich inward passengers exceeded outward, which suggests that Harwich attracted passengers from the east of England and possibly the Midlands, but that it was not a port favoured by visitors, either because of poor facilities, its remoteness, or the longer sea crossing.

During part of the 1920s Southampton's outward passengers exceeded those entering from France, but in general on the south coast passengers flocked in from the continent. Dover reached the million mark in 1925 and maintained totals of around 900,000 until 1931. Southampton reached

a peak in 1930 with 322,890 passengers and continued to handle totals in excess of 300,000 except for 1932 which was slightly less.[17] The large increase recorded in Southampton in 1937 and 1938 was of roughly even proportions in both directions. The cross channel traffic of the Southern Railway Company was remarkably stable throughout the period, and although Southampton's peak year of 1938 only represented 9.6 per cent of the U.K. total, continental passengers made a notable contribution to the port's economy.

Shipbuilding

The main pre-occupation of Southampton's shipyard workers between the wars was ship-repairing, rather than shipbuilding. However, the only comparisons which can be made, either with its own output or with that of other ports, is in the construction of new vessels. There is now no way of measuring the volume of ship-repair carried out, and the number of vessels using the port is no guide as to how much local repair or overhaul work they provided.

The number and net tonnage of mercantile vessels built at the principal ports, excluding vessels built for foreigners, were published in the Annual Statements of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K., and from these one can see the variations in the volume of shipbuilding and the direction of trends. (See Figures 1-6). The six districts which are considered include the northeast in place of Bristol. The northeast coastal districts of Tyne, Tees and Wear, which formed the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation area described as the northeast coast, included Newcastle, North and South Shields, Wallsend, Middlesborough, Sunderland and the Hartlepools, and produced a combined tonnage greater than any other area. Bristol, on the other hand, in its busiest year (1923) built three vessels totalling 1,979 tons.[18]

Output in 1913 ranged from 400,000 tons in the northeast to less than 1,000 in Southampton, but most districts declined sharply in annual tonnage built between 1920 and 1922. Southampton was the only district to increase on its pre-war tonnage in 1921, but in 1922 it returned to a lower level again and then sank to its lowest output of the inter-war period in 1923, with only 54 tons built (as recorded by the BOT).

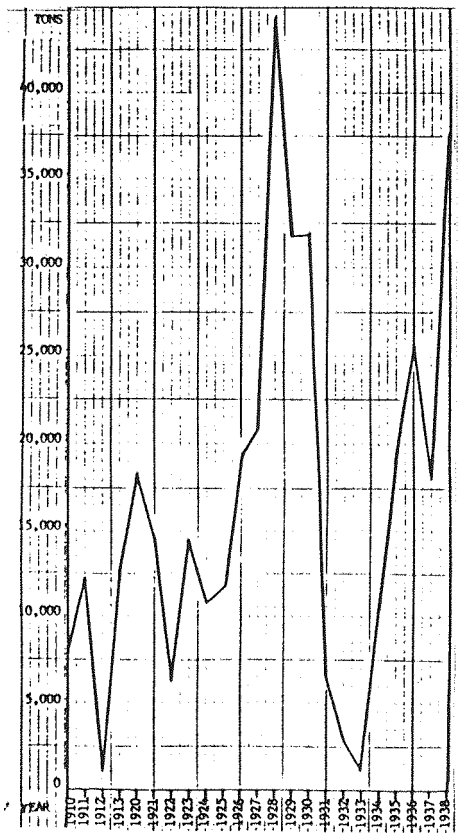
The years 1921-23 have revealed a post-war slump in port activities in most ports and trade areas examined. Shipbuilding was no exception. The largest decline in these years was experienced by Liverpool, the

district which included Birkenhead. Hull, Clydeside and the northeast coast each produced considerably less new tonnage than in the first years after the war.

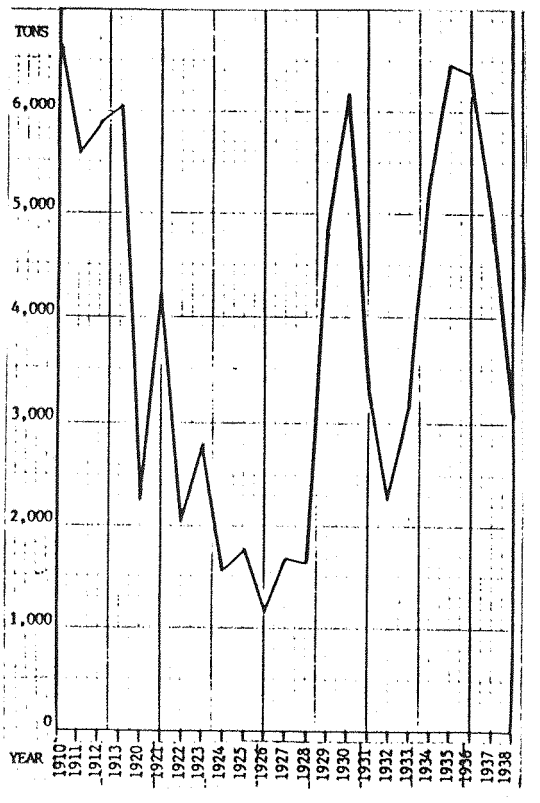
Between 1923 and 1926 the situation improved generally with a modest flow of new orders. Clydeside and Hull almost reached their pre-war level of output, but the northeast, although improved, was still below the level regarded by the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation as a satisfactory improvement. It was the Tyne ports in particular which failed to recover from the 1921-23 slump when other districts showed signs of improvement. The shortage of coal in 1926/27 was another setback to production in most shipyards.

The tonnage of vessels built according to the Board of Trade statistics in each of the selected districts for the years 1910-1913 and 1920-1938 is shown below in Figures 1-6.

Figures 1-6. Tonnage of vessels built in selected districts during 1910-13 and 1920-38

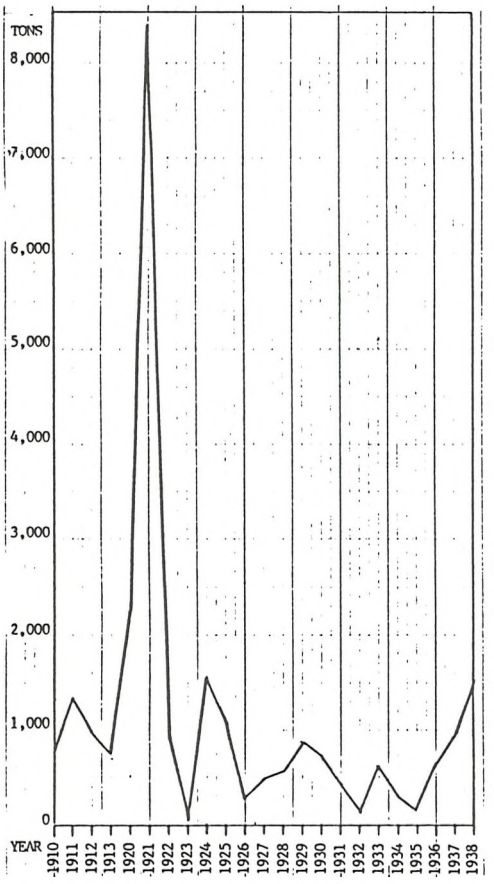


1. LIVERPOOL

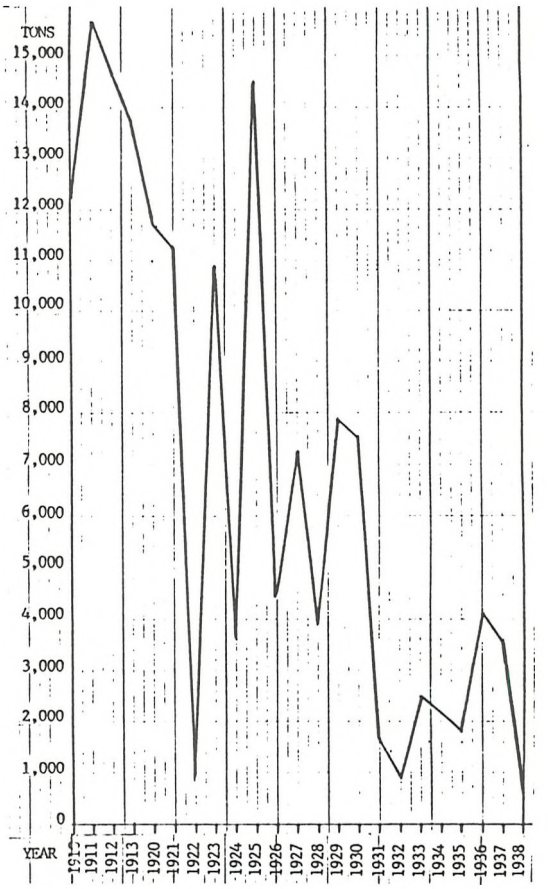


2. LONDON

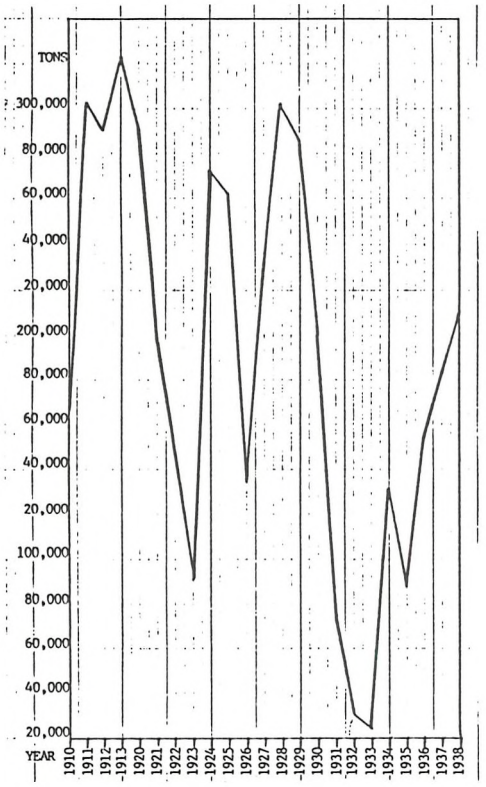
Source: Compiled from Tables of Number and Tonnage of Vessels Built at Ports in the U.K. exclusive of Vessels Built for Foreigners - Annual Statements of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K. (See Appendix 4)



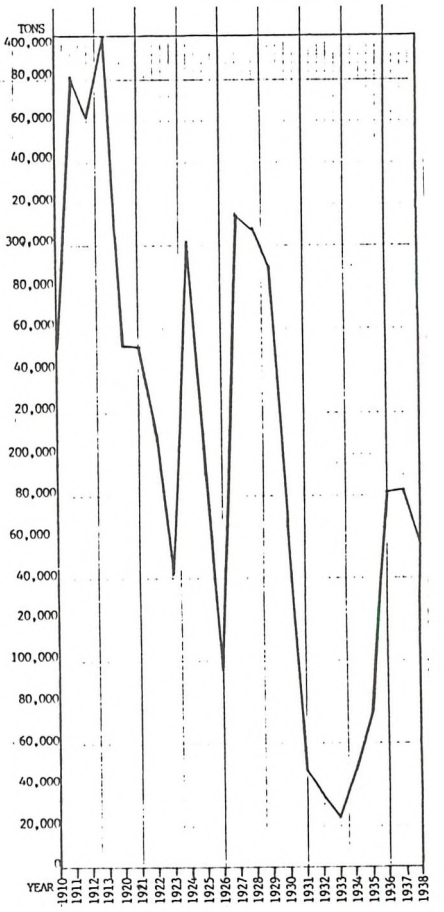
3. SOUTHAMPTON



4. HULL



5. CLYDESIDE



6. NORTHEAST COAST

Tonnage volumes were very different, but the trends between 1910 and 1930 were similar in the northeast, Clydeside and Hull, and the similarity continued into the 1930s. The shrinkage of the British shipbuilding industry can be expressed in terms of percentage decreases between the end of the 1920s and 1933 in each of the districts. Whether the 1920s tonnage was large or small made no difference to the degree of the calamity, which can be seen in Table 13. Tonnage began to fall in 1927 and the years shown for each district are those of maximum and minimum output between 1927 and 1933.

Table 13. Maximum and minimum annual tonnage built between 1927-33 in selected ports showing percentage decreases.

Port	Maximum		Minimum		
	Year	Net Tons	Year	Net Tons	% Decrease
LONDON	1930	6,157	1932	2,258	-63%
LIVERPOOL	1928	44,248	1933	1,198	-97%
SOUTHAMPTON	1929	873	1932	79	-91%
HULL	1929	7,849	1932	868	-89%
CLYDESIDE	1928	304,507	1933	27,041	-91%
NORTHEAST	1927	315,437	1933	21,298	-93%

Source: Annual Statements of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K. (Compiled from Annual Tables of Number and Tonnage of Vessels Built at Ports in the U.K. exclusive of Vessels Built for Foreigners) (See Appendix 4)

The loss of work occasioned by the reduced output in London was less severe than in other districts, but London was an exception, having reached its lowest output level between 1924 and 1928. The reason for London's difference was the type of vessels being built. For example, in 1930 when the 28 vessels built by the Tyne ports[19] totalled 86,600 tons, London built 109 vessels with a total tonnage of only 6,160 tons. The district was not dependent on orders for freighters, or liners, or naval vessels, and when the lack of orders was felt acutely elsewhere, the barges and small craft in which London specialised remained more in demand.

In the districts which built the largest tonnage the cyclical pattern was more distinct than in the smaller districts, and it was the principal centres which were looked to for recovery after the depression, but which were slow to respond. For example, the total tonnage of the northeast coast in 1937 was still 42 per cent below 1927. Although the northern districts improved they only recovered to approximately half of their 1920 production levels, and the northeast and Hull both made further down-turns in 1938. Liverpool district, which was largely Cammel Laird at Birkenhead, lost the greatest amount of output between 1931-33, but also

made the best recovery in 1938, doubling its 1937 output.

In the two districts with the smallest output, both of which were engaged in the construction of tugs, launches, barges and pleasure craft, post-depression gains were much more significant, but not identical. London made a very rapid, but short-lived improvement, while Southampton, which specialised in luxury yacht-building, and also had the benefit of some larger vessels as well, made steady progress from 1935. By the same token, Southampton workers had missed the bigger ships when there were none to build.

The statistics provided by the Board of Trade were not, however, the sum total of output between the wars. There were also the vessels built for foreign buyers which included the greater proportion of Southampton's production; and there were Admiralty contracts. Naval shipbuilding was scarce owing to the agreement on disarmament by the League of Nations, but some Admiralty work was provided during the 1930s, a proportion of which was won by Southampton.

The full list of vessels and tonnage published annually by the Board of Trade for each of the six districts, together with the U.K. totals, can be found in Appendix 4. These statistics have been used in the above discussion to show the uneasy state of shipbuilding in the 1920s, and the collapse of the industry in the early 1930s, from which a full recovery had not been made by 1938. According to these statistics 1921 was an entirely abnormal year for shipbuilding in Southampton, being the remainder of the post-war boom and a reflection of the port's importance as a construction district during the war. However, 1921 apart, output variations followed an even more erratic course than on the northeast coast. The disparity of tonnage volumes does not make comparison easy, but looking at percentage increases and decreases compared with London Southampton again seems to have a wider range of fluctuations. In other words, Southampton tonnage variation seems to have been less tied to the drag and thrust of trade cycles. In fact, trade cycles were found to influence shipyard employment, but in employment the effect of the ship-repairing departments was also taken into account.

Ship-repairing

Even taking into account all the tonnage built in Southampton, including foreign, naval, and the small yards of boat and yacht builders,

it might not have been a very significant industry without the addition of the repairing departments. Usually during the months of December to March the six giant liners were put in dry dock in rotation and overhauled, each providing two or three weeks work for several hundred men. Interior work on these great ships, whose furnishings and fittings were renowned, called for specialist work in a different category from voyage wear and tear repairs carried out on cargo steamers in Hull and the northeast coast. The size of the ships alone created more work than any other vessels. In addition to the six north atlantic liners there were also the vessels of the Union Castle, Royal Mail Steam Packet, Canadian Pacific Ocean Services and Southern Railway fleets, many of which, but by no means all, were overhauled in Southampton. During the year regular repairs and maintenance were carried out.

The repairing industry was as much subject to cyclical fluctuations as shipping, the more ships sailed the more repairs became necessary. In the mid 1920s, when shipping was prosperous in Southampton, the liners were given an extra summer overhaul, but in the early 1930s, when the future of mercantile shipping looked bleak, repairs were cut back to the absolute minimum.

The greater number of British registered vessels entering other ports meant that a greater number of ships were maintained by other shipyards, but the most attention many freighters were likely to receive was enough to pass the four yearly testing for seaworthiness. The interiors of British freighters hardly called for the work carried out on the luxury liners, and work in other shipyards was largely confined to voyage repairs and essential wear and tear correction and replacement. Therefore, the liner ports of Liverpool, London, Glasgow and Southampton were those with the most important repair departments, and the latter being the only port in Britain with facilities which could take the 'big six', it obtained the lion's share of the high class repair work.

Employment

The various aspects of employment in the port industries will be discussed fully in Chapter Six, with particular reference to casual and seasonal elements. The present aim is to put Southampton's employment into perspective, as far as possible, by comparing the main trends with other ports.

Dockworkers

The basis used for estimating employment figures for dockworkers is a set of written descriptions which were published monthly in the Ministry of Labour Gazette. Although this information is empirical, where it has been possible to test it against other information it has proved to be reliable. From August 1931 onwards port-by-port statistical data is available relating to unemployment. These statistics were prepared by the Ministry of Labour (MOL) for an investigation into Unemployment Benefit expenses. However, the percentages of unemployment given refer to counts made on specific days each month, usually the day on which unemployment books were exchanged, and in casual occupations such as dock work the number of unemployed applicable to one day per month leaves a great deal of scope for variation.

London and Liverpool dockworkers were numerically not comparable with other ports, and remembering that between them these two ports accounted for half the nation's foreign trade, the quantity and type of work carried out by these huge labour forces makes comparison even of trends uncertain. For example, taking the number of dockworkers recorded as insured in the industry in 1930, a mid-period year, there was a difference of 46,465 dockers between London and Southampton. (See Table 14).

Table 14. Total number of adult male dockworkers recorded as insured persons. Average of May-Oct. 1930.

LONDON	LIVERPOOL	SOUTHAMPTON	HULL	GLASGOW	BRISTOL (incl. Avonmouth and Portishead).
50,974	20,766	4,509	7,985	4,444	4,292

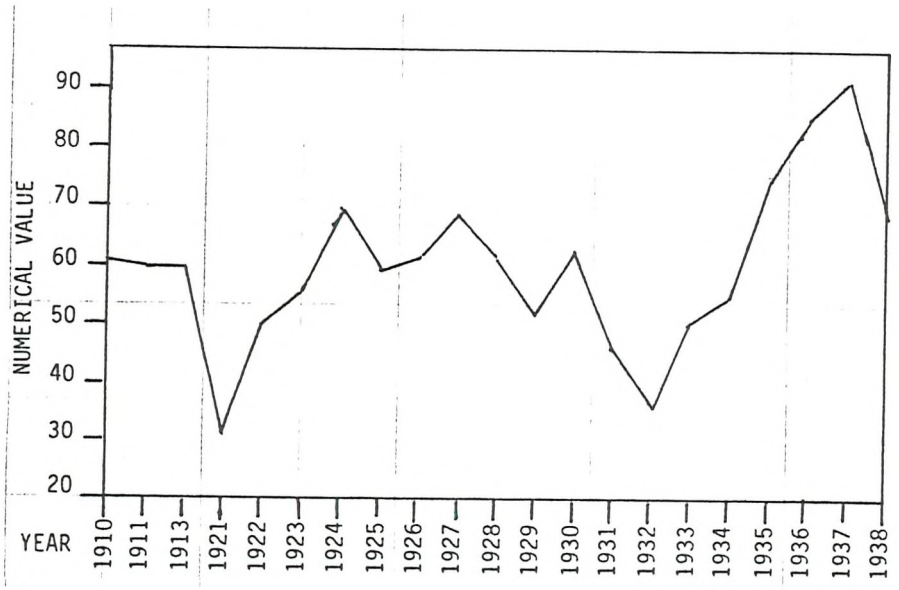
Source: MOL Summary of Returns May-October, 1930. PRO: PIN 7 115

NB. Persons insured in the industry were not necessarily registered dockworkers and were certainly not necessarily obtaining employment.

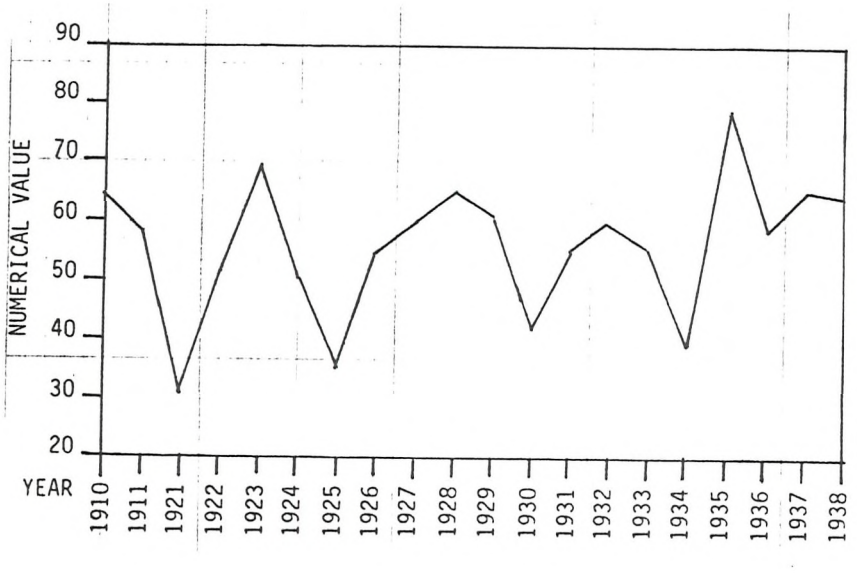
The available evidence[20] for Southampton tends to suggest that in 1921 employment was less plentiful than in 1910-1913. The MOL reports in the Gazette classified employment levels using fairly standard terminology. These common descriptive words have been converted into numerical values 1-8 for each month. The annual totals have then been plotted into graphs making visual comparison of the data possible. It is not intended that the vertical coordinate should be thought to represent percentages or actual numbers of men. The aim is to show the cyclical trends in employment as they were noted at the time. Figures

7-10 give the annual employment graphs for the four ports under consideration. Looking first at Figure 7 we can see the general trends of Southampton's dock employment, in which the steep decline which occurred

Figures 7-10. Annual totals of numerical values from written evaluations of employment levels for dockworkers.



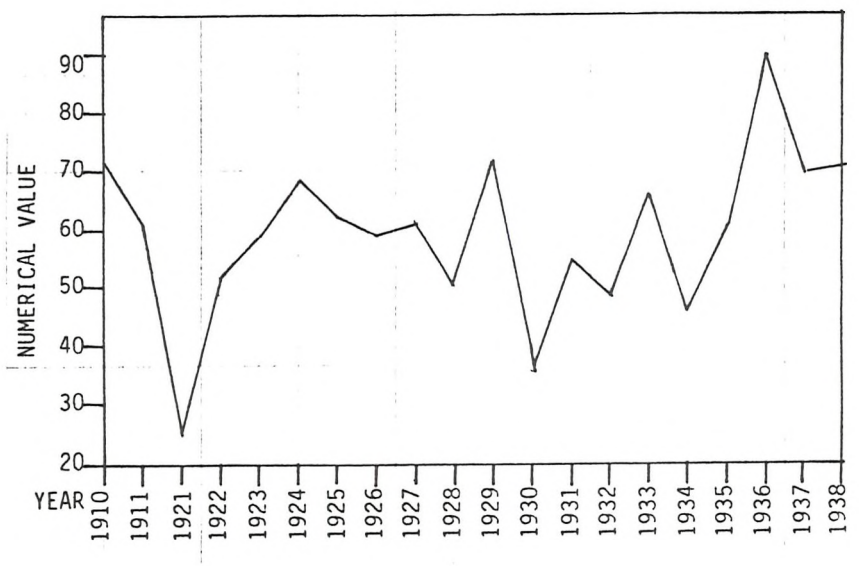
7. SOUTHAMPTON



8. HULL



9. GLASGOW



10. BRISTOL

in 1921 followed the trade pattern seen in foreign-going shipping, with a very marked employment slump. The improvement in Southampton from 1922 reached a high point in 1924. The short national dock strike of that year was not apparently detrimental to overall annual employment levels, but Southampton's employment suffered a setback in 1925, a year when its cargoes increased. The international seamen's strike in 1925 did not

succeed in detaining passenger shipping and is unlikely to have had much affect in reducing dock work.

1927 was a second high point, but from then on the depression in dock employment seems to have been sharper than the depression in shipping. 1930 saw a slight recovery in a series of otherwise depressing years from 1928 to 1932. The improvement which occurred from 1933-35 was in keeping with expectations, according to the volume of trade. However, 1936 and 1937 might have been regarded as the result of an over-enthusiastic reporter to the Gazette were it not for the fact that foreign-going shipping, net tonnage, passenger traffic, and even the volume of coastwise shipping, all made exceptional gains in these years. The full use of the New Docks and the increase in Union Castle's fleet were the main contributors to the improved trade. The MOL unemployment statistics were also in agreement with this trend, and recorded an average of 25.8 per cent unemployed insured dockworkers in Southampton in 1936, which shows an improvement on the figure of 37.6 per cent for 1933.

The general trend of dockwork seen in Figure 7 is similar to the more reliable statistics for shipping and passenger movements. Since dockwork must be loosely related to the volume of shipping, despite the variability of cargoes carried, there seems no reason not to accept the written evaluations as honest and equitable representations of employment, with limitations, but nevertheless, sufficiently accurate for use as guides to dock employment situations.

Figures 8, 9 and 10 show similar arrangements of employment reports for Hull, Glasgow and Bristol. Again the dismal record for 1921 matches the reduced shipping. In 1923 Hull and Glasgow made more improvement than Southampton and Bristol. Hull might have fared even better but for a prolonged unofficial dock strike. Despite the strike, 1923 was the year of Hull's maximum net tonnage of foreign-going shipping, which, in a cargo port, should have meant a good employment period. Unfortunately, ships were increasingly obliged to make voyages in part ballast while searching for cargoes, so that increased tonnage did not guarantee increased freight handling opportunities.

Employment in all four ports moved in a downward direction after the high point of 1924, and rose again in the late 1920s. Trends in Hull and Glasgow were similar at that time, whereas Bristol was reported as establishing a high level of employment in 1929 only. Bristol's foreign-going shipping in 1930 was plentiful and one might not have expected such a sharp fall in dock work that year, but it may have been a case of shipping tonnage being better than freight tonnage.

Southampton's trend of dock employment during the 1930s was one of expansion from 1932-1937. None of the other ports followed such a stable course. Hull suffered a deep depression in 1934 and a lesser one in 1936; Glasgow was depressed in 1933 and Bristol in 1934. All four ports experienced a down turn at the end of the period.

Glasgow made computations by the MOL difficult because of the men's refusal to operate a registration scheme by which method much data was recorded, as well as improving work opportunities for a limited number of men. Despite its labour relations and internal trade union difficulties Glasgow dockworkers were reported as being better employed than Hull, and in the 1920s were thought to offer better employment than Southampton. However, as the written evaluations were not supplied by the same reporter they were relative to local conditions. What was described as moderate in Glasgow may have been regarded as slack in Southampton. Closer analysis of other reports later help to clarify the situation.

Bristol followed the general trend during the early 1920s, but from 1928-1934 employment seems to have been erratic. Bristol was the only port to record lower average employment in 1938 than in 1910. This situation is somewhat enigmatic because Bristol's imports had considerably increased and the registration scheme was said (by the Port Authorities) to have eliminated surplus labour and provide much more regular employment for those engaged in port transport.

The indication is that in annual averages of employment Southampton dockworkers were in a more stable situation than the other ports, and certainly enjoyed a higher level than Hull. Unfortunately, annual levels of employment tend to be mis-leading in an occupation which engaged its labour by the half day, and much depended upon equal distribution of labour throughout the year. This aspect will be reviewed later.

Seafarers

The employment of seamen was calculated by the BOT and the MOL according to the number of engagements made through District Maritime Board offices. This was the most feasible method of counting a work force which was not only intermittently employed, but whose occupation took them away from their home port and provided only a temporary place of work. By counting crews' engagements much duplication occurred because the regulations required crews to be re-engaged for each voyage, and consequently, the same men were counted several times during the

course of a year.

A periodic Census of Seamen was also taken enabling a count to be made of all seafarers actually serving on a given date. It did not follow that the number counted on Census Day would be the same on any other day of the year, but it was a more accurate guide for the BOT. The Census information did not include port-by-port classification, and is of no value in this particular case.

The MOL statistics were published monthly in the Gazette, but they require a little mental agility in making allowance for duplication according to the type of shipping regularly passing through ports. However, they provide the continuity of a complete port-by-port monthly record of employment levels for the entire period.

The three principal passenger ports were in a class of their own, partly because of the volume of shipping, but mostly because of the type of shipping - the crews of some of the large passenger liners were more than 1,000 men and women. Nevertheless, the trends in employment were not altered because of the size of the crews, nor by repeat voyages of the same crews. If seamen had not been able to sail regularly, obliging them to be counted more than once, lower employment levels would have been recorded.

Appendices 5a and b show the number of seamen engaged annually in each of the selected ports, together with the U.K. totals. It can be seen that Liverpool's outstanding pre-war supremacy and sharp decline in 1921 were mirrored in the U.K. totals for those years. The joint decline of Liverpool and Southampton during the 1930s was also reflected in the U.K. totals, but it followed Liverpool's increased engagements from 1936 rather than Southampton's continued decline. This apparent reduction of engagements in Southampton was due to an alteration in the method of engaging men which eliminated much of the duplication of liner crews. The change was made in 1936 and it makes comparison with the earlier years mis-leading. Southampton-based shipping lines had been the subject of rationalisation with the amalgamation of Cunard and White Star Line, but regular voyages of the Queen Mary, which began service in 1936, might have shown as an increase in engagements for seamen had they been counted as previously, which could have corresponded with the increase in shipping tonnage which was recorded.

Apart from the pre-war years which were insignificant in Southampton, the domination of engagements on the transatlantic passenger liners is evidenced by the remarkable similarity of Liverpool, Southampton and the national totals throughout the twenty years. Engagements made in London

where passenger routes were India, Africa, Australia, the Far East and other countries, were much less influenced by the trade cycle of generally prosperous 1920s (from 1923 onwards), and depression in the first half of the 1930s. Liverpool and Southampton-based vessels sailed other routes as well, but approximately 50 per cent of all passengers travelling in and out of the U.K. between the wars crossed the Atlantic. This pattern of engagements is reinforced by the Glasgow totals which, on a much smaller scale, show the domination of the port's transatlantic passenger shipping.

Similar to the other port trades examined seamen's employment dropped sharply in 1921, except in Southampton, where engagements increased in response to an increase in port activity. This co-incides with a decrease in foreign-going shipping over the pre-war years, which suggests an increase in seamen from the catering department to provide for an increase in passengers. Despite the decrease in shipping, suspicion is now raised as to the validity of the port's supposed immediate post-war disadvantage, at least as far as passenger transport was concerned.

The duplication of liner crews, whilst useful for examining trends, is not a true record of employment and a more detailed analysis of other factors affecting employment, in particular seasonality, needs to be made, together with an examination of contemporary comments concerning seafarer's employment, which will give a clearer picture of actual employment levels obtained.

Shipyard Workers

For the employment trends of shipyard workers more than one set of statistics is available, but they all refer to unemployment figures and percentages by region, rather than to employment figures by port. The principal shipbuilding centres were often groups of ports within a defined area, and they were regarded as industrial regions with very little individual port significance. The statistics are those collected monthly by the MOL and published in the Gazette; some specific trades' statistics prepared by the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation (SEF); and the statistics issued for the inter-war period by the Shipping Conference.

Unemployment was probably the dominant feature of the industry between the wars, with as many as 60 per cent of the insured work force out of work in the Tyne and Clyde districts. It is, therefore, not surprising that interest focussed on unemployment rather than on employment levels, particularly when employment in casual occupations was so

difficult to record. Shipbuilding was not casual in the sense that dock work was casual, but very little labour was employed permanently.

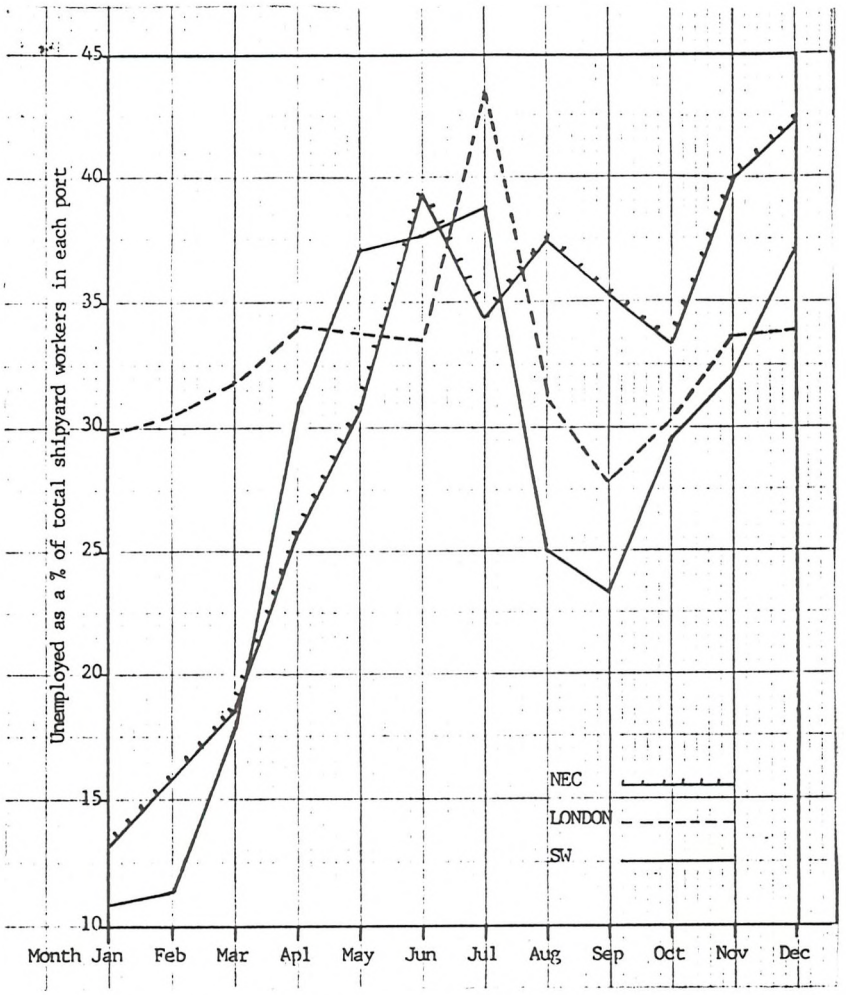
In the MOL regional statistics the southwest region included Southampton, Bristol and Falmouth. Southampton was the largest of the three and can be expected to have exerted the greatest influence over the employment figures. The shipyards in Bristol and Falmouth undertook repair work and some new construction, but their output was not of the same magnitude as Southampton's.[21] The MOL did not differentiate between branches of the industry and the figures include all insured workers, whether in shipbuilding or ship-repairing. A number of the unemployed who normally worked in the industry were not insured, or for various reasons were not eligible for unemployment benefit, and they would not have been counted unless they had unemployment books to lodge at the Employment Exchanges. In any case, because men were not employed on a permanent basis a count made on a given day each month only referred to that day, not necessarily for a whole month consistently, even though the industry was not subject to the wide daily variation found in dock work. However, the fluctuation of numbers employed, and therefore also of the unemployed, was more marked in ship-repair departments.

Based on the unemployment figures for the northeast, the southwest and London regions there is a clear indication that shipyard workers did not escape the effects of the slump in 1921. To add to the difficulties in the shipyards, apart from the post-war economic distress and the coal shortage, 1921 also witnessed an eight month strike by shipyard joiners.

Figure 11 shows the relative situations in 1921 of the three regions northeast coast, London and southwest.

From a very good employment level at the beginning of 1921 unemployment in both the northeast and the southwest rose rapidly between March and June/July, with 31 and 28 per cent increases respectively. The joiners' dispute referred to above started in December 1920 and continued into August 1921, and the dislocation of work which had occurred by midsummer was emphasised by a 10 per cent increase in London's unemployment by July. Although starting the year at a much higher level than the northeast and southwest, the number of unemployed in London shipyards had been consistent until July. The end of the strike either brought about or co-incided with a reduction in unemployment. In a repairing port it was not unusual for unemployment to increase at the end of the overhaul period in April, until the busier summer shipping brought an increase in repairs and maintenance, often followed by a lull in the autumn until the start of the next overhaul season. Southampton was certainly affected by

Figure 11. Percentages of unemployed shipyard workers in the northeast, southwest and London regions in 1921.



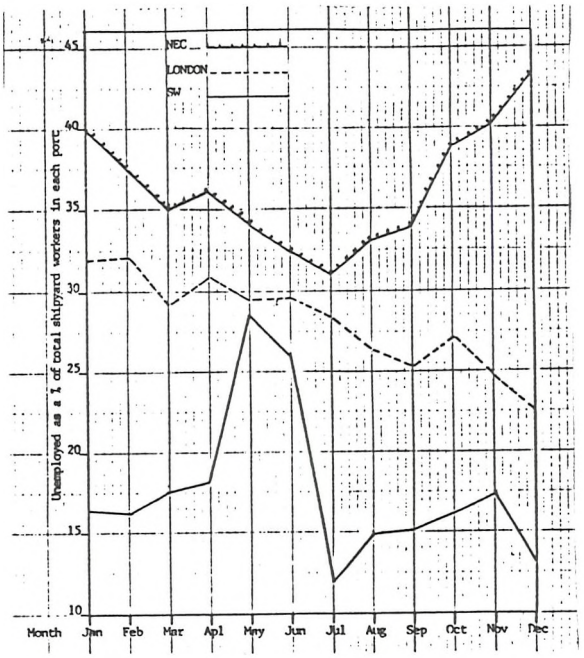
Source: Compiled from Detailed Reports on Unemployment in some of the Principal Industries MOL Gazette

the joiners' strike that year, and the improvement in August and September reflects both the end of the strike and the increase in maintenance work. London, which was also a repairing district, experienced a similar improvement in August and September, with an end of year shortage of work. In the northeast, where the priority was shipbuilding, the joiners and miners also exerted their influence, together with a fall in orders.

In 1922 and 1923 two more labour disputes, involving the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Boilermakers' Society, kept unemployment high, particularly in the northeast.

1924 brought signs of improvement, but Southampton shipyard workers and marine engineers were on strike from February to May, and by the time the strike was called off most of the work which might have been undertaken in the port had been sent elsewhere. The local employment situation was fortunately improved by the mid-summer overhauls. (See Fig.12). While London's unemployment continued to decrease throughout the year, the improvement shown in the northeast was short-lived. Tyneside

Figure 12. Percentages of unemployed shipyard workers in the northeast, southwest and London regions in 1924.

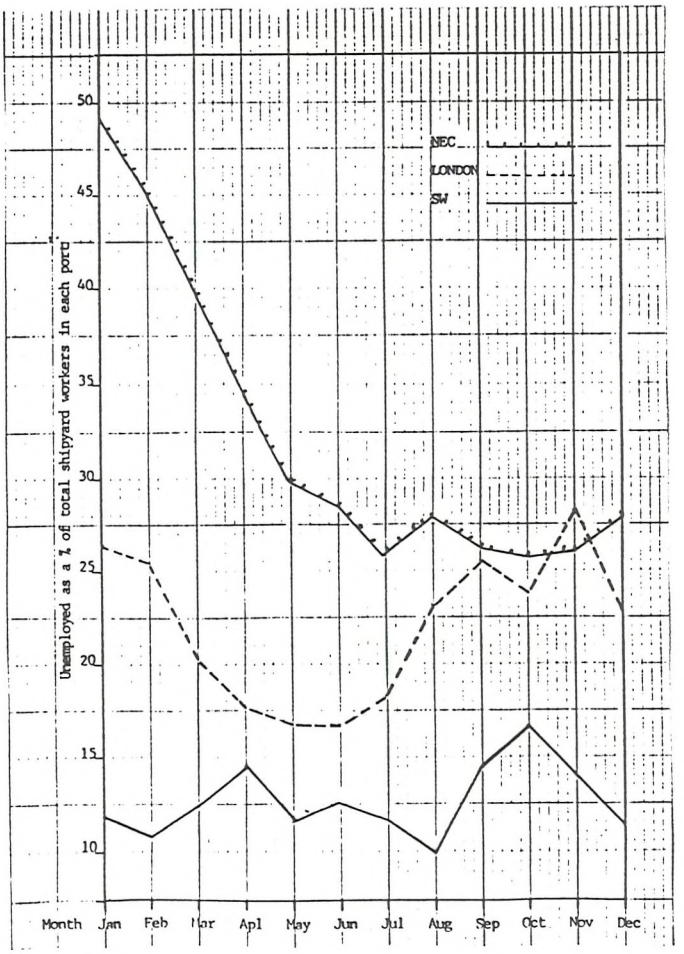


unemployment rose steadily and reached 61.3 per cent in October 1926.[22]

It was not until 1927 that the shipbuilding industry could claim to have a definite increase in orders, resulting in lower unemployment, as shown in Figure 13.

Source: Compiled from Detailed Reports on Unemployment in some of the Principal Industries MOL Gazette

Figure 13. Percentages of unemployed shipyard workers in the northeast, southwest and London regions in 1927.



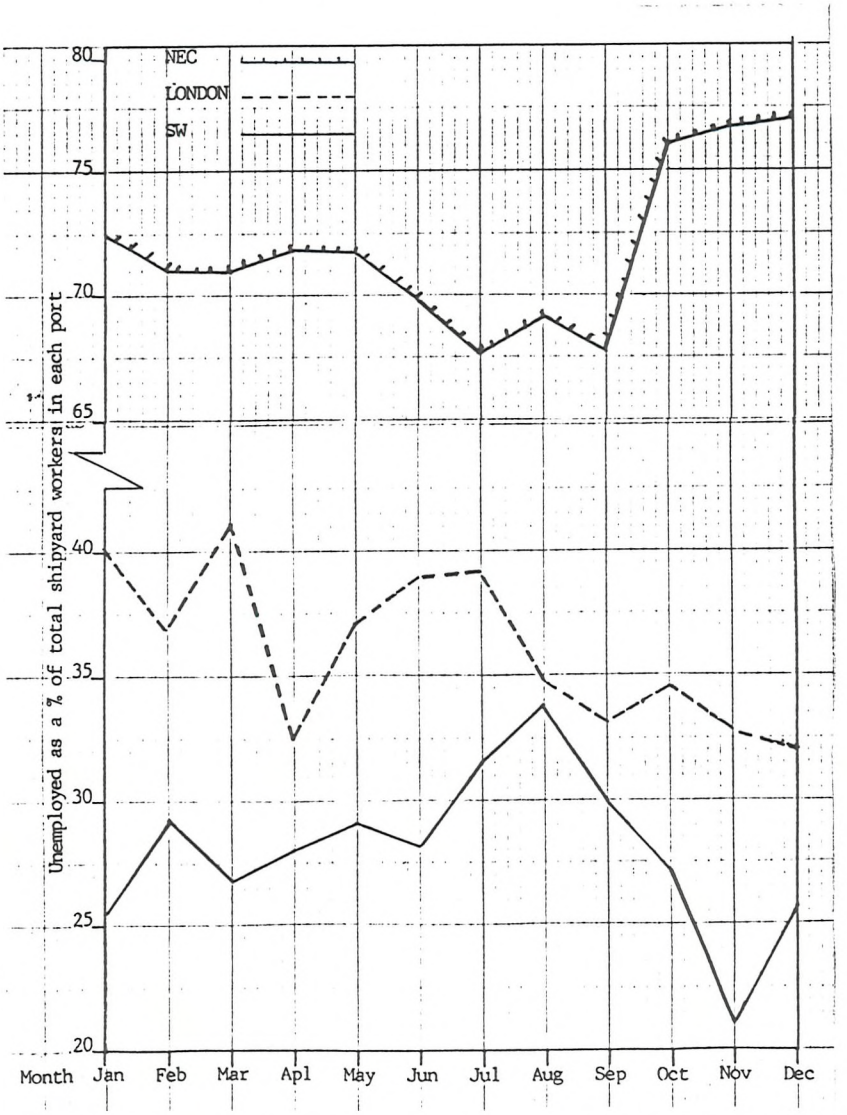
Source: Compiled from Detailed Reports on Unemployment in some of the Principal Industries MOL Gazette

Employers were not optimistic about the signs, and they discouraged workers' euphoria over the increase in orders, to which they had responded by applying for "a share of the profits."[23] The SEF warned that they were not over the crisis and that the increase in orders in 1927 was due to orders having been withheld in 1926. Nevertheless, the north-east's unemployment fell to below 30 per cent for the first time since May 1921, and shipbuilding enjoyed a brief period of relative prosperity towards the end of the decade, in line with other port trades.

In 1927 the ship-repairing ports enjoyed the same good fortune. Southampton and Cowes had also won naval contracts from foreign governments and in the southwest unemployment was below 15 per cent for threequarters of the year. The London region also recorded its lowest unemployment since 1921.

In contrast, the depression years were never more depressing than the northeast region's shipbuilding unemployment record in 1932. (See Fig.14)

Figure 14. Percentages of unemployed shipyard workers in the northeast, southwest and London regions in 1932.

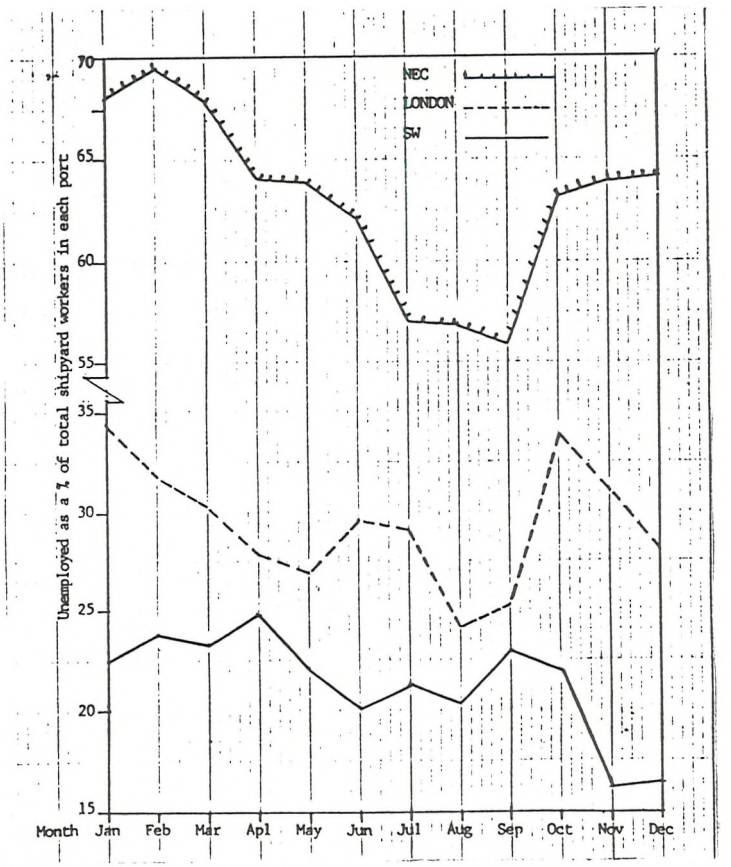


Source: Compiled from Detailed Reports on Unemployment in some of the Principal Industries MOL Gazette

In the northeast region as a whole unemployment reached 77 per cent by the end of the year, and even in the best months of July to September it was around 68 per cent. From November 1930 to May 1934 the northeast's unemployment figures rose to and remained more than 30,000 workers. The south experienced nothing like it, nor even the northwest, where the level of unemployment was mostly below 55 per cent. In London and the southwest the percentages recorded were slightly better than in 1921, but there were fewer people insured in the industry in 1932 than in 1921.

During the following years the position gradually eased in the south as men formerly employed in the industry found alternative employment in aircraft construction and the building trade. As the 1930s advanced orders were received from the Admiralty and there was an increasing interest in yacht ownership which was also a help to the southern yards. The slow improvement in the northeast compared with the southwest in 1934 can be seen in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Percentages of unemployed shipyard workers in the northeast, southwest and London regions in 1934.

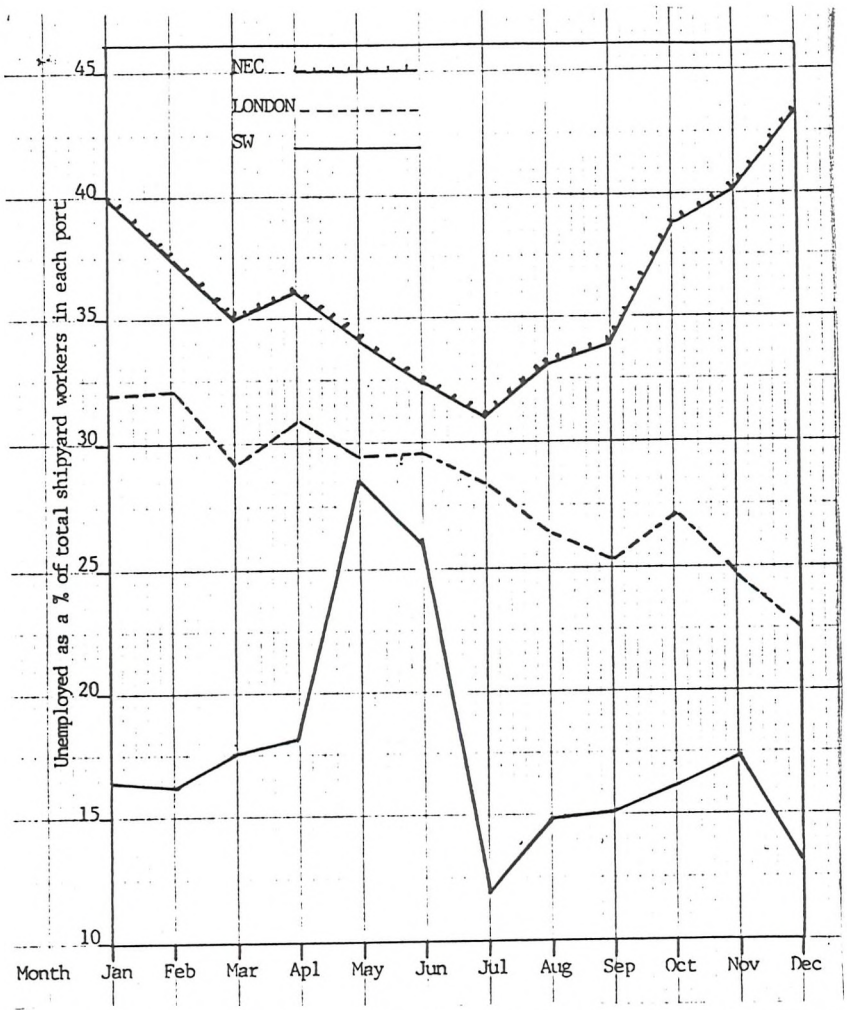


Source: Compiled from Detailed Reports on Unemployment in some of the Principal Industries MOL Gazette

The MOL changed its method of calculating unemployment in September 1937 which makes a direct comparison with 1938 difficult. However, the

percentages given indicate the undisputed improvement in the fortunes of all regions in 1938, despite decreases in output in some districts. (See Figure 16).

Figure 16. Percentages of unemployed shipyard workers in the northeast, southwest and London regions in 1938



Source: Compiled from Detailed Reports on Unemployment in some of the Principal Industries MOL Gazette

The southwest continued to show seasonal fluctuation between high and low unemployment periods, but it was on a generally reduced level of unemployment. London enjoyed steady improvement in shipbuilding and repairing, and the northeast saw its best employment since 1927.

The MOL classed the whole of Scotland as one region, but the Clyde was undoubtedly the major influence on Scottish employment records. Between 1921 and 1931 the northeast had a higher rate of unemployment than Scotland, and the situation was reversed after the depression years, but

unemployment in the two regions was very similar throughout the period.

Summary of Employment

Each port compared with its own employment record, as provided by the available statistics for the twenty years, shows the cyclical trends of the three industries to have been broadly similar. There was also a degree of similarity between the various ports and districts, but local influences played important roles in shaping economic and employment trends.

The statistics used to obtain estimates of the employment available in each industry and each port are examples of different types of data collected by the MOL and published monthly during the inter-war years. There are no statistics of actual employment figures for any of the port industries; seamen were counted by engagement, shipyard workers by the numbers unemployed, and dockers by the written accounts of employment levels. Because of the casual system of employment in the docks, dock-workers registered in each port could have been counted at any time between one revision of the register and the next without indicating how many men were finding work.

The 1921 decline in Southampton's employment opportunities was partly due to the slump, but it was also partly due to the port not being able to resume normal commercial business owing to Admiralty restrictions. The increase in seamen's engagements from the pre-war figures denotes the increase in the size of the liners rather than increased sailings. "...not a single sailing from Southampton to New York in three weeks. In the first thirteen days of 1914 White and American Lines had more sailings from Southampton than the total fixed for the present month."[24] The arrival of Cunard and Canadian Pacific Ocean Services in Southampton made a big difference to the engagements, even if shipping was not normal, and the improved share of passenger traffic was another encouraging sign.

The shipyard disputes in the early 1920s had an adverse effect on labour and employment in the industry, whereas the strike by dockworkers in 1924 caused very little disruption to employment. The length of the disputes was at the root of this. The seamen's strike in 1925 helped to make it a bad year for shipping generally, but not being a bad year for passenger traffic, Southampton did not follow the poor trend in shipping.

When the depression came it appears to have affected dockwork more severely than shipping in the southwest. The change in shipping schedules

at Southampton which created an increase in cruising kept ships and seamen busy without providing any work for dockers. Cruising also meant less regular work for ship-repairers as ships made longer voyages, and some Southampton vessels were transferred to warmer climates in winter. Shipyard workers in the south did not experience the degree of unemployment suffered by their northern colleagues, and in some months unemployment recorded in Southampton was not as low as in 1921.

Both dockwork and ship-repairing employment were more plentiful in the later 1930s, and the volume of shipping tonnage also increased in Southampton. The number of seamen's engagements in the port was reduced according to the statistics, and indeed, fewer ships arrived and departed than in the late 1920s, but as their tonnage was greater it did not necessarily imply reduced employment. Cruising was one cause of the change in engagements, but the main cause was that from 1936 a six-monthly crews' agreement was introduced in place of signing-on for every voyage.

Cyclical fluctuations in employment availability certainly occurred in Southampton, and in most instances the 1921 slump was rather worse than in ports which had maintained trading links during the war, but it is equally true that the rapid increase in passenger traffic assisted Southampton's revival and raised it to a status in the national economy of much greater significance than before the war. The sharp reduction in passengers did not occur until 1933-34 which brought the 1930s economic depression to the port a little later than elsewhere. However, it was the seasonal and casual aspects of employment which exerted the greatest influence on Southampton port labour, and cyclical trends tended to emphasise these local employment restrictions. Despite the apparent prosperity which passenger shipping brought to the port, it is possible that it may have added to casual and seasonal problems. It was itself a seasonal trade, and because of the fast turnround times demanded by its sailing schedules it increased the need for a larger supply of dock and repair labour than could be utilised either for full time work or on a permanent basis.

These issues will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six.

1. This is really a double crest at high tide caused by a halt in the tidal rise occurring two to four hours after low water, and the short duration of the ebb - only 3 3/4 hours out of 12½. James Bird, The Major Seaports of the U.K., Hutchinsons, London. 1963. p.164.
2. An area in Southampton Water dredged for turning liners.
3. The Empress Dock was used by Union Castle and Royal Mail Steam Packet, and the Ocean Dock by Cunard and White Star.
4. Brysson Cunningham, Port Administration and Operation, Chapman & Hall, London. 1925. p.151.
5. Garston port, a little higher up the Mersey, was a separate port under the jurisdiction of the LMS Railway.
6. Bird. op. cit. p.149.
7. Sir David J. Owen, The Origin and Development of the Ports of the U.K., Allman & Sons, London. 1948. (revised edition). pp.92-97.
8. Percy Ford, Work and Wealth in a Modern Port, George Allen & Unwin, London. 1934. p.23.
9. M.P. Fogarty, Prospects of the Industrial Areas of Great Britain, Methuen, London. 1945. p.269.
10. The term 'foreign-going' denotes the passage to and from destinations outside Europe. 'Home' or 'short sea' denotes trade with the continent of Europe, generally operating between the Elbe and Brest. Coastwise trade, as its name implies, denotes the carriage of goods between U.K. ports.
11. Adrian J. Vinson discusses the problems of ex-servicemen in his International Conference Paper (unpublished): "Demobilisation and Unemployment in the Southampton Region After the First World War," delivered to the Joint Conference of the Open University and the German Historical Institute on "Social Processes of Demobilisation after the First World War in Germany, France and Great Britain," (May 1981).
12. D.E. Baines, "Merseyside in the British Economy: the 1930s and the Second World War." Merseyside. Social and Economic Studies, (ed. Richard Lawton and Catherine M. Cunningham), Longman, London. 1970. pp.60-61.
13. Statistics of port trade were published monthly in the local press from Southern Railway Company sources.
14. Hull did not ship foreign-going passengers and Bristol's annual totals were only around 1 per cent of the U.K. total.

15. D. Caradog Jones, Survey of Merseyside, Vol.II, Liverpool. 1934. p.79.
16. Southern Railway Company Annual Reports of the Marine Department. PRO: RAIL 655 59-64.
17. In 1932 Dover's passengers were reduced by 441,949 from the 1930 total.
18. Southampton's output was only marginally larger.
19. Newcastle and South Shields only.
20. Estimates of dock work are based on written evaluations of employment available at the time. This type of information, using arbitrary grading from "very bad" to "good", cannot be regarded as giving precise indications, but in the absence of numerical data these evaluations provide useful information. A full explanation of the system used is given in Chapter Six.
21. Between 1920 and 1938 Southampton launched 129 vessels of 100 tons and over with a total of 82,019 gross tons. In the same period Bristol launched 49 vessels of 100 tons and over totalling 16,595 gross tons. Both ports also built smaller vessels. Statistics compiled by the Shipping Conference using Lloyds Register of Shipping, Annual Summary of Mercantile Shipbuilding of the World.
22. H.A. Mess, Industrial Tyneside - A Social Survey, Ernest Benn Ltd., London. 1928. p.55.
23. Shipbuilding Employers' Federation Minutes. Central conference with Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades on a wage application, May 20, 1927 and subsequent meetings. NMM, Woolwich.
24. Southampton Times, January 15, 1921.

CHAPTER TWO

MANAGEMENT AND NEGOTIATING PROCEDURES

The three trade groups in Southampton's port industries, dockworkers, seafarers and shipyard workers, came under the management of two groups of employers, those who employed both seamen and dockers, and those who employed shipyard workers. Apart from Master Stevedores, who engaged shore labour on behalf of shipping lines, there were only three employers of dock labour who did not also engage seamen.[1] Unlike most other dock labour employers the Southern Railway Company also employed some shipyard labour for regular ship maintenance, plus a range of skilled men and labourers for building work and the maintenance of existing buildings and plant on the docks. The Railway Company was exceptional in the port, being the dock owner, and the operator of a fleet of home trade vessels as well. The south coast ports of Dover, Folkestone and Newhaven were also managed by the company, and of course, the railway itself, plus an orphanage for the children of railway families.

The port industries collectively employed a greater number of workers than any other employment group in the town. In 1933, a low period for port employment of all categories, there were some 24,000 insured workers in the three port industries, and slightly less than that number insured in distribution, building and the other main employment areas combined.[2] By the end of the decade the distributive trades had overtaken the former largest single category, seamen, and a substantial increase in those employed in the aircraft industry was indicated. However, throughout most of the period under investigation Southampton labour was dependent upon the port industries to find sufficient employment to provide livelihoods for approximately half the working population. The port industries were, therefore, important to the economy of Southampton and the region, and much depended upon labour relations to ensure that employment was not jeopardised. In this connection, management's contribution to labour relations was influenced by the policies of national employers' organisations as much as by local associations.

This chapter examines the structure of employers' organisations and the strength of their reliance upon national federations. Although trade unions will be examined in Chapter Three, the negotiating methods used in each of the industries is considered here. Comparison is also made between employers and trade unionists regarding their influence in the town, and their activities beyond the normal sphere of industry.

Shipbuilders and Repairers

The first of the local employers' organisations to come into existence was the South Coast Engineering and Shipbuilding Employers' Association (SCESEA), which was formed in 1902. This was primarily an organisation for shipbuilders and repairers, but the dock owners and a number of the shipping lines were also members. A sound working relationship with the shipowners was necessary because of the large proportion of work which was directly involved with the maintenance and overhaul of their fleets.

There were approximately thirty member firms in the Association, the committee being drawn from the principal shipbuilding and repairing firms, the Railway Company and the most prominent shipping lines. Meetings were held fortnightly with either the president or vice president in the chair, but extra meetings were frequently called during long-drawn negotiations with trade unions and during labour crises.

The most significant shipbuilder in the district was John I Thornycroft, who had shipyards in Woolston and workshops on the docks. The company employed as many as 6,000 skilled and unskilled men when at full strength, but this number was reduced to as few as 1,900 during the depression.[3] Their wartime activities had been lively and varied, with an output of nearly thirty destroyers, plus other small, fast naval boats, and the repair of some 500 war-damaged vessels. In peacetime the company was responsible for the overhaul and maintenance of all the Cunard Steam Ship Company vessels using Southampton, but their construction work, both mercantile and naval, suffered from cut-backs after the war. Most of their post-war shipbuilding was for foreign navies.

Day, Summers and Company was established in Southampton in 1834 and in its earlier years had built passenger liners for P & O, Royal Mail Steam Packet and the Hamburg-Amerika Line, but most of their twentieth century business had been in specialised lifting gear and hauling machinery. Day, Summers was an important company in the Employers' Association, and Arthur J. Day held the office of president before the war. In the post-war era Col. Campbell Day took over the presidency, but the company was no longer in a sound trading position. After recovering from near bankruptcy in 1924 the company eventually ceased trading in 1928 and disappeared from the records. They had employed around 700 men in busy times, and even more during the war.[4]

Harland and Wolff was one of the largest companies represented in Southampton, but the local works were only a small part of their total business. They had shipyards in Belfast, Glasgow and London as well as

Southampton. Belfast was their principal shipbuilding centre and the works in Southampton were confined to ship-repair. However, as they undertook the overhaul and maintenance work for most of the shipping lines using the port, plus the Southern Railway's fleet, Southampton was their main ship-repair centre. They had workshops and a foundry on the docks and employed several thousand men in normal times, down to 2,500 during the depression.[5]

Another of the district's larger shipbuilding firms was J. Samuel White & Co. Ltd. They leased premises on the docks for repair work, but their shipyards and business offices were situated in East Cowes, I.O.W. They employed approximately 100 men on ship-repair at the Prince of Wales Dry Dock, and a greater number in East Cowes.

Several Southampton boatbuilders specialised in yachtbuilding and the firm of Camper & Nicholson was renowned for its luxury class yachts. The firm employed 694 men precisely in 1919 and around 500 even during the depression.[6] They withdrew from membership of the South Coast Association in 1924 in order to avoid employment difficulties over a dispute between the Association and local labour.

Cunard, White Star, Union Castle, Royal Mail Steam Packet and the Railway Company were usually represented at committee meetings. Complaints initiated by or raised against non-committee member firms were expected to send representatives to appropriate meetings, they were otherwise kept in touch by means of letter and attendance at the Annual Meeting.

The secretary of the Association was William Nelson. He had first appeared in the Association Minutes a few years before the war as the delegate for the Ship Constructors' and Shipwrights' Association, but during the war he worked for the Admiralty Labour Department. He was obviously a well-educated man, and it is presumed that he was a skilled craftsman. (Although the seamen's union had officials who had not been seamen, it is unlikely that non-apprenticed men would have been local leaders of a craft union). Nelson's experience with the Admiralty appears to have caused a change of outlook, although of course, it may have been the very opportunity he had been seeking to make such a change. Either way, from having been a representative of the men, he sided very firmly with the employers from then on. He resigned from the Admiralty in September 1918 and joined SCESEA as "whole time Secretary and Technical Advisor at a salary of £500 per year for a period of three years"[7] in October 1918. His contract was re-newed in three years and he remained the Association's secretary and advisor until his retirement during the 1950s. During that time he adopted an unsympathetic and, at times,

intolerant, attitude towards employees, which was particularly noticeable in the Association dealing with dock labour, of which he was also secretary. He was a very competent secretary, and he assisted the Association with correspondence, negotiations and the arrangements for affiliation to the SEF.

In 1919, recalling the industrial strife which had occurred before the war, members of the SCESEA were alarmed at the outbreak of re-newed unrest and disturbance in the shipyards. Col. Day (president) suggested linking up with the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation because closer co-operation between employers offered benefit to all.[8]

The SEF was formed in 1899 as a voluntary combination of local associations, with the object of protecting themselves from strikes and restrictive practices of workmen. Not surprisingly, its strength was in the north of England and around the Clyde, but it was keen to take in all employers' associations. Its executive board was composed of directors of the large shipbuilding concerns, and it advised and instructed the general council of members representing the districts. There was also a works and conference board which undertook much of the routine work and preliminary discussion and negotiation. The SEF divided its administrative area into districts, rather than ports, as explained earlier, because the industry tended to flourish in groups of ports along suitable waterways. Many of the SEF negotiations with trade unions and affiliated districts were conducted from venues in Carlisle and Edinburgh. Several trade unions which organised shipyard workers also had their headquarters in the north, but for others, including South Coast members and union delegates, considerable time and travel expenses were involved in attending meetings. Some joint meetings and general conferences were held in London.

Of the South Coast Association companies Harland and Wolff was the only one to object to affiliation, and Col. Day wrote to SEF secretary, Andrew Duncan, in November 1919 saying that he wanted to bring in the whole association and not "drop our shipping friends who are a great source of strength to us," but he was not concerned about Harland and Wolff and did not think it would matter if they joined or not.[9] The difficulty with the "shipping friends" was the association's Rule 3 which stated: "All Mail Steam Ship Companies, Railway Company and Dock Company shall be free to act independently of the Association should their business require it." The object of the Rule was to give companies with mail contracts the freedom to fulfil those contracts. Day pointed out that "no one had taken advantage of the Rule in thirty years."[10] Privately the Federation

did not like the Rule, "it gave the shipping companies an opening by which to back out in case of trouble, but it might be better to accept membership even with the Rule, as it might tend to secure greater co-operation and it would not be any worse than with the Steam Ship Companies outside."[11]

Southampton's affiliation to the SEF placed the port in a difficult position from the point of view of labour relations, because workers frequently compared their wages and conditions with those in London, Liverpool[12] and Bristol, which were not affiliated and therefore, not governed by SEF/trade union agreements. Southampton workers thought their conditions compared unfavourably with the non-federated districts. Without having a national agreement on wages or a uniform wage rate until 1930, the SEF undertook collective bargaining for the industry, at least as far as the authority of its affiliated districts extended. Ports which were not affiliated, far from being subject to employer exploitation, paid higher wages to practically all trades, through not having the security against wage demands offered by the federation. On the other hand, the non-affiliated districts were those, in common with Southampton, which were ship-repairers rather than shipbuilders.[13] Ship-repair employers preferred to remain independent and avoid involvement with industrial disputes in the northeast, Clydeside and Barrow-in-Furness. They were not keen to accept the decisions and interference of an organisation primarily concerned with shipbuilding. The Port of Liverpool was, in any case, extremely independent when it came to employers' organisations, and neither the Liverpool Steamship Owners' Association, nor the Mersey Shiprepairers' Association were interested in affiliating with other bodies, despite one of the port's leading figures, Sir Alfred Booth, Chairman of Cunard, having been instrumental in setting up a national employers' organisation which dealt with dock labour.

Southampton was, therefore, untypical among repairing ports in seeking the support of the more powerful shipbuilding firms, even at the risk of becoming involved in disputes which did not concern the southern district. In fact, there was no reason why ship-repair workers should have been any less militant than shipbuilding workers, unless better wages and conditions gave less cause for complaint. Such a situation could not be relied upon to last once the differential of repairers over other workers had been lost. In Southampton's case affiliation to the SEF enabled the port to maintain a lower wage level than other ship-repairing ports. Nevertheless, before the end of the 1920s most of the non-federated ports had seen for themselves the advantages of joining the SEF.

Agreements which were negotiated between SEF and trade union negotiating bodies were put into effect in all affiliated districts. In addition to wages these concerned hours, overtime and nightshift, and the procedure for the avoidance of disputes. A new procedure for avoiding disputes was introduced in July 1927 after two years of negotiations. It was aimed at promoting speedier settlements by allowing arbitration by mutual consent, and by making provision for an independent chairman to attend general conferences.[14] Otherwise, it was very little different from the 1918 procedure which had been based on the procedure used in the engineering industry.[15] It was also hoped that the new agreement in 1927 would prevent the short, but disruptive, stoppages of work which frequently occurred among boilermakers. The workers in this particular trade believed that they were entitled to special consideration because they were an almost entirely pieceworking trade, and as such, could only make really satisfactory arrangements regarding working conditions through local negotiations and agreements. National agreements made to suit time workers rarely suited piecework methods. The trade earned a reputation for having very poor labour relations, partly because it had the largest number of workers in the industry, and partly because ports and groups of ports revolted independently which meant that boilermakers somewhere were almost always in dispute about something, but seldom the whole trade at once. In the shipbuilding industry the work of several trades might be affected by the stoppage of one, and for this reason wide-ranging agreements were sought by employers; a task not made easier by the number of trades involved, nor the trades' own arrangement of groupings, which necessitated negotiating each issue with more than one negotiating body. General conferences were able to overcome this.

The SCESEA made much use of the SEF in dealing with local problems, and local trade union leaders accepted the procedures for negotiation, although they were sometimes reluctant to accept the results and unofficial action in protest was not completely unknown. Once a dispute had been referred to the higher authority it was dealt with by SEF and trade union executives, and local men were no longer able to argue their own case. This worked well for the employers who handed over their case to a powerful body of well-informed policy-makers. The workers' side was not always so well served. Trade union executives were not in every case entirely conversant with local problems, particularly when the district concerned was not a shipbuilding district with a large number of union members to be protected. In other words, Southampton's disputes were not always argued to the men's advantage by their own side, and the SEF did not make allowance for any circumstances which might have been

different in a ship-repairing centre.

Local negotiations were often conducted with an individual union, but it was also common for more than one union to be involved in matters affecting wages and conditions. There were two separate groups of workers with whom management could negotiate, as well as the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) which did not belong to either of the other groups. The first of the groups was the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades (FEST), which was an early federation of unions, having been inaugurated in 1891,[16] with most of the industry's main trades affiliated to it. By 1920 the AEU and the Friendly Society of Ironfounders[17] had withdrawn from the Federation, but there were still more than forty unions under the direction of a president and a national secretary.[18] Local committees and district secretaries provided a network through which the executive was kept informed, but the bias of the FEST was engineering rather than shipbuilding. It was the FEST's local committee which was used as Southampton's point of contact for negotiation with the managements of shipbuilding and repairing companies.

As a national organisation for shipbuilding the FEST was frowned upon by some of the craft unions' executives who considered that it was not possible to negotiate satisfactorily with an organisation which a) provided for semi-skilled machine operators and general labourers, and b) which conducted negotiations on behalf of both time and pieceworking trades. Knowing that the FEST would be weakened by the withdrawal of the craft unions, Allan Findlay, General Secretary of the United Patternmakers Association, elected FEST president in June 1923, attempted to reconstruct the federation to satisfy the craft unions. He revised the rules and constitution "to refer to all trades," and "to meet the present pay needs."[19] However, he was too late to prevent six craft unions from forming their own Shipyard Trades Committee, the second negotiating body referred to above. These six unions were the painters, plumbers, woodworkers, electricians and shipwrights, which seceded from the federation, and the boilermakers which had already been expelled from the FEST that year for refusing to accept the common policy on overtime and nightshift. The inclusion of the boilermakers in the Craft Unions Committee (which it came to be called) seems to suggest that it was general discontent about federation policy and the voting power of the semi-skilled and general labourers' unions which had prompted the split, rather than the incompatibility of time and pieceworking trades.

In Southampton the local FEST committee continued to negotiate with management together with the delegates from the Craft Unions Committee, and the AEU. Although the Craft Unions Committee was officially a

separate body, and was treated as such by the SCESEA and union executives, there was no split among local union officers.

Because of a tendency towards inertia on the part of the FEST and its ineffectiveness as a shipyard workers' negotiating body, a small group of the more dynamic unionists in Southampton formed themselves into the Southampton Shipbuilding and Repairing Joint Trades Committee in May 1925. They were anxious to achieve local improvements and were not satisfied with the efforts of other union officials, and they wanted a swifter approach to important issues. However, the alliance was rather a curious one in view of the split from the FEST only two years earlier which had involved separation from the labourers' unions. It reinforces the fact that Southampton trade unionists were content to negotiate alongside local colleagues irrespective of their trade union, and that what brought them together was a common local interest rather than national policies or the strength of the ballot box.

The district secretary of the United Operative Plumbers' Association (UOPA) joined with the local delegate of the National Union of General Workers (NUGW) to become the Joint Committee's secretary and president respectively. Both men were inclined towards militancy because, as they saw it, actions spoke louder than words. The third member was E. le Cornu, a former seamen, now an official of the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union (AMWU), which had taken over the position formerly occupied in the port by the British Seafarers Union. The AMWU had a very tenuous connection with shipbuilding through the employment of a small number of sea-going plumbers, carpenters, electricians and boilermakers, but the union was 'at war' with its rival, the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (NSFU), throughout its short existence and it had good reason to seek an alliance with the more powerful unions represented in the port.

The SCESEA refused to recognise the new joint trades and warned member firms not to negotiate with it, and there is no indication that it had any further support from either its own or other trade unions. As a joint enterprise it was a failure, but it does suggest that national arrangements were not seen by all as the most suitable for local situations, and its formation shows that some local leaders were aware that their interests were not always being best served by their regional negotiating bodies.

Measures taken by the SCESEA to protect members against strikes and restrictive conditions were those proposed by the SEF. In national stoppages when called on to support SEF policy Southampton employers obeyed. For example, they locked out the shipyard trades in 1922 owing to a dispute over wage reductions, and they locked out the boilermakers

in 1923 when they refused to accept the overtime agreement made with all other trades. Reciprocal support was given by the SEF in 1924 when they called a national lockout of shipyard trades in support of Southampton district whose workers were on strike over a purely local wage issue which failed to reach settlement by negotiation.

The SEF was a staunchly united organisation headed by powerful men. Nationally shipyard labour was fragmented into numerous trades, some with comparatively few members in shipbuilding compared with their members in engineering and the construction industry. The unions themselves were composed of members with different political attitudes. Such a variety of skills and opinions often made it difficult to reach unanimous agreement even on fundamental principles. The lack of unity among trade unions was in strong contrast to the SEF which had no difficulty in reaching unanimous decisions. It was an organisation which challenged reproaches and which chose confrontation in preference to giving concessions.

In the SCESEA Harland and Wolff's manager was less willing to risk confrontation than some of the other members, and he was not always in agreement with the committee. There were occasions when he believed his workers had cause for complaint, and he was always anxious to avoid the disruption of work. Harland and Wolff had the most to lose when disputes affected repair work, and the company had not agreed to affiliate with the SEF until the end of 1926. Remaining outside the SEF had not prevented them from being involved in the strikes of the early 1920s because they were obliged to abide by the decisions of the SCESEA. Two smaller firms resigned from the Association over the 1924 dispute in Southampton, so that they could be free to increase wages in response to union demands and avoid further conflict.

There was a national agreement for dealing with demarcation procedure intended to prevent disputes of this nature interfering with productivity. Unfortunately this was one of the least observed agreements, and even the official settlements were liable to be rejected by one of the parties and the same differences of opinion about job demarcation recurred. These disputes were exceedingly frustrating to employers because they tended to disrupt work in small areas for very trivial reasons which were, nevertheless, extremely difficult to solve amicably and fairly for all parties. Southampton had many such disputes and many checks to productivity, both in new work and repair. Changing methods and the use of different materials precipitated these difficulties.

Dock Labour Employers

In the government's reorganisation of the railways after the war in 1923 the London and Southwest Railway Company became the Southern Railway Company, and at the same time an internal cost-saving exercise was carried out by the company in Southampton. The Marine Department, which formerly employed seamen, and the Docks Department, responsible for dockers, were amalgamated. Trains also came into the docks to deliver and pick up passengers, and discharge and load goods, but the men who were in charge of trains, also employees of the Railway Company, were railway workers, and only those who handled ships' cargoes were dockers. This ruling applied prior to 1923 and, in fact, the change in administration made little difference to the engagement of labour. It was a change of name, both of the Railway Company and its internal structure in Southampton, but otherwise it does not affect this study.

At the beginning of 1919 a proposition regarding a national wage settlement was put forward by the National Transport Workers' Federation[20] at the suggestion of Ernest Bevin, then assistant secretary of the Docks, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union. To meet this issue a standing committee of the SCESEA came into being in February 1919. It was officially called the Southampton and District Employers' Association Standing Committee for Stevedoring, Quay and Allied Workers, but it was known as the Port Employers' Association, and so shall it be called here.

At the inaugural meeting of the Port Employers' Association (PEA) the chairman commented that "it was amazing how separated the employers of labour were as compared with the trade unions,"[21] which was, in fact, the case. Each port operated its own system of employing dock labour and arranged its own wages and conditions. The trade unions were nominally united within the Transport Workers' Federation (NTWF), but even so, there had never been a united effort for the standardisation of wages until Bevin's national wage structure claim was raised.

The PEA embraced approximately twenty member firms which included all those who were connected with the docks; the shipping lines, both foreign and coastal; shipping agents, who acted as stevedoring companies for certain shipping lines; Master Stevedores; the tugboat and dredging companies; the coal bunkering merchants, whose employees were not dock workers; the fruit importers, who also used a warehouse on the docks as their auction sale room; the cold storage company, whose refrigerated plant was one of the largest in the country, situated close to the Ocean Dock; the Southampton Harbour Board, which presided over the Town Quay; two members of SCESEA, Thornycroft and Harland and Wolff, much of whose

ship-repair work was carried out on the docks; and, needless to say, the Railway Company. The association's membership was far more diverse than that of the SCESEA whose members were all in shipbuilding, marine engineering or shipping.

A significant feature of the Southampton PEA was that it included all port employers, which was not the case everywhere. For example, it was not so in Liverpool, London or Hull, where there were many more employers. In these ports some employers were outside the local associations and did not consider themselves bound by association rules to employ registered men or union members, and did not support the dock registration schemes being fostered by the Ministry of Labour.

The chairman of the Southampton PEA was the manager of the Docks and Marine Department of the Railway Company, and each time a manager was promoted his successor was elected to the chair. From September 1920 until July 1937 the deputy chairman was Captain S.N. Braithwaite, Marine Superintendent of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, and he attended almost every meeting until his illness in 1937. As he was for many years also chairman of one of the other port committees (Port Registration Committee), he provided a measure of continuity in port affairs.

Further continuity was provided by the secretary, William Nelson, whose career was described in connection with the SCESEA. His work for the two associations made him one of the most knowledgeable men in the port regarding labour matters, and the PEA relied on him increasingly during the period up to the second war, frequently handing matters over to him to deal with. Correspondence was passed to him, and he represented the PEA at meetings with MOL officials and other employers' bodies. He was also often called upon to negotiate with trade union officers.

The PEA met regularly in its first few years, and formed sub-committees which dealt with certain aspects of the work, such as the piece-work, safety and local joint negotiating committees. These sub-committees kept separate Minutes, and as the main committee met less and less frequently over the years, particularly into the 1930s, not all the details of port business were recorded in the main PEA Minutes. However, much closer contact was maintained through these sub-committees than the eventual two meetings plus general meeting each year tend to suggest.

Committee members were representatives of the main shipping lines based in the port, including the largest of the coasting companies, Coast Lines Ltd., and also the International Cold Storage Company, J. Rose, the Master Stevedore, and R. and J.H. Rea, the coaling company. The chairman and his deputy were elected annually, but as with the SCESEA, there is no record of committee members being elected. Firms involved

with a particular issue attended relevant meetings, but those mentioned above sent representatives to almost all meetings.

Before the war there had been no permanent central body of employers to negotiate specifically with dock labour, and it had fallen to Lord Devonport, chairman of the PLA, and Sir Alfred Booth (Cunard) to act as spokesmen de facto for the employers. The PLA and the Mersey Trust were non-profit making bodies employing a major proportion of dock labour, so Booth and Devonport were in a good position to speak on behalf of port labour. When the demand for standardisation of wages for a standard eight hour day for all port transport workers was made by the NTWF, it was decided there was a need for better co-operation and a point of communication for port employers' associations. The idea, suggested by Liverpool Steamship Employers' Association, was to form a general council of port representatives, which would then appoint an executive committee to negotiate with the union side. This council came into being as the National Coucil of Port Labour Employers (NCPLE), with Sir Alfred Booth as its accepted leader and unofficial chairman. The objects of the NCPLE were "to secure fullest consultation and co-operation at all ports in dealing with labour problems."[22]

The council was composed of one to three representatives from each port, depending on importance, and Southampton PEA, deciding their own importance, nominated three. They were the local manager of White Star Line, Philip Curry, to represent shipping interests; Major G.S. Szlumper, Railway Company Docks and Marine Manager, to represent dock and harbour interests; and the Southampton Assistant Manager of Cunard, O. Harries, to represent the interests of other employers in the association.

As a counter to union demands on behalf of dockworkers the NCPLE was not very successful. It came into being to avert a national wages agreement in the docks industry, which it failed to do, and it failed to prevent a strike in 1924 over a claim for increased wages. It succeeded in reducing wages and conditions between 1921-23, but this was largely on the strength of Bevin holding the newly-formed Transport and General Workers' Union in check against branch leaders' wishes. The council did not meet sufficiently often to be a really effective tool for employers. Its main function was negotiating wage alterations to the national basic rate, and in this respect Southampton supported its resolutions and agreed to accept the outcome of negotiations, but the local employers usually thought wage increases were too large and reductions were too small, and that better terms could have been obtained.

As previously discussed, the difficulties of establishing satisfactory negotiating procedures in the shipbuilding industry were due to the number

of trades which had to be catered for. Sometimes not all trades were involved in negotiations, and the most practical method for the industry was to call meetings and joint conferences as and when they were required, bringing in all interested parties from both sides. In the docks industry after 1921 the formation of the TGWU considerably reduced the number of unions organising dockers and it was feasible to consider a more permanent arrangement. The National Council appointed Workers (TGWU) which it was intended should settle local disputes and avoid strikes. However, what Bevin wanted was a committee which could be more evenly balanced, which could serve as an example for the type of joint negotiating committees he envisaged should operate locally. Arising from recommendations made by a Court of Enquiry into Wages, Rates and Conditions of Men Employed in Docks and Waterside Labour in 1920,[23] the National Joint Council for Dock Labour (NJCDL) was formed with Ernest Bevin and Sir Alfred Booth as joint chairmen. It was composed of eighteen members each from the NCPLE and NTWF, and decisions were made by a conciliation committee with nine members from each side who met once a month.[24]

Local PEAs were able to consult the NJCDL regarding working methods and the interpretation of national agreements and their amendments. Southampton was represented on the council by Major Szlumper, but the PEA did not refer many of their problems to it. Perhaps because old habits die hard, Southampton PEA retained the custom of seeking information from other ports when they were unsure of their ground, particularly over special rates of pay which were not included in national agreements. Competition between ports had existed before the war and continued after it, and despite the national wage rate, established in 1920, a forest of differentials still existed for handling different types of cargo. For example, if London and Liverpool paid 1s.3d. per shift extra for handling meat from cold stores, Southampton would not pay 1s.6d. As these differentials were not governed by national rates it was important to obtain prices paid direct from the cargo ports.

Whether PEAs used the national council or not the most important of the negotiating committees were the local joint committees, which were set up along the same lines as the national council in many, but not all, ports. These were standing committees of the PEAs, or other governing authority in the port, and it was left to individual ports to work out the constitution and rules of their own local joint committees.

Originally Southampton PEA had seen this idea as an imposition. Their objection seems to have been based on the number of men who would leave their work to attend meetings without real need, because they

already had a system for negotiating with the Dockers' Union representative. By this method of negotiation the union district secretary had obtained agreement on a 44 hour week, which also included a number of subsidiary issues connected with hours of work,[25] and acceptance of the union's Schedule of Tariffs and Port Customs.[26]

The new local joint committee (LJC), eventually agreed to by the PEA, was set up with five employers, excluding the association's secretary, and with an employer as chairman. It was stipulated that the employers were to be those whose companies were affected by issues in question, and not necessarily the same for each meeting. The union was to provide the vice chairman and an equal number of representatives, who were to be granted time off to attend recognised meetings, but without remuneration for time lost. Despite the frosty reception of the idea, the committee was used continuously and most effectively from June 1920, and met regularly as the sub-committee of the PEA in which most of the business concerning labour was transacted. Meetings were sometimes dominated numerically by employers, but the average attendance at meetings for which details are given in the PEA Minute Books was five employers and three workers.

Port Labour Committee

An important committee dealing with dock labour was the Southampton Port Labour Committee which dated from 1916, but which had its foundations in the pre-war decasualisation of dock labour ideas of William Beveridge. In response to Board of Trade policy on the payment of health insurance contribution by employers a scheme was introduced at the Port of Liverpool in 1912, aimed at establishing a register of dockers so as to bring order to the enormous surplus of men seeking work in the port. It was also hoped to improve industrial relations, as well as benefit employers through savings on insurance contributions.[27]

During the war it was apparent that the distribution of dock labour was not at all satisfactory, and that shortages of man power were occurring in strategic areas, while huge surpluses were being left idle in others. Registration schemes were, therefore, started at a number of ports, using the Liverpool idea as a model. This was not done to eliminate the casual system which had been condemned as recently as 1916 by Henry Mess,[28] but to ensure an adequate supply of labour where it was needed during the war crisis.[29] Local modifications to the Liverpool scheme enabled ports to continue operating in much the same manner as

previously, but with a list of men registered as dockworkers and a means of identifying them. Southampton, under the control of the Ministry of Shipping, was the port of prime importance to the war effort, and regulation of its labour was considered essential. So a registration scheme was set up in 1916 and the Port Labour Committee (PLC), which was formed to administer the scheme, decided in favour of using the brass tally system of identification used at Liverpool.

The members of the PLC were eight employers and two workers with the local Labour Exchange officer. The independent chairman of the committee was Sir Russell Bencraft, chairman of Southampton Conservative Association. After the war the PLC remained in being, but the employers looked upon it as a wartime measure which had outlived its usefulness. They wanted it replaced with a committee of four employers, two labour representatives and one from the MOL. They appointed four PEA members to enquire into its functions, and although their findings were not reported in the Association Minutes, the need to look into the functions of the Committee suggests that it was not functioning very well.

In January 1921 the PLC came under fire from F. Blessley, the secretary of the Southampton branch of the National Association of Discharged Soldiers and Sailors, because of alleged discrimination against ex-servicemen in the distribution of tallies. Another special committee was set up to investigate the PLC, this time under the chairmanship of the Harbour Board chairman, Alderman A.J. Pearce. The composition of the special committee is rather interesting because all but three of the members were already members of the PLC, and as one of the three was Blessley, this left the chairman and one trade unionist as the only impartial members of the investigators.

The committee's findings were that there were more men registered than were necessary for the work available, and that no more tallies should be issued until there was some improvement in trade. 1921 was one of the worst of the inter-war years in Southampton, and with employment at such a low ebb their recommendation came as no surprise, but then it was the poor employment situation which had prompted Blessley to complain. The committee also recommended reducing the number of tallies by a process of gradual elimination. To avoid the possibility of fraud in claiming out-of-work donation and unemployment benefit it was recommended that daily returns of men engaged should be given to the Labour Exchange. They also suggested that a central call stand should be introduced to better facilitate the engagement of men. Both of these were excellent recommendations which were to be instanced as beneficial amendments to the Southampton registration scheme on more than one

occasion. The Discharged Soldiers' and Sailors' Association's allegations were dismissed with the comment that steps should be taken to prevent improper transfer of tallies from one man to another, and they stated that no ex-servicemen who had been dockers before the war and were still fit had been refused tallies.

The report was accepted by all committee members except Blessley, who alleged mis-use of tallies, such as passing them to friends, keeping them after other work had been obtained, tipping and treating for preference. The committee denied that there were any such cases.[30] Oral evidence of dockworkers referring to the later 1920s states that tallies were definitely mis-used in the way described, but the scale of such mis-use is not clear, and it may not have occurred in this particular instance. As the war receded, so concern for ex-servicemen dwindled, and Blessley's pressure group was ineffective. However, there were undoubtedly ex-servicemen amongst the tally-holders.

A change of TGWU area secretary focussed attention on the PLC again. When Dan Hillman succeeded Bill Paul in the local union hierarchy, he also took the latter's place on the PLC, but his appointment did not please certain officials in the MOL, one of whom was already acquainted with him. On arrival Hillman objected to the PLC chairman because he was not sufficiently familiar with the industry, and as one of the town's leading Conservatives the workers did not think he was neutral, and Hillman objected to him having a casting vote. The reaction of the MOL official throws some light on the activities of the PLC. "Owing to Hillman's forcing tactics matters would have reached deadlock but for the casting vote...and if Hillman continues his tactics, with an equally divided committee it may be rendered impotent. Until the advent of Hillman Southampton PLC was an active body. It has not been very active recently."[31] The original constitution of the PLC was eight employers and two workers, it was not equally divided. Further enlightenment about Hillman was provided by the MOL a few months later when G.W. Irons wrote "He it was who disrupted the Plymouth committee prior to his transfer as a union official to Southampton."[32]

Port Labour Committees were concerned with issuing tallies or any other method of identification used, and with keeping records of men on the register. In Southampton the names of the tally-holders may have been available, but there were never records of the work they obtained, and its ineffectiveness seems to demonstrate the need for joint efforts in dealing with dock labour, because it was the employers who were not interested in the PLC. Following the recommendations of the 1st Maclean Report in 1924 and subsequent union pressure[33] it was reconstituted in August 1925, with five members from each side. Sir

Russell Bencraft was voted out, and it was decided to elect the chairman for each meeting. The member always elected, until his retirement through ill health in 1937, was Captain Braithwaite. He was certainly familiar with the industry, but no one could have described him as neutral. However, his continued chairmanship suggests local confidence in him personally and indicates a measure of stability within the committee which seems to have been lacking previously.

The name of the committee was changed to Port Registration Committee (PRC), and it continued as the body responsible for the re-issue of tallies. These were now to be approved by the union side as well as the employers, but first the committee had to decide upon the total number to be issued, and then the employers could submit their lists. Revisions were still only conducted every two years, whereas most other ports revised their registers at six and even three monthly intervals. The MOL was not happy about the long period of unchanged tallies, because many changes in the labour force were likely to occur in that time, and it meant that not all tallies issued were correctly in circulation. Port workers moved to other areas, gave up dock work, or even died, without this information being recorded or the tallies accounted for. However, the MOL and the trade union, which also desired more frequent revisions, accepted the argument that the arrangement worked in Southampton because so few men were involved.[34]

The size factor, as instanced by the PRC, was important. In a port the size of Southampton which employed a very small number of dockworkers in relation to its shipping tonnage, stevedore and quayside labour were easily managed. There were, of course, far more men looking for work than were actually engaged, but another simplifying factor was that there were few employers and, thus, a limited number of engagement points, or call stands, for management to organise. Having selected his labour each company's foreman then dispersed it to the holds and shipsides in his charge. Complaints arising were passed through shop stewards to negotiating officers, whose joint committee was regularly available to deal with problems. Brittle-tempered men who refused to wait for solutions to pass through the recognised channels, sometimes caused eruptions to break out, but these were all of short duration and confined to small groups of men. The system of labour management at Southampton docks gave every appearance of working well, despite many short-comings, but it is unlikely that good management was the reason for smooth labour relations, although the standard of management must have contributed to stability. The real factors were the work of the local joint negotiating committee, and the size of the work force, which being small, was less prone to demonstrative action.

Shipping Employers

The local managers of the shipping lines were not solely concerned with shipping or the engagement of seafarers. They were also involved with ship-repairing, perhaps somewhat indirectly, and rather more directly involved with dock labour. Most of the shipping lines engaged their own stevedores. Foreign lines and those not based in the port who wished to discharge or pick up cargoes used the services of a master stevedore or a shipping agent to engage labour for them. Nearly all quayside labour was engaged by the Southern Railway Company, and requisitioned by shipping lines according to their half-daily requirements. The PEA adequately covered the shipping lines' needs regarding dock labour.

As well as the major shipping lines the Railway Company, the coasting lines, ferry and tugboat services all engaged crews for their boats, but their requirements were small by comparison. However, their crews were a part of Southampton's total seafaring labour force and should not be overlooked because of the dominant influence of the passenger shipping lines.

As we have seen the shipping employers were represented on both employers' organisations in Southampton, but there were also three national organisations concerned with shipping: the Chamber of Shipping of the U.K. which dealt with economic and commercial aspects of shipping; the Shipping Conference, which provided statistical information; and the Shipping Federation, whose business it was to control and regulate seafaring personnel and deal with labour relations.

The Shipping Federation had at least one local office, or a representative, in each port, with whom shipping lines liaised regarding the supply of labour. The Federation was formed in 1890, and in the beginning, owing to the scattered workforce and weak trade union organisation, it was very successful in dominating seafarers and in keeping shipping costs down by disregarding seamen's essential needs. Until 1917 there was no joint negotiation at all, and J. Havelock Wilson had pioneered a way to give seafarers some sort of hearing with his National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (NSFU). The war assisted in this task and provided what Wilson was trying to achieve, which was to establish a body with joint representation. This body was the National Maritime Board (NMB), set up in 1917 to overcome delays in shipping attributable to the men's demands for pay increases, and deficiences in personnel for troop carriers and supply ships. The object of the NMB was to obtain a greater degree of co-operation in settling differences, arranging standard rates of pay, and introducing improved conditions of employment. The Shipping

Federation no longer had the ultimate decision, and although it was slow to recognise the seamen's union, it eventually accepted the changing situation - a task made easier by the seamen's leader's co-operation with management.

The National Maritime Board officially came to an end in 1919 and ceased to be the responsibility of the Shipping Controller, but it was re-constituted in the same year, along exactly the same lines. The work of the Board was divided into four panels, the ship owners' side of which consisted of the same six representatives as in the earlier constitution. They were: Sir F. Shadforth Watts, Chairman of the Shipping Federation; Sir Frederick Allen, Chairman of P & O, (also Chairman of the NCPLE after Sir Alfred Booth); Cuthbert Laws, General Manager of the Shipping Federation; L.F. Pritchard of the Union Castle Mail Steam Ship Co.; J. Howard Glover of Glover Brothers; and Captain H.B. Hooper of General Steam Navigation Company.

Seamen's representatives of the four panels were as follows:-

Navigation Officers	Imperial Merchant Service Guild, Association of Coastwise Masters, Mates and Engineers.
Engineering Officers	Marine Engineers Association, Amalgamated Society of Engineers (afterwards Amalgamated Engineering Union).
Sailors and Firemen	Six members of the NSFU, including J. Havelock Wilson.
Catering	Six members of the National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers, including its president Joseph Cotter.

District Maritime Boards were also set up in each principal port and officers were appointed to act jointly in matters affecting personnel. These officers were appointed by the Shipping Federation and the NSFU and were called Port Consultants.

The important role played by the NSFU in joint negotiations is apparent from the union's involvement in the decisions of the national and local maritime boards, and this placed Southampton in a different position from ports where the majority of union seamen were members of the NSFU. From 1911 the majority of Southampton seamen had been members of a union formed by Southampton men, called the British Seafarers Union (BSU).[35] This union was not officially recognised by employers (not even by local employers), and neither did the BSU recognise the organisations of the employers and NSFU. The District Maritime Board in Southampton did, however, accept that because of their numbers in local shipping, BSU members should be represented on that Board. Therefore, the BSU, like the NSFU, had three representatives on the District Board, as well as a port consultant. Among the District Board's ship owners' representatives

were Captain Braithwaite (Royal Mail Steam Packet), H.G. Lawther, (Union Castle) and John Roberts (Coast Lines). All three were members of the Southampton PEA committee.

The Maritime Board's principle area of work was in regulating the supply of seamen. Its difficulties in this connection were heightened by inter-union rivalries which were strongest in Southampton, and regulations introduced in 1923 by the NMB and NSFU designed to restrict employment to NSFU members seems to have been least effective in this port. As long as seamen kept their discharge books with good character references they were able to obtain employment with most of the shipping lines when work was available, which became more difficult for non-NSFU men in other ports after 1923.[36] The least tolerant of the shipping lines towards non-NSFU men in Southampton was Cunard S.S. Company, but there is no record of directives being sent to local port managers regarding an official agreement to employ only NSFU members, as suggested in correspondence between Lord Kylsant (Royal Mail Steam Packet) and Sir Thomas Royden (Cunard) in October 1925.[37] The only indication that there might have been a company policy on employment was that during the strike by seamen in 1925 Cunard took the opportunity to replace striking crews with NSFU members.

The international nature of shipping meant that much of the work in dealing with shipping and labour problems required an international approach in finding solutions. To this end there was an international Shipping Federation to which its British counterpart was affiliated. However, international competition was more a feature of shipping between the wars than international co-operation on matters arising from labour problems. Such problems had a recurring tendency to increase costs and a situation where the labour supply exceeded the demand, as it did for most of the inter-war years, reduced the need to risk cost increases in the face of competition. A surfeit of labour was to the employers' advantage, but a surfeit of shipping, contrasting with a shortage of freight, was a more serious problem and one which occupied the attention of both national and international organisations. The British shipping industry was not beset by trade union demands and management was able to concentrate on economic, rather than labour difficulties.

An International Labour Organisation (ILO) was set up as part of the League of Nations as a joint venture in international labour relations. The organisation was for the benefit of all industries, to prevent depressed labour conditions in undeveloped countries from competing unfairly with more advanced countries.[38] The ILO held its first

Maritime Conference in 1920 and the subjects raised were those which required international adjustment if they were to be implemented without prejudice to participating countries. On these high-level international conferences Southampton employers could only pass comment on decisions made or left in abeyance. Advisors to ILO official representatives from industry and the government were not drawn from among Southampton's personnel.

* * * *

Shipbuilding was the most complex of the port industries. It was also the most susceptible to poor labour relations. Locally the shipbuilding employers' association was similar to the dock labour employers' association, and even had some of the same members. However, it drew its support from the SEF which was a forceful, determined and united organisation, dealing with very large work forces. It was an industry which underwent intense economic difficulty in which concessions could be ill-afforded. Disruption of work through poor labour relations was, however, very wasteful of time and resources, and during the early 1920s when the large-scale strikes occurred, there was still work in hand. After the general strike of 1926 there was a distinct weakening of trade union demands, and shipyard militancy diminished with the flow of work.

Southampton management's adoption of SEF policies and protection was made while the industry was still in the post-war boom and union demands were both loud and numerous, but it enabled the district to benefit from wage-reduction measures which followed the boom. Wage-cutting was the traditional remedy for economic recession and it was still regarded by management as the best solution. The SEF also enabled Southampton to maintain a lower wage rate than many other districts.

The period surrounding the Great War was an era in which employers, in common with trade unions, sought to increase the size and strength of their organisations by affiliation and amalgamation. The idea was also taken up by industry, and a programme of rationalisation began the creation of great commercial organisations which were to become a feature of twentieth century business enterprise. Although some rationalisation was successfully carried out in the shipping industry, it was not undertaken to the same extent in shipbuilding and heavy engineering. The smaller, uneconomic shipyards went out of business. This was the case even in the 'lesser' districts, and a number of Southampton's small shipyards closed down between the wars.

Management of Southampton's port industries was largely in the hands

of elderly men with old-fashioned ideas and attitudes. They expected the return of the old order after the war and were reluctant to change. In labour management, however, the docks industry employers were not permitted to retain their reactionary views unopposed. The desire to achieve a system of regular employment which was urged by the TGWU was also championed by the MOL, and the issue of decasualisation had much bearing on labour management. Employment in the docks was not so much a problem of daily labour management as a problem of finding a satisfactory method of employment at a time when the economic climate was entirely against making alterations to labour management of such magnitude as those required by a decasualisation scheme.

There was an element of seasonal regularity about shipping employment in Southampton because of the regularity of the sailing schedules, and the home trade and coasting markets of the Southern Railway Company also created their own seasonal labour peaks and troughs. There was a contrast between the approach to labour in shipping and the docks. The reason for satisfactory labour relations in shipping was much more the non-antagonistic trade unionism in the industry than considerate management. Southampton seamen, with a different union background and tradition, unsuccessfully attempted to set standards for other ports to follow, and were the most militant seamen between the wars. Despite this there was little demonstration of militancy owing to the lack of support from the principal seamen's union.

Conversely, labour relations in the docks, which were also remarkably stable, were so because management accepted the need for dialogue. The Southampton branch of the TGWU was by no means militant, but when union members protested the local joint negotiating committee was available for discussion, even if issues were passed to a higher authority for final solution. Undoubtedly, the LJC was the main source of Southampton dock labour's stability.

* * * *

The port industries were a major part of life in Southampton with much of the town's dependence derived from the port trades. Therefore, a brief comparison of the port employers' and trade unionists' contribution to the town and the community, other than in a strictly industrial sense, will complete the study of employers, prior to examining the structure of Southampton's trade unions.

Their interests and activities did not lead to any inter-action between the two groups, apart from, one imagines, some of the port's

sporting functions. The difference between employers and trade unionists was that the main interests of the former were commercial and philanthropic, while the interests of the latter were political.

One of the most prominent port employers was Philip Curry, manager of White Star Line in Southampton. He was president of Southampton Chamber of Commerce in 1914 and after the war represented the port on the Chamber's shipping committee. His activities were as diverse as chairman of the Seamen's Orphanage for Boys, president of the Rotary Club, and president of White Star Football Club. Sir Russell Bencraft said "he knew of no one man who had helped more with charitable objects in the town than Mr. Philip Curry."[39] Most of the shipping company managers and the Railway Company manager were similarly represented on hospital and orphanage committees, the Sailors' Home, Missions to Seamen, the Rotary Club, Toc H, and various sporting clubs. Their sporting activities were not only for their own pleasure and participation, as employers were regularly involved with events organised by the Docks and Marine Sports and Social Club, and other clubs, in which the participants were the workers and their families. Sometimes the liners were used for charitable events, such as children's tea parties, but more often they were venues for entertaining foreign statesmen and trade delegations, or other visiting dignatories.

Philip Curry was a magistrate, but there was little interest among employers in civic duties. Generally there was more interest in dispensing benevolence than in dispensing justice. Sir John Thornycroft stated in 1919 that games and exercise were the best way to develop welfare work,[40] and consequently his company provided the facilities for this.[41] However, following the 1918 Education Act, which made educational classes for boys obligatory, he had wondered about providing educational facilities in his factory and workshops at Basingstoke and Southampton.[42] Some years later John Smith, an executive of Thornycroft, suggested that trade unionists should join the Rotary Club because it would give them a sense of responsibility. His idea of a social approach to labour relations was not taken up.

Apart from after dinner speeches there is very little evidence of any political motivation on the part of employers. Keeping the wheels of commerce turning, or in their case the propellers, was their motivation, and they preferred to deal with the matters which lay within their sphere of influence, rather than seeking to steer government policy to their advantage. They were, after all, local managers, and they were content to leave policy-making to the shipowners and national institutions.

Trade unionists, on the other hand, were most interested in matters of a political or civic nature. During the twenty years between the wars

no less than twenty four trade union officers from the port industries were elected to the Borough Council, some of whom became Aldermen. A source of motivation for some trade union leaders was the Southampton Trades and Labour Council. This Council was a means of bringing local trade unionists together on matters of common interest and providing an opportunity to deal with affairs within the wider scope of the socialist and trade union movements. However, only some of the trade unions which organised port workers were affiliated to the Council. Between 1928 and 1936 eleven unions, or certain branches of them, which were eligible for membership, either refrained from joining or seceded. Where the problem was a financial one, as in the case of the AEU, the branch re-affiliated when funds were available. Demarcation disputes was another cause of temporary loss of membership, when the delegates of one union refused to sit in the Council with the representatives of another with which they were in conflict industrially. The NSFU, which became the National Union of Seamen (NUS) in 1926, was expelled for taking action against Labour Party members, and a second time for supporting the miners' breakaway union.[43]

There does not appear to have been overwhelming interest in the Council among port workers generally, but there was a noticeable apathy in the unions throughout the period, particularly among dockers, and probably for this reason, communist members were elected to represent some union branches, but they did not necessarily represent the views of the branches who sent them. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) took steps to eliminate communists from Trades Councils in 1934 and Southampton was pleased to comply, at least as far as removing one particular trouble-maker was concerned.

The Trades Council actually achieved little despite much talk and many good resolutions. Its members were deeply concerned about unemployment and its effects on the local population, but their influence on the Conservative and Independent Ratepayer-dominated Borough Council, and on local employers was very slight. Even when they provided a service to union members to instruct and advise them on dealing with the intricacies of unemployment benefit and the Public Assistance Committee during the depression a disappointing response was reported. It appears that workers seeking assistance at the Trades Council's Unemployed Persons Free Advice Bureau were asked about their political affiliation and trade union membership, to which they took exception.[44]

It is difficult to find any evidence of action having been taken on suggestions and recommendations made. Unfortunately, apart from local press reports, the records of the Trades Council are not available before

1927, and by this time the trade union movement as a whole was moving into a period of decline. The Southampton Trades and Labour Council may have been more vociferous during the early 1920s, but there is no sound evidence that it was more effective. Until 1927 the Labour Representation Section was part of the Trades Council, but following a TUC directive to make a "clear distinction between industrial and electoral functions," Southampton was one of the few Councils to separate the political wing completely, and the name was changed accordingly to Southampton Trades Council in 1928.[45]

Most of the charitable functions organised by trade unions were for the benefit of wives and children of strikers, and those indirectly affected by strikes. Entertainments for strikers and the unemployed were also provided by welfare organisations, because funds were not available for the unions to provide for all those in need. However, an annual event much appreciated in the town was the children's christmas party.

Thus, each group's contribution to the town was, not surprisingly, appropriate to its class and status of citizenship, but each in its own way sought to improve society. The employers did so mostly with handouts from above, while the trade unionists tried to change society from within.

1. Simons (fruit importers) who chartered ships; International Cold Storage Co. Ltd., and R. and J.H. Rea Ltd., (coaling merchant).
2. Adrian J. Vinson,"Unemployment Relief Works in Southampton Between the Wars: A Case Study." Table of Distribution of Insured Workforce. Exeter University. p.90. The other industries included distribution, building, road transport, water, gas, electricity, public works, motor vehicles and aircraft. Exeter Papers in Econ. & Soc. Hist.Vol.12
3. P. Ford, Work and Wealth in a Modern Port. London 1934. p.38
4. ibid.
5. ibid.
6. ibid. Also SEF South Coast Membership File. NMM, Woolwich. 3165 SO
7. SCESEA Minutes, September 24, 1918. SRO. Ref: D/SES/1/1-38
8. SCESEA Minutes, July 8, 1919.
9. SEF South Coast Membership File. Letter from SCESEA to SEF dated November 19, 1919.
10. SEF executive committee report No. 9 dated November 29, 1919. NMM. Day implied the rule had been in existence for thirty years, but the SCESEA had only been in existence seventeen years itself, and the SEF for twenty years. However, no one appears to have remarked on this.
11. SEF Membership Files. J. Samuel White negotiated a separate affiliation for their works on the Isle of Wight in 1925. When they closed their repair department on the docks they resigned from the SCESEA and from the SEF from September 30, 1935, but the shipbuilding yard in E. Cowes remained affiliated.
12. Southampton workers looked to Liverpool as the Mersey Shiprepairers' Association situated in Liverpool, rather than the shipbuilding yards at Birkenhead, which were not federated either.
13. Cammel Laird's shipyards at Birkenhead were extensive, but the output of the other Mersey shipbuilding interests declined after the war, and ship-repair was the major shipyard industry on the Liverpool side of the river.
14. A General Conference was a meeting for joint negotiations at which SEF General Council members were present with trade union delegates from all the trades concerned in the issue.
15. SEF Minutes, October 25, 1918. NMM, Woolwich.
16. David Dougan, The Shipwrights - The History of the Ship Constructors' and Shipwrights Association, 1882-1963. Frank Graham, Newcastle, 1975. p.64

17. The Friendly Society of Ironfounders became the National Union of Foundry Workers.
18. United Patternmakers' Association Monthly Report, July 1919. Association of Patternmakers and Allied Craftsmen's Achives.
19. United Patternmakers' Association Monthly Report, June 1923, which reported the FEST meeting.
20. The NTWF was founded in 1910 in an effort to create a more harmonious relationship among transport unions. However, it was an uneasy federation of autonomous unions, each preoccupied with overlapping interests and sectional rivalry.
21. PEA Minutes, February 10, 1919. Office of the Port Employers' Association, Southampton Docks, Herbert Walker Avenue.
22. NCPLE Minutes, October 10, 1920. Cunard S.S. Records. University of Liverpool Archives. Ref: C1/286
23. This was before the TGWU was created and while dockers were organised by a number of different unions. Report of a Court of Inquiry concerning Transport Workers' Wages and Conditions with Minutes of Evidence and Appendices (Shaw). Cmd.936 and 937. P.P. xxiv. 1920
24. NJCDL Minutes, June 28, 1920. Cunard S.S. Records. Ref: C1/286
25. For example, the conversion of hourly rates into daily rates, men discharging themselves early, meal time arrangements, overtime and nightshift, piecework rates, river rates, and special arrangements for finishing off ocean-going steamers due to sail. The 44 hour week agreement was signed on May 27, 1919. PEA Minutes, March 12 - May 27 1919.
26. These tariffs were for special payments in addition to standard rates for dirty and awkward cargoes, for working in artificial temperatures in cold chambers, and so on. Also for some of the more tedious and non-standard jobs such as bushelling grain and operating ships' steam lifting gear. Negotiations were conducted between June 12 - July 24, 1919. PEA Minutes.
27. For details of Liverpool's scheme see R. Williams, First Year's Working of the Liverpool Scheme, Liverpool Economic and Statistical Society 1913.
28. H.A. Mess, Casual Labour at the Docks, G. Bell & Son, London 1916, from a survey of the Port of London.
29. PRO: LAB 8 52 ED 9855/1924.
30. Southampton Times, March 19, 1921. The Report was published together with the criticism of it by Blessley, but the latter was not treated sympathetically by the Southampton Times.
31. MOL Minute, February 14, 1924. PRO: LAB2 1054 ED 14085/1923
32. MOL Minutes, August 28, 1924. PRO: LAB2 1054 ED 14085/1923.

33. PEA Minutes, October 6, 1925.
34. The maximum number of tallies on issue at one time between the wars was less than 3,000.
35. The complications arising in the seamen's unions will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.
36. Regulations issued by the Shipping Federation and the NSFU made NSFU membership obligatory prior to engagement on a ship, but the regulation was not always enforced by employers.
37. Cunard S.S. Records. University of Liverpool Archives. C2/158
38. L.H. Powell, The Shipping Federation. The First Sixty Years, 1890-1950. London. 1950. p.112.
39. Hampshire Advertiser, January 3, 1931.
40. It was also a commonly held belief in the establishment that physical exercise was an excellent training for developing a good character and moral standards.
41. Thornycroft's football team was evidently of a high standard as several of its players became professionals.
42. Hampshire Independent, December 20, 1919.
43. It was the general president of the union who was guilty of Labour Party and TUC infringements, not necessarily supported by rank and file seamen - in Southampton he was most definitely not supported by the majority. The NUS rejoined the Council in 1931.
    The unions not affiliated included: AEU, Electrical Trades Union, Furnishing Trades and Upholsterers Society, Shipwrights, Coppersmiths, Sheet Metal Workers, Blacksmiths, and Boilermakers. Among non-affiliated unions closely associated with port workers were National Union of Railwaymen and National Union of General and Municipal Workers.
44. Letter from the Associated Society of Woodworkers to the Trades Council, May 13, 1932. Trades Council Minutes. SRO: D/Tu 1.
45. Alan Clinton, Trade Union Rank and File, Manchester University Press, 1977. p.142. (also Hampshire Advertiser, September 22, 1928.

CHAPTER THREE

TRADE UNIONS

Port industries' labour was organised by trade unions which were different in origin and character, but the problems of job shortage and unemployment, which occupied much of the period under consideration, were common to all three. One of the differences here lay in the way trade groups approached these problems, and the process of development within the organisations themselves had a bearing on their method of approach to all labour problems.

Early in the period the docks industry was united in a trade group within a general union. In the shipyards there was a multi-union system within a single industry, which was often conflicting in its own interests as well as the industry's, and which created its own difficulties alongside those brought about by economic circumstances. Unlike the other port industries, the shipyard unions were not solely concerned with port workers, which added another dimension to their organisation of labour and the degree of attention given to the shipyard sections of it. Seamen were organised by one union eventually, but not without a great struggle, and at times the union seemed to lose sight of its object in the turmoil, and forsook those whom it was seeking to benefit. A national federation of seamen's unions had existed briefly in the mid-nineteenth century,[1] but neither the federation nor the small unions survived. It was the late 1880s which produced the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union with the aim of organising all seafarers in these classes of labour.[2] The development of passenger liner trade introduced a corresponding growth in a third class of seafarer, the stewards and other catering staff, who were not included in the NSFU. Despite being nationally organised in 1909, stewards retained a strong regional bias because of the hundreds who sailed from Liverpool and Southampton, and the few who took ship from other ports, except London. The integration of the regional element of one union into the national organisation of the other proved to be extremely slow between the wars. The development of the national union will be considered in conjunction with the Stewards' Union and with a Southampton breakaway union which also aimed at being a national organisation, and which affected Southampton seamen's attitude to trade unionism for many years.

The basically regional unions which organised dock labourers in the latter part of the nineteenth century were more readily compatible by 1920, despite specialist occupations within the industry. Partly aided by

having been already loosely gathered into the National Transport Workers' Federation, dockers and their leaders were willing to establish a trade group of their own which could be incorporated into a union of transport workers and general labourers. The Transport and General Workers' Union created a national union for all dockworkers in 1921. It did not, however, succeed in organising all dockworkers.

The different grades and skills of seamen and dockworkers were covered by their national institutions. This was not the case among the many crafts and skills required in the shipbuilding industry. Only marine engineers amalgamated with other workers in allied industries; the rest of the shipbuilding unions, each of which had developed according to its own historical circumstances, maintained absolute autonomy and a degree of independence, even when grouped with others under the cover of a federation. As seen in the previous chapter, collective bargaining was carried out by groups of unions within the areas affiliated to the SEF, but this did not include all the members of the unions concerned.

The structure of these organisations will be examined in greater detail. Additionally, the effects of the problems and conflicts which occurred within and between unions will be considered with particular reference to labour relations and to events and attitudes which influenced Southampton's port industries. These fall into two categories - inter-union rivalry, and internal problems. The first of these is sub-divided because there were two distinct types of rivalry. One was political, but the other concerned the distribution of work in a contracting market, accompanied by technical innovations which tended to obscure the recognised parameters of individual trades and crafts, resulting in demarcation disputes.

Organisation

Shipyard workers were a collection of many different crafts and skills. Shipbuilding, like the construction industry, had evolved over the centuries, and the number of crafts employed had gradually increased as materials changed and technical expertise was extended. The distinction between craft and skill was in no way diminished by this growth in the industry, and the difference was important to shipyard workers.

Craft unions evolved from the middle ages Guilds, and to obtain full membership a period of indentured apprenticeship was necessary. A mid-way stage between apprentice and craftsman was spent as a journeyman, which was

literally journeying from job to job in order to gain experience in the craft.

The introduction of 'dilutism', under which semi-skilled machine operators had been permitted to work in the engineering industry during the first world war, and which continued after the war, was one of the reasons patternmakers and foundryworkers refrained from joining the amalgamation of engineering unions in 1921. The craftsman's pride in his work was part of the ethos of the craft union between the wars, and although a craftsman could be called a skilled tradesman, a skilled tradesman was not necessarily a craftsman.

It was in the shipyards that the greatest number of different trades worked together as a combined labour force. With their labourers they were thousands strong, working in noisy and often unpleasant conditions and, despite the inter-dependence associated with the industry, they were a volatile body of workers, rigorously defending their individual rights and traditions against any threat of encroachment. Their independence, derived partly from the ancient origin of their trades, and partly from the individuality of their work, made federation of these related crafts and skills difficult to establish effectively. In the construction industry it had not proved quite so tricky, but the building trade's national federation was dominated by the time-working crafts, and it did not include so many autonomous unions as shipbuilding. Nevertheless, the independence of the shipyard unions contrasted sharply with the work of the shipbuilding industry, which made one trade dependent upon another. The nature of shipbuilding and ship-repairing, where so many trades worked together on one project heightened the risk of confrontation in one of the most sensitive areas of industrial labour - crossing the lines of demarcation in job allocation.

A simple categorisation of shipyard labour would be to put crafts, skilled trades and unskilled labourers as three sections. However, the divisions which developed naturally were based on tentative union relationships, and did not follow this simple outline. For political expediency the old-established time-working crafts of shipwrights, painters, plumbers and woodworkers (carpenters and joiners), allied themselves not only with the modern union of electrical trades, but also with the piece-working Boilermakers' Society, which was itself a combination of several skills - platers, caulkers and rivet squads - each of which was required in order to complete their shipbuilding work.

A second group of shipyard workers included the other ironworking trades, such as foundryworkers, sheet metal workers, blacksmiths, angle-iron smiths, and other crafts, such as patternmakers, furnishing trades,

bricklayers, drillers, coppersmiths and sailmakers, as well as woodcutting machinists and some of the semi-skilled machine operators and engineering grades which were not members of the AEU. It was this second category which made up the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades. Also within the FEST movement were the two principal general labourers unions, the TGWU and NUGW, which later added the municipal workers. Unskilled workers really formed a third category being employed on lower rates of pay and not having port rules and agreements. They were, however, included in collective bargaining at their own level by the FEST. Some labourers were attached to specific trades as part of a gang or squad, or were regularly connected with skilled workers, such as fitters' mates and platers' helpers. Others had official designations of their own, such as boilerscalers,[3] riggers,[4] and rough painters.[5]

A fourth group of shipyard workers were the marine engineers, the members of the AEU. In engineering the AEU was dominant, but this was not so in shipbuilding. The vast body of engineering employers had their own organisation, equivalent to the SEF, the Engineering and National Allied Employers' Association. The wages and conditions of most marine engineers fluctuated in accordance with men employed by this Association's members.

In 1919 a SCESEA member, Parsons Motor Company, which undertook marine as well as motor engineering, endeavoured to arouse local interest in the engineering employers' association to bring about "mutually advantageous relations" with motor and engineering firms in the district. They did manage to arrange a visit from an Association representative, but there was little enthusiasm from other SCESEA members, and definite disapproval of the expense likely to be incurred in running a larger office and increased staff.[6] Wages paid to some mechanics and fitters in the engineering industry were higher than those paid to Southampton marine engineers whose wages fluctuated with the shipbuilding industry. Affiliation to the engineering employers might have brought about a change in Southampton's AEU arrangements, as they were the only engineers in shipbuilding federated districts whose wages did not move with the engineering industry, and the anomalies so caused were a source of irritation to local AEU members. Nevertheless, it was the wish of the district members to remain with the shipyard trades, a decision which was not altered until 1936. They were only a small section of the workers in Southampton, even when the coppersmiths and blacksmiths joined their local negotiations, and they considered themselves better served by allowing their wages and conditions to follow the collective negotiations of the shipyard workers. The fear was that local municipal

engineers' negotiating machinery might be applied to marine engineers, rather than the conditions which were applied to the engineering industry at large, because of the limited amount of engineering in the district. Port engineers did not think municipal engineers received favourable rates. In 1936 the increase in local motor vehicle and aircraft manufacture swung the balance in favour of following engineering fluctuations.

The remaining group of tradesmen, or craftsmen, normally employed in shipyards, were those who were also required on board ship, but they were classed as tradesmen, not seamen. They were woodworkers (or shipwrights), plumbers, boilermakers and electricians. The ships' carpenter had been an essential member of the crew through the ages. In former days he had been responsible for plumbing as well as woodwork, and his job had involved keeping the ship seaworthy. On modern passenger liners the plumbing was so extensive that plumbers were as necessary as carpenters, despite which they were not accorded the same measure of importance by either shipowners or masters. Because sanitation had originally been the work of the carpenter or shipwright, sea-going plumbers tended to be regarded as carpenters' mates, whereas sea-going electricians and boiler-makers, who were added to the crew to cover new fields of development immediately attained better recognition and status. The Plumbers' Association kept up pressure on shipowners to improve the status of their members, and on Southampton liners many plumbers achieved the status of Sanitary Inspector and had assistants working under them.[7] The sea-going members of these unions belonged to branches (or lodges in the case of the plumbers) along with their shipyard colleagues, and membership was the same as for the shore-based workers.

In contrast to the shipyard labour force which was naturally fragmented by its own development into a multi-union complex, dock labour moved in the opposite direction. From a collection of regionally-based dock and general labourers' unions of varying size and geographical scope, most came together within the bold unification of the TGWU in 1921. Dockers had their own trade group quite separate from road transport, flour milling workers, market and coal porters, and general factory and shipyard labourers, which were all part of the TGWU.

The largest of the dockers' unions to amalgamate was the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union, whose general secretary was Ben Tillett, by now an elderly, but still dynamic orator, ably assisted by Ernest Bevin. It had a membership of around 120,000 in 1920,[8] chiefly in London and the southeast, but with membership in Bristol and Southampton, where a branch was started in 1906. James Sexton's National Union of Dock Labourers was some 70,000 strong in 1920,[9] mostly in the

Liverpool area; while Harry Gosling's Amalgamated Society of Watermen, Lightermen and Bargemen organised around 11,000 waterside workers,[10] predominantly along the twenty six miles of London's dockland. North of the border the Scottish Union of Dock Labourers, which also agreed to the amalgamation, was led by James Houghton.

These unions, together with twenty two others, representing seamen, engine and crane drivers, gas workers, vehicle builders, carters and general labourers, as well as other groups of dock workers, were affiliated to the National Transport Workers' Federation.

The NTWF did not solve the problems of the port transport industry because its structure precluded it from offering the central leadership and power necessary for policy-making in a determined and coherent manner. It was also unable to overcome sectional difficulties such as fears of flooding the docks' labour market with its federated, but non-docker, members. However, it survived until 1927 and it was instrumental in achieving the early improvement in dockworkers' conditions by providing a platform from which Ernest Bevin could represent the entire industry at the Court of Enquiry into wages and conditions in the industry.[11]

The TGWU was Ernest Bevin's brain-child and he became its first general secretary. Harry Gosling, who was the labour representative on the PLA, became president. Bevin was clearly the union's inspiration and leader, and until 1929 he remained national secretary of the docks trade group, thus giving momentum to the movement for reform of the casual system. The union was not without its organisational and administrative problems, nor was it free from dockers' opposition, but it established a powerful position for collective bargaining. The unity of dock labour, under one leader, was of great benefit in setting up a satisfactory liaison with officials of the MOL when government investigations into port transport were undertaken.

The branch structure of the TGWU, as with the shipyard unions, enabled members to inform local officers of their views and take part in the framing of union policy and joint agreements, at least by voting at branch meetings, if not in a more direct manner. Seamen, on the other hand, had much less opportunity to express their opinions, and the branch system was less effective as a means of communication. Collective bargaining was carried out on behalf of seamen by the NSFU, in conjunction with the Cooks' and Stewards' Union and the other members of the NMB panels, but the benefits for seamen were not comparable to those of dockworkers. However, if an assessment were to be made of the benefit given by the NSFU to the shipping industry rather than to seamen, the result would probably not be

so negative. The question this poses is did the shipping industry gain some respite from a recessional period at the expense of the seamen? For much of the period shipbuilding was in a worse economic situation than shipping, but the shipyard unions' leaders did not go out of their way to make life easier for the shipbuilding employers. J. Havelock Wilson saw co-operation with employers as being in the best interests of the shipping industry, and therefore, also the best for seamen whose jobs depended on ships sailing. Unfortunately, in carrying out his policy the seamen's union channelled its energies not into fulfilling one of its own rules,[13] but rather into preventing seafarers from obtaining an alternative trade union outlet.

The NSFU, as its name implies, originally only provided for sailors and firemen, but events led Havelock Wilson to change the name to National Union of Seamen so that he could represent the Catering Panel on the NMB and recruit stewards and catering personnel. These events and the bitter rivalry they engendered occupied much of the union officers' time during the 1920s, and cannot be separated from the development of the NSFU. Southampton played a leading role in the struggles and intrigues of this unfortunate affair and it will be considered in detail presently.

First, it is necessary to look at those differences in seamen's employment which made unionisation unlike either docks or shipyard trade unionism.

Seamen were, to a large extent, at the mercy of their union organisers and negotiators, but conversely, union organisers were at the mercy of seamen. Agricultural and construction workers were often, in a sense, migratory, but seafarers were more than this. They were a moving and fluctuating population, constantly changing, arriving and departing, and it made union organisation extremely difficult. Seamen were not on hand to pay weekly contributions; they were not necessarily at home when they arrived in a U.K. port; and because several weeks' arrears were likely to have accumulated during a sea voyage, they were reluctant to part with sufficient of their earnings to cover the deficit. Unless they were regular readers of a union journal they were liable to get out of touch with events and decisions which affected them; they were not in a position which made any kind of joint action easy; and their ballots took weeks to complete, and then probably only represented the views of a fraction of the membership. This last point was equally true of other unions and only a small percentage voted at local meetings, but for shore workers the small percentage of members with sufficient interest to attend meetings was able to do so. From a similar percentage of interested seamen even fewer would have been at home to express an opinion and attend

meetings in person.

The NSFU had started as a militant force determined to break the hold of the Shipping Federation on seamen's employment. However, by 1919 its leader had undergone a volte-face, and on the pretext that antagonism might jeopardise the continuation of the NMB, he acquiesced with employers' wishes and demands for the rest of his life, and presented his members with faits accomplis, about which they could do nothing except protest. Joseph Havelock Wilson's autocratic personality dominated the union which he founded and caused it to become "isolated from the rest of the labour movement." He was a Liberal politician and he disliked the Labour Party, to which the NSFU was only "spasmodically affiliated."[14] What alienated members was his promise to employers to maintain industrial peace and the lowest possible labour costs in return for their support for his closed shop proposal. From 1922 shipowners did not recognise any other seafaring union, and gave some support to the enforcement of NSFU membership, against the wishes of probably more than a quarter of the seamen.

The national union was not, therefore, an organisation pledged to raise the standard of life or improve the working conditions of its members. However, seamen made very little attempt to take any action themselves. Wilson made industrial action constitutionally illegal, but unofficial and therefore unconstitutional, action occurred in other industries. Seamen were fearful for their jobs because, as in other occupations there was so much surplus labour available for most of period between the wars, but in other occupations a measure of support from within the trade union movement could be expected, even in unofficial stoppages, whereas strike-breaking by the Shipping Federation was condoned and aided by the NSFU. With seamen thinly scattered around the globe concerted action was difficult to arrange, and spontaneous action by a few was courageous, but ineffective.[15] As F. Lindop put it "long hours of hardship in isolation at sea under tough, legally enforced discipline, interspersed with short periods of affluence in port, made it a young man's job with a high rate of labour turnover and hence a weak tradition of collective action."[16] Another cause for the lack of concerted effort was particularly applicable to Southampton. The big liners employed some 600-800 stewards and with the rest of the crew some ships had over 1,000 men and women. When two or three ships were in port at the same time there was no shortage of seamen to unite in a cause. However, the hierarchy which operated on the liners created class distinctions within crews which did not exist among the various types and grades of dockworkers. The system on board did not lend itself to collective action. Catering, Deck and Engineroom Depart-

ments were self-segregated, as well as segregated by conditions of work and accommodation on board. They did not fraternise. Stewards were not on the Watch system, they worked an extended day shift, as did sea-going craftsmen, and they ate, slept and worked in different parts of the ship from sailors and firemen. Dockworkers were strongly opposed to mobility of labour if it was to be by complusion, but on a voluntary basis many were the stevedores willing to accept quayside work if there was nothing else, and who, therefore, worked alongside less familiar workmates. Interchangeability was impossible between stewards and stokehold men. Dockworkers mixed socially when off duty to some extent, they frequented the same public houses, took part in community activities in their neighbourhood and followed various sporting events. Seamen's leisure activities, however limited, were almost entirely confined to their own decks and companions at sea.

Supportive inter-action between unions in the shipbuilding industry was understandable, since however independent they wished to be they were all in the same boat. Union support between industries was more cautious, but the district secretary of the plumbers in Southampton was always willing to give his support to protesting seamen, and on more than one occasion endeavoured to raise support from the executives of other shipyard unions. Plumbers in Southampton had a particular interest in raising seamen's standards because of their own sea-going section. Southampton dockworkers only once supported seamen by staging a strike, and that was little more than a token stoppage. A very bold stand indeed was required to overturn the dominance of the NSFU, and seamen using the port of Southampton attempted to make that stand more than any others.

Inter-union Rivalry

Enough has already been said about the NSFU in the interwar era to indicate that there were grounds for dissatisfaction among seamen, but it was in Southampton that the dissatisfaction was manifest. Thomas Lewis[17] was chairman of the NSFU Southampton branch in 1911, and with its secretary, Arthur Cannon, pressed for reform of union management, particularly in financial matters. There was no response from head office "which was no surprise to anyone familiar with the autocracy of the NSFU."[18] When Wilson did respond he referred to the Southampton men as "rabble" and his estranged branch officers were dismissed from the union. Consequently at a branch meeting on October 6, 1911 it was agreed to cease payment of subscriptions to the NSFU, and the British Seafarers' Union (BSU) was

founded, with Lewis as president and Cannon as secretary.[19]

The new union received both praise and ridicule and an interesting letter published by the Southampton Times was received from Emanuel Shinwell, recently appointed secretary of the NSFU in Glasgow. He said his branch "emphatically condemns the action of the small and unimportant body of seamen in Southampton...and expresses loyalty to the NSFU."[20] It was not long before Shinwell upset Wilson and was turned out of office in Glasgow, so he started a branch of the BSU there instead, early in 1912.[21]

The NSFU maintained a branch in Southampton, but from being one of the largest in the country in October 1911[22] it lost the backbone of its support to the BSU. However, one branch could not make a national union, and expansion was vital if the breakaway was to succeed. The TUC did not recognise the BSU as a separate union, and in 1917 Wilson, having already changed his attitude towards the shipowners, took steps to ensure the exclusion of the rival union at the formation of National Maritime Board, by threatening to withdraw the NSFU if the breakaway was recognised. Because of the size of the national union and the previous miltancy of its president, it was believed essential to the war effort that it should participate in joint negotiations. The BSU was, thus, effectively barred from any national representation.

The BSU's main strength was in Southampton and recruitment of members was easiest in the other ports used by the passenger and mail shipping companies. So it became concentrated in the liner ports, but recruitment drives continued in both unions. Seafarers wanted better wages, shorter hours and reasonable food and accommodation on board, but many were sceptical about any union's ability to achieve these improvements for them. When they came ashore they were not inclined to part with their money on contribution arrears or waste time in union talk. Much hard work and enthusiasm was required of union organisers if they were to make headway, but being blocked by the TUC as well as by employers made it a very hard task for the BSU.

Despite opposition branches gradually spread but the union lacked the organisation to create sufficient impetus to establish a network which could rival the NSFU. In Southampton they were represented on the District Maritime Board, but without national representation they had little chance of influencing policy decisions.

At last, in 1921 an opportunity arose for increasing its membership through amalgamation. When Wilson accepted a wage reduction for all categories of seamen, even though he did not represent cooks and stewards, opposition to the NSFU broke out on two fronts. As Basil Mogridge points

out, the Chamber of Shipping index had fallen to a degree where a wage reduction had become more than likely, if not inevitable, and since Wilson was able to negotiate a much smaller reduction than was originally proposed, it probably represented the best that could be achieved in the economic circumstances of mid-1921.[23] The trouble came mainly because he failed to consult members prior to the decision - but that was not a new policy.

Vigilance Committees were formed in Liverpool, London, Bristol and Cardiff, with the object of reforming head office administration. They were supported by the communists in these areas, and although this was not the main communist opposition to the NSFU[24] it provided fuel for Wilson's propaganda in The Seaman, the union's journal.[25] These committees were inconsequential, but that they had a measure of support from seamen demonstrates that Southampton was not alone in criticising the fundamental constitution of the NSFU.

The other area of opposition provoked by the wage cut came from the National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers (NUSSCBB) This union was founded in 1909 by Joseph Cotter after he had agitated against the employment of foreign stewards and been dismissed from his position as a steward on board the Mauretania.[26] The NUSSCBB organised the liner Catering Department and the NSFU organised cooks and stewards on tramp steamers, but it was Cotter who represented this class on the NMB's Catering Panel.

In 1921 Cotter argued that the NMB had ignored his earlier claim for a wage increase, but acted immediately upon employers' demands for a wage reduction. So, in a demonstration of his volatile disposition,[27] he withdrew his union from the NMB and called a national strike of cooks and stewards. It was an impulsive action, which in view of the unemployment at that time, was ill-considered. Giving up his place on the NMB was to cost him dearly. It is true he had been overlooked while he headed the seamen's side of the Catering Panel, but leaving it altogether could only put his men in a worse position.

The BSU supported the stewards' strike effort whole-heartedly, as did the NTWF, but the NSFU took an active part in strike-breaking.[28] The NSFU withdrew from the NTWF because of its support for the strike, or perhaps as Tom Lewis claimed, because the NTWF was about to conduct an enquiry into blacklegging.[29]

Cotter's strike was a complete failure; his union's membership and morale sank to their lowest, and Cotter had cut himself off from further negotiations by his secession from the NMB. Stewards were definitely disenchanted with the NUSSCBB and had Wilson managed affairs differently

he might have been able to pick up the membership through amalgamation, but Wilson and the NSFU had behaved in the worst possible manner for a trade union.

The Cooks and Stewards union with a small membership,[30] but a large financial holding, needed support, and where better to look than Southampton, the stronghold of the BSU? The BSU had a reasonable membership in the areas of shipping also organised by the Cooks and Stewards, and furthermore, it had respectability, even if not recognition. The NUSSCB had lost face over its failed strike policy, but it had a network for organising seamen, and more importantly, it had substantial funds. So Cotter forgot the animosity he had aimed at Lewis before the war, and fortunately, Lewis also forgot it,[31] and they proposed amalgamation.

Because the nerve centre of the BSU was in Southampton where seamen's engagements, especially stewards, were increasing, the port once again became "the storm centre of rival seafarers' organisations" as the Southampton Times put it.[32] Wilson made strenuous efforts to block the amalgamation. At a meeting, allegedly of Cooks' and Stewards' Union representatives,[33] a band of carefully rehearsed, or at least well-informed speakers, including a Southampton delegate, declared one after another their branches' support for the NSFU and lack of confidence in Cotter and his plans.[34] Opposing claims were made for Southampton in the following weeks.

The amalgamation was ratified on January 1, 1922 and the new union was called the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union (AMWU). Cotter was general president, Lewis treasurer, and Shinwell, organiser. The joint secretaries were Arthur Cannon (BSU-Southampton) and Ben Mollan (NUSSCBB-Liverpool). The AMWU claimed to have 15,000 members, but Lindop suggests 10,000 as being a more realistic figure, and mostly in the liner ports.[35] Nevertheless, it posed a bigger threat to the NSFU (which claimed 80,000 members) than the two separate unions had done, and not being bound by collective bargaining and national agreements negotiated with Wilson, it made employers nervous. Had Cotter still represented the NUSSCBB on the NMB at the time of the amalgamation the AMWU might well have continued his representation. However, the AMWU, like the BSU, was opposed to the NMB/NSFU engagement system for seamen and refused to recognise the NMB. Afterwards they were unable to gain acceptance by the Board. Wilson had by then become Catering Panel representative, and had completed the transformation of his image in the eyes of the Shipping Federation. The NSFU "no longer concerned itself with political objects, had dissociated itself from the NTWF, and under the leadership of Mr. Havelock Wilson had proved its readiness to meet ship owners in a reasonable manner and co-operate

for the general benefit of the industry."[36]

Havelock Wilson immediately set about destroying the opposition to his union. The PC5 system of engaging seamen which he introduced at the beginning of 1923 was a crushing blow to the AMWU and was greeted with considerable alarm by seafarers. In effect, it was similar to the Shipping Federation ticket which the NSFU had gone on strike to be liberated from in 1911, but whereas the Shipping Federation ticket was only available to non-union men, the PC5 was only available to NSFU members.[37] In 1923 sailors and firemen, or Deck and Engine Department seamen, were unable to obtain employment on the majority of shipping companies' vessels without the appropriate form, because PC5 was incorporated into the joint engagement system already operated by the NMB through their district offices. Still more to the distress of seamen was a clause on the form agreeing to pay arrears of union dues, which could actually be deducted from end-of-voyage wages; and of course, if they were not union members they were required to pay the £2 entrance fee to join - which could also be deducted from wages. Wilson was aware of the dissatisfaction among seamen, voiced loudest in Southampton, but he said men not paying his union dues did not count.[38] His policy was not to encourage growth of membership, but to crush the opposition and compel it.

Wilson's co-operation with shipowners was used in the service of increasing his union's membership. Lord Kylsant, chairman of Royal Mail Steam Packet and Union Castle Lines, wrote to Sir Thomas Royden, chairman of Cunard, saying he had discussed the position of the NSFU with his managers, and had had a personal interview with J. Havelock Wilson. "In ordinary circumstances, ship owners should hold the scales evenly between members of various unions," but after a reconsideration of the circumstances, he decided to fall in with Royden's view and that of "the majority of British ship owners" that "it is desirable to arrive at an amicable settlement with the NSFU on the basis of their putting up a large sum (say £100,000 or so) in order to guarantee that their members will loyally carry out their contracts in the future, while we on our part would be willing to agree to the suggestion that we should give their men a distinct preference..."[39] This correspondence between chairmen suggests not only collusion between the shipping companies and Wilson, but a definite policy on employment. However, it is unlikely that the NSFU was in a position to raise any such sum as suggested by Lord Kylsant.

By 1925 regional differences, together with contentious sectionalism, had brought about what was almost a reversion to the BSU in Southampton and the NUSSCBB in Liverpool. The TUC and the NTWF attempted to bring

about an amalgamation of the NSFU and the Marine Workers, but to Wilson this meant a take-over, and there was no place in his scheme for Lewis, Shinwell, Cannon or McKinley (the London secretary), who were each offered £1,000 by Wilson to leave trade union affairs.[40]

During early 1925 letters were sent to Wilson from a number of AMWU officials proclaiming their allegiance to the NSFU and incriminating others. Their immediate aim was the destruction of Shinwell, who was recruiting in Liverpool at the time, but ultimately the demise of the AMWU was the intention. The AMWU, however, was intent on continuing in the ports where it had the strongest following, in what Ben Mollan called "a revised edition of the BSU."[41]

It is clear that Liverpool membership of the AMWU had dropped and the split between the rival sectors could not be healed. At an explosive meeting of the Executive Council, followed by an equally irrascible Annual Meeting on June 8-9, 1925, Cotter was dismissed for "refusing to carry out his obligation...holding up funds...advocating the dissolution [of the AMWU] and neglect of interests of the union." He was also removed from his rent-free house.[42] The Report of these distasteful meetings which, although exaggerated is a reasonable record of the proceedings,[43] highlights the difficulties under which the union laboured, and the acrimony engendered by several years of declining fortunes and divergent ideas. It also demonstrates the havoc which could be created by subversive infiltration into an unstable organisation.

The AMWU had no chance of survival, with or without the stewards, and the coup de grace was delivered when Wilson obtained a High Court injunction restraining the AMWU from using the funds contributed to the amalgamation by the NUSSCBB, because the amalgamation was declared not to have been legitimate. It was impossible to separate the monies of the two unions and the AMWU was effectively bankrupt.[44]

The failure of the AMWU was, to a large extent, due to factors beyond its own control. It could not function effectively because as an unrecognised organisation it could not combat PC5, nor offer hope of preventing wage agreements made by other bodies and forced upon its members. It could not negotiate with employers, and while the stranglehold of PC5 existed it was very difficult to increase its membership. However, there was also a fundamental barrier within itself which impeded success. The AMWU was not a true amalgamation. Its constituent parts had never united; they had retained their own identities and their own regional backgrounds, and the leaders had maintained their own aspirations.

Eventually nothing of the BSU or the AMWU remained and the only seamen who kept themselves outside the NUS[45] were the Catering Department

men. Havelock Wilson and his successors failed to organise that class of marine labour. In the late 1930s when jobs were more plentiful and it was sometimes difficult to find enough men to complete crews, the NUS was still attempting to recruit stewards. The main non-union ports were Southampton, London, Liverpool and Glasgow. The liner companies would still not encourage employment of union members "unless compelled to do so by trade union constitutional methods."[46] In this respect Southampton was described as "the most backward port in the country."[47]

Southampton had taken the lead in attempting to create a "Seamen's Union to be run in a clean and straightforward manner,"[48] but it was Havelock Wilson who achieved the monopoly.

After Wilson's death in 1929 there was no great change in the running of the NUS. Although Southampton's former branch chairman, Bob Spence, succeeded him as general secretary, and was far from the dictator Wilson had been, membership was still maintained by the use of PC5, and industrial peace was still preserved on Shipping Federation terms. Without the Southampton union there was no longer any opposition to the NUS.[49]

Demarcation Disputes

Inter-union squabbling over job demarcation was one of the greatest causes of disruption to productivity in shipbuilding and repairing between the wars. Changes in ship design and technical innovations brought about alterations to standard working practices and systematic construction procedures which accentuated openings for ambiguous interpretations of accepted routines. Some of the danger zones were obvious, such as clashes between shipwrights and joiners, plumbers and coppersmiths and boilermakers and sheet metal workers. There were also many others, less obviously related, but none the less hotly disputed.

The ship-repairing industry had its own lines of demarcation, but mis-interpretation of the rules was numerous, and there were many occasions when the rules did not cover alterations in circumstances. In repair work a damaged part might be dismantled by the trade responsible for that particular material and work, but its replacement was sometimes a substitute, made of different material, which might call for an entirely different trade, giving rise to conflict. The gauge of sheet metal or the diameter of copper pipe were enough to bring forth complaints from one union that another was doing its rightful work, and perhaps even bring work to a halt on that particular job.

Thus, we find electricians in dispute at different times with fitters, shipwrights, and boilermakers over questions which centred on the removal of parts to enable electrical installations to be reached. Plumbers encountered similar problems; and although work on deck planking was the province of the shipwright, the new insulation materials were handled by joiners, who claimed all such work as their own and caused numerous conflicts with shipwrights. The allocation of work was, therefore, critical, and in this respect some unions appeared to have a greater influence than others.

A general demarcation agreement was negotiated between the SEF and the unions concerned in 1912. The SCESEA was not then a member of the federation, but the same rules were applied and the official agreement was adopted from the date of affiliation.

The first clause of the procedure stipulated that no stoppage of work should occur while a complaint was being investigated, but unfortunately, this part of the agreement was not kept. Threats of stoppages, actual stoppages, and embargoes on certain work were all too common, and even if such interruptions were confined to the members of one trade for perhaps only a day or two, the effect on productivity was bad, particularly as one trade's work might so easily be inter-related with another's.

In the event of a dispute arising management and men conferred at the place where the question arose, and if settlement was not reached, either the recognised practice of the Works was continued, or after consultation with the men, management gave a temporary decision, pending settlement by a committee. The impartiality of the arbitration was maintained by not allowing a representative of the employer in whose yard the question had arisen to be included in the committee.[50] In Southampton the larger and more powerful unions succeeded in getting most of the work, regardless of demarcation awards made by arbitration.

A case in point was the claim that all sheet iron work at Thornycroft should be done by boilermakers. The firm admitted that, although the work had formerly been done by sheet metal workers they had acceded to the boilermakers' demand in order to avoid a stoppage. The issue recurred at regular intervals for many years, and the boilermakers always managed to get the upperhand.[51] The joiners fought repeated battles with the shipwrights and showed the same kind of dominance as the boilermakers. Both boilermakers and joiners had very outspoken and militant district delegates and both were numerically powerful in Southampton shipyards.

The Painters' Society had a large number of members in Southampton, but theirs was a different kind of problem and they were not a politically strong union.

The majority of painters in the district were employed on ship-repair work which involved hundreds of men being required to paint large liners, much of it from swinging stages. Painters were members of a craft union and one might have expected them to have dominated a labouring class, but labourers were able to obtain painters' work, not only because they were organised by the TGWU, but because painters did not want to do the work in question. Decorating the luxury public rooms and state rooms on liners required a certain expertise, but rough painting of ships' breast-plates and bottoms, for example, which occupied a greater number of men for a greater portion of the time, was a task that could be performed by less skilled workers. From before the war labourers in Southampton had painted ships' bottoms on what were called 'lumpers', that is, a lump sum for the job, and by 1939 75 percent of the breastplate painting had been added to this. Had the Painters' executive council condoned a piecework scheme which would have enabled their members to compete with labourers, earn more and satisfy employers at the same time, the problem might have been resolved, but the union was completely opposed to any form of payment by results. Painters did not want to paint the outside of ships from swinging stages, but they resented labourers being given the work. There may have been some consolation in the fact that Southampton was not the only port with the problem; similar demarcation difficulties were experienced in Liverpool, North Shields, Tyne and Wear, London and Belfast. Unfortunately, in the national vote on piecework a large proportion of the voters were members who worked in the construction industry, for whom conditions were very different, and perhaps it was a short-sighted policy which did not allow that special circumstances prevailed in ship-repair making piecework arrangements the most practicable method of operation to avoid demarcation infringements by unskilled labourers.[52]

Another kind of demarcation friction occurred between plumbers and coppersmiths, and since both trades worked with copper pipes it was necessary to establish agreements with individual firms regarding specific jobs, in order to arrive at satisfactory work allocation. What applied to work on one ship did not necessarily apply to another, and arrange-ments made to cover seacocks, pumps, storm valves and scuppers, did not cover water softening plant or copper supplies to wash basins and showers.

Numerous settlements were made between the wars, and the coppersmiths, who negotiated jointly with the AEU, can be seen to have had a very slight advantage over plumbers, without resorting to stoppages of work or angry exchanges. However, in 1934 there was a breakdown of relations between the two unions when the coppersmiths attempted to restrict plumbers work on pipes. The matter was referred to the union executives and

eventually in 1939 it was realised that "no general decision of national application could be reached" and it was passed back to district committees to solve local demarcation problems themselves, without reference to a third party.[53] The executives of these two unions simply swept the difficult problem under the carpet.

Demarcation disputes in Southampton were accentuated by the shortage of work and the extent of unemployment. Ship-repairing works were particularly prone to demarcation problems because repair jobs were seldom identical to work already done, and many general demarcation settlements could be too widely interpreted. As the examples described show, there were different types of demarcation problems in Southampton, and the fact that most cases arose among Harland and Wolff workers was due to the greater number of workers employed by that firm, and its sole pre-occupation in the port with ship-repairing.

Internal Union Problems

William Paul was welcomed by the Southampton Trades and Labour Council as the Dock, Wharf, River and General Workers' Union delegate in April 1912,[54] and in March 1913 he became president of a Joint Trades Committee for Shipbuilding and Engineering set up by the Trades Council. By the beginning of 1919 he was district secretary of the Southampton DWRGWU, having been a local official for seven years and very probably a founder member of the stevedores' branch.

The Minutes of the Port Employers' Association suggest that Bill Paul was a conscientious and hard-working district secretary who had his members' welfare in mind. His negotiations with the employers were conducted with the utmost enthusiasm and a measure of success in gaining concessions. However, in 1921 the state of organisation in the local branches of the union cast doubts in the minds of his superiors as to his ability to manage all the facets of his job. In 1919-20 there had been around 2,400 members in the district,[55] but by the end of 1921 some fifty percent were no longer paying union dues.[56] A union meeting was held in Southampton on September 18, 1921 attended by Ben Tillett and other members of the executive council, as well as local branch officers, but Bill Paul's name is not on the list of those present. The union was collecting information in connection with its amalgamation into the TGWU and attention was drawn to the reduced membership. J.G. Ware, Southampton delegate to the executive council, thought that "bad times and faulty organisation" were to blame, and as an example of the latter he referred to a "tribunal

set up to revise the tally system" at which "a shop steward from another union had been allocated a seat, but this organisation had no representative."[57]

Ware did not name the tribunal and he might have been genuinely mistaken, but his statement is not true. It is clear from the Minutes of the Port Labour Committee that no revision of tallies was undertaken in 1919, and that all tallies were issued through the DWRGWU by agreement.[58] When the tallies were re-issued at the beginning of 1920 the procedure was carried out under the joint supervision of W. Paul and C. Kelly (local employment exchange officer).[59] The only other enquiry into Southampton's registration scheme was by a special committee, of which Paul and another branch officer were members.[60]

The Dockers' Union was, therefore, represented at tally revisions, but no correction of Ware's statement was recorded.

A membership arrears investigation was carried out by two members of the Union's Emergency Committee, who reported that the stevedores blamed W.J. Beaton and F. Jensen, the Southampton officers, for the lapse in membership, but they had no confidence in Paul either; quayside workers complained of neglect and some added "bitter complaints" about "the off-hand manner with which Paul treated them if they went to him with a grievance." Shipyard unskilled labourers also complained of neglect.[61] Only one remark in Paul's favour was reported, and it came from a Union Castle Line time clerk who thought "he was doing his best for the District."[62]

The outcome was that the Emergency Committee decided Paul should be relieved of all duties in Southampton,[63] and Bevin recommended that he be appointed area secretary, and that a new district secretary should be elected. In fact, neither of these happened. The Emergency Committee wanted to send Paul to Guernsey, but members there were unwilling to accept him, and as no one felt able to recommend his retention in the area or his transfer to another, he was dismissed with salary in lieu of notice and holiday.[64]

Jensen and Beaton were retained in Southampton, but in the summer of 1923 the latter was dismissed and disappeared from the records. The new area (not district) secretary, and appointed not elected, was Dan Hillman, formerly Plymouth district secretary, who was already known to Bevin, as he had assisted him in forming the Bristol Carters' Union in 1909-10.

The evidence presented by union officials suggests that Paul had placed too much importance on that part of his job at which he was most proficient, namely, negotiating with employers, instead of listening to members and checking on the work of his subordinates. There is no record

of any statement made by Paul in his own defence, but at the end of the proceedings he thanked the investigators for their impartiality. His positive work for the district was brushed aside with the reference to "Brother Paul's undoubted ability in negotiations, etc.," but he seems to have been harshly dealt with, and it raises the question that he may have been the victim of personal antagonism which did not come out in the investigation report. It was through the amalgamation proposals that the affair was brought to light, and it may have been these very proposals which were the cause of his downfall. The affair began as a matter for the DWRGWU, but it ended as the concern of the TGWU, and it was a very large storm for a teacup. There had been ill-feeling at the end of the war by some NUGW members against the Dockers' Union in Southampton, and the belief that they had been prevented from obtaining tallies by Paul may have added to his unpopularity.

The reshuffle of personnel did not solve organisation problems and local administration continued to be inefficient. When Bevin investigated the Southampton position himself in 1923 he "found a very unsatisfactory state of affairs," with the area secretary "rendering little or no assistance." This time Beaton was dismissed, but without the benefit of further recorded details.[66] However, it leads to speculation as to whether there was a connection with earlier problems, perhaps involving rather more than ineptitude.

Towards the end of 1924 Southampton introduced an administrative system divided into trade groups. Bevin considered this inappropriate. He thought the district committee system, as used in Bristol and Cardiff, was better suited to the geography of the port, and he objected to the appointment of F. Jensen as trade group secretary for general workers in the whole of Area 2, because the work was really confined to shipyard labourers in Southampton.[67] Bevin's wishes were not carried out and the port kept its trade groups, and Jensen kept his appointment.[68]

Hillman was active in Southampton during 1923-26 liaising with employers on behalf of dockers and shipyard workers, but in due course it appears that he, too, was failing in other parts of the job. Membership decreased during his period in Southampton, but that was the fate of the trade union movement generally after the defeat and demoralisation of the General Strike. In Southampton during 1927 dockers' membership dropped to 68.5 per cent of the 1926 figure, and 60.3 per cent among general workers.[69] Because of the need for economies in the union another investigation of Southampton was undertaken, and this time the shortcomings of the area secretary were recorded. The investigators said his 1927 expenses were to be reduced by at least 60 per cent, that

he was travelling too much, and that he had not exercised sufficient control or proper direction over area administration. "There was no regular system of reporting or proper supervision of officers." It was recommended that Hillman's salary should be reduced by 15s. a week to £7 5s. The sub-committee also requested that office staff be reduced and commented that "in the branch office Brother Hillman Jnr., who is 21 years of age and employed at a salary of £2 per week, is not required.[70]

Unfortunately the TGWU local records were destroyed in the bombing of 1941.[71] Branch records might have thrown some light on the underlying cause of what appears to have been considerable inefficiency over a number of years. Was Southampton a slack district in this union, or was there an under-current of political intrigue? During the second war and into the 1950s there is evidence of alarm in the union caused by local communist influence, but between the wars the source of the problem is not clear.

Internal inefficiency in Southampton's TGWU may have accounted for some of the apparent apathy among local dockworkers, but that was not a problem peculiar to Southampton, any more than organisation difficulties were. Hull proved to be far more difficult to organise, largely because of the employers who did not participate in the registration scheme or restrict the use of non-union labour, but also because of a rival union in the port. Glasgow was another port with opposition to registration, but here opposition to amalgamation with the London TGWU was even more intense, and the port formed the Scottish TGWU in 1932. There was no sectionalism in Southampton, all dockers having previously belonged to the DWRGWU, if they had belonged to a dockers' union at all.

Transport workers were not the only union members in Southampton to experience internal upsets, and in the case of the National Society of Operative House and Ships Painters and Decorators (NASOHSPD) the use of the word conflict is appropriate.

William Bonner was a man of considerable experience, having joined the Southampton East Branch of the Painters in 1905 at the age of 38. He became district organiser in 1912. He was a councillor and J.P. in 1906 and an alderman by 1921. As a member of the Trades and Labour Council executive he represented that body on the Southampton Harbour Board, together with Bill Paul of the Dockers' Union.

The trouble first came to light in mid-1921 when Bonner referred to "a plot against him,"[72] followed by a rapid deterioration in relations between himself and the district committee. He was even mildly assaulted at the end of a committee meeting, for which his attacker was subsequently fined 10s.[73]

The union general secretary and his assistant came to a district committee meeting in Southampton at which the chairman "seriously tried the temper of those present and the meeting dispersed in disorder without taking any decision."[74] When a ballot was eventually taken on the differences between the district committee and the district organiser (Bonner) the committee resigned, and left the chairman, secretary and treasurer to carry on until a new committee could be elected.[75]

For several months from August 1921 the district committee withheld Bonner's salary because he had stopped work briefly during July owing to the uncomfortable position the committee had placed him in. It may have been this inconvenience which provoked him into revealing information to the executive council regarding the misuse of the levy fund, and the fact that certain members were being excused their arrears payments. This was "a flagrant breach of the rules"[76] according to the executive council and Bonner's revelation initiated an investigation into the affairs of the district committee. It was discovered that postage had been claimed for items not sent through the post; and a great many members were either being excused arrears contributions or were receiving unemployment benefit from union funds to which they were not entitled. It proved necessary to take out a summons just to obtain the books from the secretary and the cash from the treasurer. When the books eventually reached the auditors in May 1922 it was found they had not been balanced since January 1918! There were all manner of discrepancies, unexplained entries, illegal expenditures, and deliberately falsified accounts. There was much evidence of "neglect of duty by the treasurer," which had allowed "an unscrupulous officer," namely the secretary, to carry out these misdemeanours without detection.[77]

Surely Bonner had discovered something of these irregularities in 1921 and, perhaps, threatened to put a stop to them. After all, he was a magistrate. No doubt, not only the guilty officers, but also their friends who were benefitting from dropped arrears and illegal unemployment payments, had taken their own measures to stop Bonner by attempting to discredit him.[78] Three of the culprits from two offending branches were taken to Court by the executive council, two of whom were fined and ordered to repay missing money, and the secretary was imprisoned.[79]

1921 and 1922 were years when unemployment was at its worst in Southampton for many shipyard trades, and the painters' membership, like the plumbers' and joiners', found its majority from among the ship-repairers. It was obviously not a time when maximum attention was being given to the needs of district members generally.

After this troublesome period the Southampton painters were still plagued by their demarcation problems with labourers, which were not designed to alleviate either cyclical or seasonal unemployment in the trade, or assist the work of the district organiser.

Communist Influence

A recurring theme in Southampton port affairs between the wars was the possible influence of political extremists. There are very few direct references to actions by political extremists in any of the unions, but insinuations and even allegations that communist influences were at work to disrupt union and industrial stability were made on a number of occasions. Acknowledged communist party members were tolerated by union officials both locally and at executive level. In Southampton the TGWU, the Amalgmated Society of Woodworkers (ASW), the boilermakers, electricians and gas workers each had at least one communist member in a prominent position amongst their numbers.

Allegations of communist influence were made by port employers and shipbuilding employers on almost every instance of large scale industrial action in the port during the 1920s. Nevertheless, there were, at the same time, cases of intimidation by strikers against non-strikers without any suggestion that they were communist-motivated.

There was more industrial unrest during the 1920s than the 1930s, but in the second decade communist activities were still energetic and concentrated into organised movements. So it would seem that extremists did not fill the vacuum, so to speak, created by the weakening of trade union influence following the general strike. J.H. Wilson saw communists in every dark corner, and since Southampton and Liverpool engaged most seamen and gave him the most trouble, they had the most dark corners.

Some Southampton dockworkers supported the left wing Dockers' Minority Movement, and in the 1930s there was support for the Unemployed Workers' movement which was also communist inspired and which was spurred into action by the effects of the recession. In the Trade Council some of the more sensitive members objected to the distribution of a handbill advertising a meeting of the Friends of Soviet Russia, bearing the information that the evening's speaker, Jock Buchanan, was a member of their executive council, which they thought implied that they supported or condoned the movement. However, when Buchanan was asked to resign from the Trades Council in December 1932 he refused, and a vote taken on

the issue went in his favour, indicating that he had supporters within the Trades Council. He was a pleasant man who showed sincere consideration for his fellow workers,[80] and his friends were not necessarily left wing activists themselves because they voted for him to remain in the Trades Council. The local TGWU took no action to persuade him to resign when they were asked to, and his eventual resignation was due to pressure from the TUC whose circular in 1934 stated that Trades Councils who admitted delegates with communist or fascist connections could be removed from the list of councils recognised by Congress.

Trade union branch activities were governed by the rules of their societies and their exectives. The degree of consideration given to local trade unionists in policy-making depended upon the administration system of each union. Most unions had branches within districts, but districts were often covered by a regional officer, and individual districts seldom communicated direct with their executive council. Unless the regional, or area, officer was very active and conscientious there was a possibility that district wishes could be overlooked, particularly in unions which had a minority membership in shipbuilding. An exception was Southampton plumbers' district secretary who contacted his executive council on numerous occasions, and achieved a greater measure of attention and support thereby.

The Southampton TGWU was continually reglected by its executive council. Bevin robbed them of their area secretary (Hillman) by sending him to organise the port of Hull, and then appointing him national organiser on the central staff without replacing him Southampton. Even when the general executive council was requested by Southampton district committee to officially appoint Alfred Waygood, who was already doing the work, they had to wait a whole year before Bevin's confirmation of the decision. Local investigations into union affairs were not initially under- taken for the benefit of local members, even if improvement were derived from such investi gations.

If executive councils did not appear overly concerned with individual branch members' welfare, neither did branches always comply with executive wishes. Southampton boilermakers went against their executive recommedations and voted for Harry Pollitt to represent the Society on the TUC. However, local support for him may have been because he had once worked for Thornycroft. Pollitt was a political activist whose left wing views caused much trouble to the more moderate members of his executive council, but according to J.E. Mortimer he did not have a large following amongst rank and file boilermakers.[81] His support came from those involved with the Minority Movement and the Unemployed Workers'

Movement.

Some Southampton union delegates were as quiet and undemanding as the boilermakers' and joiners' representatives were impetuous. To some extent one could say that the strength of local union militancy or co-operation was governed by the likely response from executive councils and members in other districts. This was true of seamen and it confined their demonstrations to members of the AMWU. Shipwrights, sheet metal workers, coppersmiths, patternmakers, foundryworkers and furnishing trades were neither large local institutions nor apparently desirous of behaving unconstitutionally. Louder protestations and threats of industrial action came from boilermakers, joiners, painters, plumbers, electricians (immediately after the war), and marine engineers of the AEU, but that is not to say that unconstitutional behaviour occurred, or that strikes would have been made official by their executives, but rather that these trades raised the most issues and received the most attention locally.

1. Basil Mogridge,"Militancy and Union Rivalries in British Shipping 1911-1929." International Review of Social History. Vol.6. 1961 P.376
2. Sailors were deckhands and navigators; firemen were engineroom attendents, stokers, greasers and trimmers as well as firemen.
3. Formerly a class of juvenile labour whose task was to scrape and clean the inside of ships' boilers and scrape ships' bottoms. They were replaced by small-statured adults owing to unemployment.
4. Men engaged chiefly for erecting and dismantling staging used by other workers, frequently painters.
5. Rough painters were those who were often called brush hands by employers, although the union rejected the term. They were used for painting areas where less skill was required, for example, the outside of ships' hulls, funnels, and red lead work.
6. SCESEA Minutes, December 19, 1919 to April 28, 1920.
7. Oral evidence of C.H. Croucher, EETPU, Plumbers' Section, Southampton Area Official. The Borough Health Reports for liners are not available and contemporary use of "sanitary inspector" has not been found.
8. Alan Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, Vol 1. Heinemann, London, 1960. p.156
9. ibid.
10. ibid.
11. For details of the NTWF see G.A. Philips, National Transport Workers' Federation, 1910-1927. Oxford D.Phil., 1969.
12. Details of the amalgamation are given in Alan Bullock, op. cit.
13. "...improving conditions, protecting interests, obtaining reasonable and fair wages." NSFU Contributions Book and Rules 1922.
14. Biographical details, including a character sketch can be found in Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville, Dictionary of Labour Biographies. London. 1972.
15. Part crews occasionally left their ships when desertions caused manning problems, but they were easily replaced. Striking crews were always replaced on ships in British ports.
16. F. Lindop,"Seamen and Dockers' Unofficial Trade Union Militancy in the 1920s." Society for the Study of Labour History. Bulletin 38, Spring 1979.
17. Thomas Lewis was one of Southampton's leading figures in the labour movement from the turn of the century. He became Southampton's first Labour councillor in 1901 and remained on the Borough Council until

1961. He helped to found the Southampton branches of the DWRGWU, NUSSCBB, and also the BSU. He was MP for Southampton from 1929 to 1931, and again in 1945, at the age of 72. He is best remembered for his work on behalf of seamen. See Bellamy and Saville, op.cit.

18. Southampton Times, October 4, 1911.
19. BSU Branch Minutes, October 6, 1911. MRC. Ref: MSS 175/BSU/1
20. Southampton Times, October 7, 1911.
21. E. Shinwell, Conflict Without Malice, Odhams, London. 1955. p.52
22. The claim made by the Southampton Times of October 7, 1911 was the largest branch. Before the war the number of seamen engaged annually in Liverpool exceeded those engaged in Southampton, but this is not necessarily an indication of the number of seamen sailing, nor the number of union members, and many Liverpool seamen were NUSSCBB men, so the Southampton Times' assertion may be correct.
23. B. Mogridge, op. cit. p.394.
24. The seamen's section of the Minority Movement has been described as the main communist opposition. F. Lindop, op. cit. p.191
25. Seaman, September 9, 1921. To avoid the possibility of the Vigilance members being able to exert any influence on his union, Wilson changed the rules to prevent new or transferred members from voting for twelve months.
26. B. Mogridge, op. cit. pp.391-92
27. The editor of The Seaman nick-named him "explosive Joe" because of his temperament. The Seaman, November 18, 1921.
28. "The NSFU offices were stormed many times in Liverpool, pickets fought with our union men going to man the ships." Edward Tupper, Seaman's Torch - The Life of Capt. Edward Tupper, National Union of Seamen. Hutchison, London 1938. p.259
29. Southampton Times, November 19, 1921.
30. See Mogridge, op. cit. p.397 n6 re the decline in membership of the NUSSCBB at this time.
31. In 1914 Cotter had tried to have Lewis excluded from the Labour Party Conference at which he was Southampton Trades and Labour Council representative. At this time Cotter was on the side of Havelock Wilson and the NSFU. In 1911 Cotter called the BSU "a bogus union." Southampton Times, December 23, 1911.
32. Southampton Times, November 19, 1921.
33. Mogridge also doubts the validity of the representation of the Stewards' Union. op. cit. p.397.
34. NSFU Conference. Minutes of Proceedings. October 19, 1921. MRC: MSS 175/6/AMW/2(1-12)

35. F. Lindop, op. cit. p.196.
36. L.H. Powell, The Shipping Federation. The First Sixty Years. 1890-1950. Shipping Federation, London. 1950. p.30.
37. PC stood for Port Consultant and the form was really a way to establish the closed shop.
38. National Maritime Board minutes, April 5, 1923. MRC: MSS 175/6/AMW/4/22.
39. Letter to Sir Thomas Royden from Lord Kylsant dated October 26, 1925. Cunard S.S. Co. records. LUA C2/158. Southampton was the terminal port of most Royal Mail Steam Packet and Union Castle Line vessels.
40. Typescript of a meeting on the S.S. Lancashire, Liverpool Docks on January 30, 1925. The speaker was E. Shinwell. NUS records. MRC: MSS 175/ASW/3/24/1.
41. Letter to J.H. Wilson from Ben Mollan dated June 19, 1925. MRC: MSS 175/ASW/3/24/1.
42. Minutes and Report of the General Executive Meeting and Annual Meeting of the AMWU, June 8-9, 1925. MRC: MSS 78/ASW/3/2/248. After transferring his support to the NUS Cotter was made national organiser, but was dismissed in 1927 for opposing Wilson's support for the Nottinghamshire miners' Union. (Mogridge, op. cit. p.407).
43. Oral evidence of Harold Smith, retired seamen and dockworker . He assisted with organisation of the AMWU as a lay worker in London and Southampton and became a Trustee at the meeting of June 8, 1925.
44. Thousands of pounds had already been spent by the AMWU in litigation brought by Wilson.
45. Wilson changed the name of the union in 1925 when he wished to take over the NMB Catering Panel representation, and therefore, needed to include catering personnel in his union.
46. Letter to W.R.Spence, general secretary, from H. Radford, organiser, NUS. NUS records. MRC: MSS 175/6/AMW/3/6.
47. ibid.
48. BSU Minutes, April 22, 1913.
49. Another rival union in Hull lasted only a short time. As it caused trouble for the NUS it was assimilated into the national union in 1926.
50. General Demarcation Agreement 1912. SRO: D/SES/ 12/22
51. SCESEA Minutes.
52. There is no documented evidence, but C.H. Croucher (whose father was a foreman painter between the wars) confirms that bonus schemes were definitely worked in Southampton during this period.
53. Letter from J.W. Stephenson, general secretary, UOPA, to certain district committees, June 6, 1939. EETPU Archives, Hayes, Kent.

54. Southampton Times, April 27, 1912.

55. Southampton and District Trades Council Annual Report for 1919 gave a total of 2,410 members based on annual subscriptions paid, and at the Shaw Inquiry (Report of a Court of Enquiry concerning Transport Workers' Wages and Conditions with Minutes of Evidence and Appendices Cmd. 936 and 937 xxiv, 1920. pp 156-58) W. Paul said there were 2,400 registered dockers.

56. Bevin Papers. DWRGWU records. Report of a meeting in Southampton September 18, 1921. TGWU Library, Transport House.

57. ibid.

58. PLC Minutes. PRO: LAB2 1041 DPL 131/6.

59. PLC Minutes, January 6, 1920. PRO LAB2 1038 DPL 100/4/1920.

60. Southampton Times, March 1921. Report of the Special Committee.

61. Bevin Papers. Arrears Investigation Report. January 26, 1922.

62. ibid.

63. Bevin Papers. Emergency Committee Minutes, January 26, 1922.

64. TGWU GEC Minutes and Records of Meetings, August 3, 1922. MRC. Bill Paul remained in Southampton and although he took no further part in trade union activities he continued to work as a docker. He committed suicide in December 1931.

65. Bevin Papers. Arrears Investigation Report. January 26, 1922.

66. TGWU GEC Minutes and Records of Meetings, June 18-19, 1923

67. TGWU Finance and Emergency Committee Minutes, January 15, 1925

68. F. Jensen remained with the union in Southampton and served a term of office as president of the Trades Council and was chairman of the local FEST committee during the 1930s.

69. Report of an Investigation into Administration of Areas 2 and 3, TGWU GEC Minutes and Records of Meetings, Appendix IV, February 13, 1928.

70. ibid. Hillman's salary was restored to £8 per week in November 1928 after he had seen the executive council himself regarding the investigation.

71. PEA Minutes, May 30, 1941

72. NASOHSPD Executive Council Minutes, June 18, 1921

73. Southampton Times, Police Court Report, July 16, 1921

74. NASOHSPD Executive Council Minutes, July 16, 1921

75. " " " " November 5 and December 17, 1921

76. " " " " November 5, 1921

77. " " " " Sub-committee report re Southampton and Woolston defalcation, August 26, 1922.

78. In 1923 it was found that similar defalcations had occurred in Southampton Central Branch, where 70 out of 88 cards checked revealed either lapsed arrears or illegal unemployment benefit payments.

79. NASOHSPD E.C. Minutes, February 23, 1924. The money involved in the case of the Southampton and Woolston treasurers was a large amount and they were still struggling to repay it in April 1925. All members of the district committee were banned from holding office in the union for several years, but in 1931 the chairman of that committee was elected to the general council by his Southampton supporters. After his release from prison the secretary attempted to set up a rival society in Southampton, but it was not recognised by the employers, nor did it worry the Painters' Association, and it did not survive.

80. Oral evidence of H.C. Stevens who was chief cashier of Cunard S.S. Company in Southampton in 1929. He became a director and assistant general manager of the company.

81. J.E. Mortimer, History of the Boilermakers' Society, Vol.2 1906-1939. Allen and Unwin, London 1982.

PART II

THE LABOUR DIMENSION

CHAPTER FOUR

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss employment in terms of quality rather than quantity. Therefore, 'conditions' is defined as a state of being, the physical state, with moral connotations, rather than the legal or ascribed terms of reference or contract by which labour was employed. In this respect it follows that a greater amount of space is devoted to seafarers because of their residential status.

The main features affecting employment to be examined are the methods of engaging and discharging labour, the facilities provided for workers, both for their own comfort and convenience and as a work-aid, the hours of work, and considerations of health and safety. It will be seen that in the port industries conformity to minimum standards had not been established, even within a port, and certainly not within an industry.

Cunard's Southampton offices were refurbished and new offices were built near the docks for the NUS at a time when some local people might have felt more should have been spent on providing better facilities for workers. Nevetheless, some progress was made towards improving the quality of employment.

Engagement and Discharge Procedures

The two categories of port workers generally regarded as dockers were those handling goods on and off ships, sometimes called shipmen, but better known as stevedores, and those who handled goods on the quayside, the quaymen. There were others, such as crane drivers, winchmen (often part of a gang of stevedores), and tally clerks, or checkers, who checked goods against the Bills of Lading, but these jobs occupied relatively few men.

The system of engaging dockworkers in Southampton dated from 1916, as explained in Chapter Two,(pp.59-60). At the end of the war Southampton kept its Port Labour Committee (PLC) in being and its registration scheme was not only retained, but refined. One reason for the continuance of the scheme was the remembrance of the chaos which had existed before the war. Southampton had experienced "disgraceful and degrading" scenes at the engagement of men, or call as it was known, and had been as bad as London, but on a smaller scale.[1] Another reason was the imminent

dispersal of the 20,000 strong Transport Workers' Battalion.[2] Over 700 of these wartime port workers had been engaged in Southampton, and at the end of the war the whole Battalion was able to claim experience of dockwork, even though only about a third of them had been pre-war dockworkers.[3] The government decreed that all men who had worked consistently in docks since November 1918 were to be eligible for peacetime dock work,[4] and there was, therefore, a real danger of the docks labour market being swamped. Southampton employers, like most others, preferred to have a large surplus of labour available, and in 1919 and early 1920 a substantial increase in trade was anticipated, giving rise to the belief that extra workers would be useful. However, it was well into 1920 before Southampton was free from Admiralty controls and, in the end, it was necessary for employers to exercise some restraint. In February 1919 over 1,000 unemployed dockworkers were drawing out-of-work donation in Southampton.[5]

The registration scheme entailed issuing each man selected with a brass tally, inscribed with a number. The cost of these tallies was borne by the MOL.[6] When the register was revised all tallies were called in and re-issued appropriately in a different shape. Revisions took place in January 1920, again in 1921, and after that a revision was either considered or carried out every two years. The re-issue of tallies took place at the Employment Exchange with the Exchange officer and the local delegate of the TGWU. The union also had a small number of tallies for its own distribution, and a Ministry official commented "an interesting feature is that the majority of men with poor records are not those nominated by the trade union."[7] This could be an indication of preference in allocating work, or that not being nominated by an employer these men were more mobile and did not feel obliged to wait at one call stand most of the time.

The Railway Company engaged a few stevedores for their own Marine Department and for the troopships, and also supplied quaymen to most of the other port employers.[8] The shipping companies engaged their own stevedores and each company had a specific number of tallies allocated according to labour requirements. In general men consistently worked for the employer who had recommended them, often remaining unemployed when that employer could not use them.

The Railway Company had about 200 permanent men who were guaranteed wages and employment, and 600 men whose tally numbers were called in rotation at consecutive calls, so that each man had an equal chance of obtaining work.[9] They were the preference men, and with the permanent

men, were chosen for these priority places on experience, physical fitness, good work records and familiarity with foremen. The Railway call stand was a former cattle shed in Canute Road, adjacent to the docks. There were doors at either end, one leading in from the road, the other opening onto the docks. From a raised platform down one side the foremen called the men and numbers they wanted for each work session, usually taking whole gangs of stevedores rather than individuals, since they worked together in regular gangs of 7-10 men. Stevedores congregated at one end of the shed, and quaymen at the other.

After the preference men there were 600 or so more casual men with tallies, and they were known as 'shedmen'. Their numbers were only called when all preference men were taken, but they could also take their chances at the shipping company call stands. When all the men required had been sent to their ships a few extra hands were sometimes taken on from amongst the remainder of the men in the shed. On these occasions scuffling broke out and men were known to scramble over each other in their efforts to get one of these tickets. It was known as "going over the bar", simply because the foreman would hold out the ticket over the rail of his platform. Fighting and pushing for tickets continued after the war, but the effects of registration on the number of men seeking work reduced the level of chaos from the pre-war era.[10]

Preference and shedmen mustered at the three daily calls whether their numbers were likely to be called or not. If they did not attend they were not eligible for unemployment benefit. The Railway Company gave a list of men called to the Employment Exchange, and anyone who failed to answer his number was recorded as not eligible for benefit. No check was made of men whose numbers were not called, and the rotary system was not popular with the men because it discriminated against some in this way.

The foremen responsible for engaging labour for the shipping companies were the equivalent of deck officers, being in charge of the cargo on the quayside. Assistant foremen, or deck foremen, were responsible for overseeing everything to do with the hatches at their end of the ship. There were usually two for the foreward part and two for the aft part of the ship, with possibly a hatch foreman in the hold. They were in charge of the loading and discharge of cargoes. They were permanent, weekly paid employees, and had their own branch of the TGWU in Southampton. The faceman was the gang leader, the most experienced member of the gang, who was responsible for the actual stowing of the cargo. Like the rest of his gang, he was a casual dockworker.

Neither White Star nor Cunard employed permanent men, but their preference stevedores were always called first and were ensured of very regular employment.[11] White Star was allocated 300 tallies in 1921, 200 of which were for quaymen. Union Castle, the Line which dealt with by far the largest amount of cargo in the port, had 300 tallies and two call stands. They also employed in the region of 60-100 permanent men. Royal Mail Steam Packet had only 100 tallies.

J. Rose and Company, Master Stevedore, hired 150-200 stevedores[12] for International Cold Storage, Canadian Pacific Ocean Services, and the visiting lines Blue Star, New Zealand and P & O. Rose's call stand was outside the docks in the public highway near the Town Quay. Men engaged by the Town Quay users went direct to a call stand there.

Men who usually worked for a particular company would go to that stand first, but if no work was available they could try elsewhere. However, time and distance were against them, and unless they possessed a bicycle they had little chance of reaching all the stands before the call was over.[13] Union Castle being the furthest call stands from the dock gates, about a mile away, started their call late to give men a chance to get there.[14]

The system of separate call stands tended to create separate pools of surplus labour, with groups of men waiting at each in the hope of obtaining work. It also allowed non-registered men (non-tally holders) to be taken on for work when tally-holders were still unemployed. Tally-holders may have been at another stand, or those waiting were perhaps quaymen when stevedores were wanted. Southampton ships' holds, or hatches as they were called, were very deep in the big liners, and men unused to going down into them were sometimes afraid to do so and preferred to remain unemployed.[15]

One feature of Southampton which was different from other ports was that being almost entirely passenger shipping with regular schedules, it was known in advance which ships were due and where work was likely to be available. Unfortunately this did not solve the problem of casual labour in the port. Shipping Lines did not notify in advance the labour they required, nor what the cargo was. Many dockers were specialists in certain types of cargo, for example, grain, timber and meat, and many others would avoid at all costs some of the more unpleasant cargoes, such as wet hides, graphite and fertilizers. The regular-sailing Railway ships on the French coast and Channel Island routes were no better. The Southampton office could not notify arrival time and cargo until the telegram was received from the agent on the other side. Cargoes on all

outward bound ships were liable to sudden change, so again the exact labour requirements were hard to define in advance. Even where regular liner schedules were concerned the hour of arrival could not be guaranteed. The unloading of mails and baggage had to begin immediately the ship was cleared by port authorities, but sometimes if a ship was delayed at sea men called in advance were sent home again, at a cost of two hours' "waiting time" per man. Employers were anxious not to call men unnecessarily.

The only company which notified its needs the day or night before the ship's arrival was Coast Lines Ltd., but as they were only allocated 75 tallies and engaged their men at the Town Quay it made little difference to the bulk of Southampton dockworkers. Passenger shipping did not, unfortunately, offer relief from the hazards of casualism.

During the period under consideration dockworkers were engaged for a minimum of four hours, or two hours if they were called in error. They were paid at the end of each shift according to work done.[16] Men might be engaged for half a day only and not know if they could obtain work for the second shift. Those who had been given a day's work could proceed direct to their ship after the second muster. If a ship was finished before the end of the four hours"the employer who engaged men shall have the right to transfer them to some other portion of his own work which is ordinarily performed by dockers to complete the period of engagement."[17] In practice dockworkers had a clever knack of completing their work to co-incide with the end of a shift.

Discharging and loading a hold might take several days and the customary practice in Southampton was for those who started a job to finish it, even though daily re-engagement was necessary. There were exceptions where shipowners kept permanent staff. The Southern Railway's permanent men took precedence over casuals. On the Union Castle Line permanent men took over from casuals when overtime was required. Both sets of permanent men were weekly paid whether they worked full weeks or part weeks.

Continuity of employment was an area without standardisation. In the ports of Hull, Bristol and the Port of London Authority, men were engaged for the job rather than the shift, and reported direct to the ship until discharging or loading had been completed. Casuals employed by other shipowners and contractors in London had no guarantee of being able to finish the job they started. In Liverpool the liner companies kept a core of "inside men" engaged regularly by the same companies, and thousands of men "followed" one employer, working only on that employer's ships. They were still engaged by the half day, along with a "floating element" as required.

Special arrangements were necessary in Southampton in connection with the overlap of shifts and getting ships ready for sailing. The liners were mail ships as well as passenger transports, and in order to complete ships for sailing men were permitted (by union agreement) to work through their dinner hour, for which they received double time pay. If work was still not finished after the dinner break it was deemed to be nearly so and no further payment was made. In other cases where work entered a second shift without a break it was regarded as the second shift and had to be paid in full. Normal overtime was payable after 8 hours' work. However, the third shift which began at either 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., also provided work for different gangs, and was complicated by the inclusion of a tea break and a supper hour for which overtime was again payable if men did not get their break period.

The meal time arrangements were an important condition of employment for the union because in the past men had been required to work long hours to have ships ready to meet tides and sailing schedules. The special arrangements were incorporated in the Rule Book which was finalised in 1923.

At pay time men queued at the pay office window of each employer worked for during a shift.[18] There were several instances when trouble arose over the 5 p.m. pay hour, because if workers were not "clear of the premises" by 5.15 p.m. it meant they had to be paid an hour's overtime. Prior to the 1923 Rules the "premises" were defined as the dock gates, and on one occasion a Union Castle employee failed to make the gates until 5.23 p.m., whereupon the union delegate demanded 2 hours pay for the 8 minutes overtime! An overtime embargo was imposed before Union Castle agreed to pay.[19] After that the company allowed men time to get to the pay office,[20] although this was strictly against the port employers' rules,since they were endeavouring to ensure that maximum hours per shift were worked.

The new rules stipulated that the pay office was to be regarded as the premises to be cleared by 5.15 p.m. instead of the dock gates, but the dockers still had a way of achieving what they called a "tickler", or two hours pay without having to work for it. When there was a long queue at the pay office and it was nearing 5.15, some of the more wily men had a habit of moving to the back of the queue so that it would be past 5.15 before they were paid.[21]

Essential employees in the handling of goods on the docks were the crane drivers. They were not dockers, nor were they members of the TGWU, but dockers could not work without them, and since their labour relations were a little less stable than dockers they were responsible for some

delays in goods handling. Crane drivers belonged to the NUR and were entitled to railway employee privileges of discount travel and pension. Unlike almost any other port workers they were permanent staff, guaranteed a 48 hour week.

Southampton had steam, hydraulic and electric cranes, and the steam crane drivers each had an assistant to stoke their fires. Cranemen did not mix with dockers, other than the working contact of signals from the hatchwayman to direct the loads. They had their own "mess" in an old railway wagon and kept themselves to themselves. Their job was skilled, and between the wars their original three weeks' training was extended to three months under supervision. The skill needed to keep a load still was known as the "crane drivers' art", and once they had acquired proficiency in that "art", they saw themselves as elevated over dockers, no matter how much expertise some dockers developed in the course of their work.

Other workers with a stratification of labour grades were the shipyard workers, but they were obliged to go through a daily process similar to dockers. Very few of the trades were employed on a permanent basis, but even those who were did not enjoy any greater job security, because they could be made redundant without notice. For the most part men gathered at the gates of the shipyards where work was likely to be available, and the foremen for the various trades came down to the gates and selected the men they wanted. The quantity of men required could vary from every member of a trade present to a mere half dozen men, or even less. Just as it was known which ships were due and, therefore, where dock work was likely to be available, so word was passed among the ship-repairing fraternity as to which trades were likely to be required by whom. There was no registration scheme in the shipyards, and no tallies to be distributed, and the preference list was drawn up from the foreman's experience to include not only skilled men who were good and thorough craftsmen, but also those who were least likely to make trouble. During most of the year competition for jobs was fierce, but for the few weeks of the overhaul season shortages sometimes occurred in certain trades, notably painters, joiners, plumbers and electricians.

Once engaged men reported direct to the place of work on succeeding days until the job was finished. They may have been told on engagement that there were three days, or maybe three weeks work if it was repairs, or even several months if it was new work. Several factors dictated the length of labour requirements; the type of work to be done, the size of the vessel concerned, and whether it was turn-round repair, major overhaul, or new work.

Yachtbuilders took on their labour in the same way. They required fewer men, but a higher percentage were specialist craftsmen. Special crafts were also called for on the luxury liners, and generally higher skills were required for work on the interiors. Some of Southampton's work was sub-contracted to non-local specialist firms who brought their own labour with them. In times of high unemployment their presence was resented by local shipyard men, and the higher rates of pay they received was another source of contention. The construction firms who undertook contract ships' refurbishing were not members of the SEF and paid building trade rates.

Although not casual workers in the sense that dockworkers were casual, shipyard workers' employment was very insecure. The majority of Southampton's men were engaged in the ship-repair industry, and apart from the winter overhaul season most jobs were of very short duration. As men finished work on one ship they could be sent to another, but they could just as easily be dismissed. Reliable men who worked to a high standard were given preference, resulting in some men being employed almost permanently, and others being unemployed for long periods, which gave rise to much union agitation over unequal work distribution.

Much of the turn-round repair work was carried out on ships at their berths, and certain areas outside the dock gates were used as shipyard call stands. The Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers(ASW) in Southampton was opposed to the sort of random job seeking which the system necessitated and A.E. Goulden, the district delegate, attempted to persuade employers to continue the distribution of tallies to joiners which had been used to obtain entry to the docks during wartime. Employers objected on the grounds that it allowed the union delegate to select the labour instead of the employers' representative.[22] A decade later, in 1932, the AEU district secretary asked employers if engineers could use the Albert Road Employment Exchange as a "taking on place",[23] and by October 1933 painters and joiners were also using the Exchange.[24] Goulden favoured the system. It kept his unemployed men under cover during the winter and he saw it as a big improvement. The painters also approved, but the joiners themselves objected because the foremen did not come to the Exchange to select their men, instead they telephoned their requirements to the Exchange manager, and the joiners thought the right men were not being chosen.

A system whereby men could wait in the dry was preferable to waiting at gateways, but the place of engagement did not alter the precariousness of the employment when it was obtained. An example of the impermanence of Southampton's labour was given by a joiner who was employed by the Railway Company to work on the dock's buildings. He was employed for two

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weeks at a time, and although the employment lasted forty years he was never a permanent employee, and had to re-new his engagement every two weeks.[24]

The engagement procedure for seamen has already been referred to, but as their employment was so different from the other port trades further elaboration is required. Before the war it was necessary for all seamen wanting work to call at the Shipping Federation office in the port of their choice to obtain a Federation 'ticket', because most employers of sea-going vessels, (certainly those affiliated to the Federation), did not employ men without a ticket. It was a system which the NSFU took industrial action in 1911 to terminate, partly because Federation officers were extremely reluctant to give tickets to union members.

The setting up of the National Maritime Board in 1917 introduced a new scheme for engaging seamen in which the union side had equal participation and which was consequently called Joint Supply. Between the wars the seamen's union was not really a democratic institution and the leader's aim in establishing Joint Supply was as much to improve the membership numbers as for any other reason, and since he did not organise catering personnel and the many grades of seamen besides deckhands and engineroom hands, the liner ports did not fully operate the Joint Supply system. Southampton did not use the scheme at all, because very few seamen using the port were NSFU members.

When control of the NMB passed from the Ministry of Shipping to the Mercantile Marine Department of the Board of Trade, the BOT became responsible for the District Maritime Boards, and for the appointment of the local superintendent, one of whose responsibilities was to witness the engagement of seamen to ensure that it was correctly carried out. Superintendents also kept a register of seamen's names and characters, including those engaged and discharged after the ship left port.[25]

The signing of Articles of Agreement was introduced in 1850 to protect seamen from forced labour. These Crews' Agreements, as they were called, contained full details of the ship's forthcoming voyage, the number and description of the crew, scale of wages and provisions, and disciplinary measures which could be carried out, having been approved by the BOT. Every crew member was required to sign the agreement and the superintendent had to explain it to each one. He kept one copy himself and sent another to the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen (an officer of the BOT). The agreement had to include provision for an advance of wages to seamen and an allotment of his wages which were to be paid direct to his family.

When seamen found the ship and sailing schedule which suited them they tended to stay with that ship, in the case of liners, from overhaul

to overhaul, often remaining unemployed when the ship was laid up. It was, therefore, standard practice on liners for Articles to be signed immediately after signing the discharge. Agreements of this kind were continuous and were called 'running agreements', but the turn-round time in port was not a period of paid employment, unless special arrangements were made, and then special rates were paid. Thus regular crews sailed on the same ships and were able to build up a rapport with officers and respect for masters and shipowners.

A separate Agreement was kept for lascar seamen,[26] relevant to Southampton because of lascar crews on troopships and some passenger liners sailing to the Far East. The lascars' agreement had to contain conditions for returning crews to India, and instead of being supervised by the BOT, for a fee of 10s. an officer appointed by the Secretary of State for India could certify that the ship and the agreement were "proper".[27]

Home trade agreements, such as for the Southern Railway Company, were signed at six monthly intervals and did not require BOT supervision, but a copy of the agreement had to be posted in the ship before every voyage.

The discharge of seamen was a routine which had considerable formality attached to it, unlike dismissal from the shipyards on completion of a job. When a liner arrived in Southampton the first people on board, after docking, were the officials of the Port Health Authority. When they were satisfied that the ship had a clean bill of health the master was given a certificate permitting the disembarkation of passengers. The Health Inspectors were followed by H.M. Customs who examined the ship's manifest and placed all dutiable goods under seal, including the contents of the ship's bars. After this the BOT representative could conduct the signing off procedure, and at the same time, the discharge of passenger baggage could begin. Finally, the officials from the cashier's department could go on board to pay the crew.

Each Discharge Book was signed by the master in the presence of the port superintendent, and its production was essential to obtain re-engagement. A clean discharge book was as good as a recommendation for employment, but if a seamen was discharged for inefficiency or a misdemeanour, this was recorded in the book. Cunard's masters signed "D.R." (declined to report) following cases of bad behaviour, "and we wouldn't employ them unless we were absolutely pushed to do so."[28]

One of the clauses in the 'job specification' of Port Consultants (local Maritime Board officers appointed by the Board and the NSFU for the purpose of operating the Joint Supply) was that they were to "take the necessary measures to secure enough men to sign on and to get them on

board in time."[29] The measures to be taken were not described, but after the war the first part of the instruction applied mostly to the disruptions caused by industrial action, because in general, there was more than an adequate supply of seamen. However, getting men on board their vessels in time was another matter altogether, but there are no records of port consultants in Southampton dragging inebriated seamen out of lodging houses to join their ships. Unfortunately, it was common for men to receive their advance wages and fail to join their ships, an offence which was regarded as desertion. In such cases it was not left to port consultants to apprehend the culprits.

Desertion was a serious problem which had several causes, and was described as "very common."[30] The higher wages paid on United States ships encouraged seamen to change ships in New York after being engaged on British ships. Nor were they discouraged by U.S. masters and shipowners, who appreciated experienced British sailors.[31] There is no specific proof that the PC5 form used for engagements was itself the cause of desertions, but it aroused much dissatisfaction and during the year of its introduction there was a distinct increase in the number of desertion cases reported. Officials of the AMWU were anxious to attribute as many of the industry's ills as possible to PC5, and they cited it as a cause of desertion.[32] Because of the alarming increase in the proportion of crews deserting shipping lines took legal action against offenders. This was more for use as a deterrent than for the purpose of compensating their losses.

The first reported case of this kind brought to Court in Southampton was in July 1920, and involved only one man on a White Star ship.[33] In 1923 Cunard took action against 16 of their men found on the U.S. Leviathan and White Star claimed to have a list of 60-70 men sailing on that vessel whom they intended to prosecute. The majority of the men had sailed from Liverpool, but there were some Southampton sailors among them.[34] Between May and August, 1923 over 1,000 desertions to America were reported from White Star ships alone, and company management pressed for offenders to be given gaol sentences.[35]

Desertions resulted in under-manning problems, which caused other seamen to demand more money in recompense for extra work. Occasionally when more money was not forthcoming groups of dissatisfied seamen left their ships just before sailing, thus adding to the desertion problem.[36] 78 Liverpool seamen were fined 40s. each for refusing to work in the White Star Adriatic only five minutes before sailing time, unless paid an extra £5 each for doing the work of 21 deserters. 37 firemen and trimmers on the Royal Mail Steam Packet Orea also refused to sail without £10 extra

to cover for 15 deserters. They were offered £6 and when they refused the offer they were all dismissed "and replaced with recruits gathered by the employer's agents."[37]

J.H. Wilson disapproved of all desertions, whatever the cause, and offered no support to members of his union. The Southampton Times suggested that a method of dealing with desertions should be sought through union action,[38] but did not state which union it had in mind. The paper was a staunch supporter of the AMWU, but it knew the Marine Workers' weakness when it came to industrial negotiations.

Desertions continued throughout 1924 and Wilson complained that the "behaviour of some 10,000 serving in the mercantile marine brought discredit upon the mass of well-behaved seamen, embarrassed the work of union officials and caused great expense." Was he counting all AMWU members as discreditable seamen? The Merchant Shipping Act 1894 had dealt fully with definitions of desertions and the penalties for offenders. Wilson wanted the Act to be supplemented by a joint committee in every port to penalise men who signed Articles but failed to join ships, or deserted abroad, "or rendered themselves unfit for employment at sea through wilful misconduct." Employers agreed with the idea, but felt that the legal and practical difficulties might be awkward to overcome.[39]

The BOT reported 664 desertions between January 1 and April 30, 1925 from British vessels sailing to the North Atlantic. This was not the busy part of the season, and although a smaller number than the summer of 1923, it still represented considerable inconvenience to the shipping lines concerned. The BOT referred to sailings from all British ports, but the majority of North Atlantic sailings were from Southampton, Liverpool and Glasgow.

After 1925 employment in the three large ports improved for several years, and although failure to join ship after receiving the wage advance was not eliminated, press reports about desertions in large numbers died out. From 1929 American prospects and wage levels did not so readily encourage legal or illegal entry into the States.

* * * *

In the other port industries the nearest comparisons which can be made with ships' officers were the foremen, chargehands and other supervisory grades. Providing docks' foremen were not involved in industrial action their employment was reasonably secure, and negotiations for reinstatement of foremen after strikes were usually successful for the foremen. Shipyard foremen and chargehands were the most secure of the employees. They were looked upon as staff and were expected to behave

accordingly. During the depression when shipping lines cut wages across the board, including directors' salaries, and office staff redundancies were imposed to help streamline the companies, there were no references to redundancies amongst yard and works supervisory grades, but some may have been necessary however.

Ships' officers were not guaranteed permanent employment. At the end of the war there was a large surplus of unemployed officers, which was gradually reduced, but an increase in ships sailing was the only solution to take up the slack amongst officers. Masters were interviewed and selected by shipping company executives, who usually engaged other senior officers as well. It was customary for junior officers to be engaged by department heads, for example, chief officers engaged junior navigation and deck officers, chief engineers engaged junior engineers, and chief stewards engaged catering officers. Shipping lines notified the Mercantile Marine Association and the Imperial Merchant Service Guild of their requirements who then sent suitable candidates for interview.

Between the wars it was all too common for ships to be withdrawn from service, either temporarily or permanently, and in this case if shipowners did not require officers on another ship they became redundant. Long serving officers were often those employed in managerial and administrative posts ashore, but they could also become port consultants and superintendents for the BOT.

* * * *

Seamen were intermittently, rather than casually employed, being engaged for the duration of the voyage as far as foreign-going seamen were concerned, and weekly on most home trade and coasting vessels. In the attitude of unions towards the engagement systems the shipping industry again differed from the other two. Whereas the NUS used the engagement method (PC5) for the benefit of the union, and even went as far as strike-breaking to ensure its security,[40] the TGWU and the shipbuilding unions strove to improve engagement methods for the benefit of their members, and were less concerned that benefits for the men might have put financial strains on their respective industries.

In ship-repair establishments where ships were repaired at their normal berths a wastage of working time occurred between the engagement of men and the commencement of work, owing to the distance to be covered from the point of engagement. Allowance made in workers' favour for this loss was known as "walking time" and it gave five to fifteen minutes to reach ships berthed at pre-determined areas of the docks. The method of

engaging men was not changed in either the ship-repair or docks industries between the wars, but the opening of the new docks extension in 1933 (the official opening was 1934) called for a reappraisal of the walking time rules owing to the increased distance involved until the roads were ready.

Facilities at Place of Work

In this area of employment conditions there is a considerable difference between the conditions to be examined for shore-based occupations and employment at sea, particularly for foreign-going seamen who were away from home for longer periods than short sea and coastal route seamen. Factory Act regulations provided that certain safety measures should be observed in places of work on land, but there was no compulsion, nor was it deemed necessary, to provide comfort and convenience. The employers of ship-repairers and dockworkers were not responsible for the way men lived at home, even if as citizens, they felt a moral responsibility to uplift the standards of the poor. Employers of seamen, on the other hand, in this case shipowners and directors of shipping lines, were responsible for the standard of accommodation and conditions provided for their crews. Neither trade unions nor employers were in a position to alter the way port workers kept their homes, but while engaged as ships' crews seamen's temporary homes on board came within the scope of working conditions.

The greater significance to seamen of the facilities provided at their place of work, which they either enjoyed or endured for weeks or possibly months at a time, establishes those facilities as perhaps the most important aspect of seamen's employment. So much of their lives was spent in their working environment that it deserves a greater degree of examination.

First, however, it is as well to look at the provisions for dock-workers and ship-repairers who, for some of the time, shared the same working environment on the docks.

Toilets and washrooms were probably adequate for dockworkers if all those marked on the Southern Railway Company's dock plan were available for use by workers. Ship-repairers working on board were not always permitted to use the ship's facilities, which was inconvenient for them, and time-wasting. However, toilet, shower and wash basin repairs ranked very high on the list of faults occurring, which meant that men were frequently working in those areas of the ship and pipes may not always

have been connected. There were occasional complaints from union leaders about the lack of facilities, but on the whole men appeared to be content to accept what was provided. For example, the concern was not whether painters had a place to wash their hands at the end of a shift, but whether they should be allowed paid time to do it.

All meals from breakfast to supper were taken at work by some men every day. Overtime and nightshifts kept men at work at all hours. The urgency for speed in turn round repairs required continuous work. Night arrivals also required overtime or late shifts from dockworkers who were needed to unload passenger baggage and cargoes without delay. Canteens or Refreshment Rooms were, therefore, an essential part of the facilities used by workers.

Pre-war canteens on the docks were described by the Southampton Times as insanitary, with sawdust from the floor found in the food, and the remains of yesterday's soup in the teacups. During the war the dock canteen was taken over by National Kitchens Department of the Ministry of Food, and it improved. By January 1919 an extension with waitress service was operating an efficient system in which counters were bought and exchanged for meals. A simple three course meal could be obtained for 1s., and tea was 1d. per cup. The Joint Trades Management Committee of the Trades and Labour Council was largely responsible for the improvements, and the Committee also made improvements to other canteens later. National Kitchens also opened a canteen in Woolston in 1919, for the benefit of shipyard workers, but it was closed in July 1922 because of its continued financial loss.[41] The implication of the closure is that employment was so scarce and insecure during 1921 and 1922 that not enough workers from the Woolston shipyards either used the canteen or could afford to buy their meals there.

In later years there were not enough canteen facilities for shipyard workers, whether they worked in the yards or on the docks, and it is very unlikely that there was sufficient canteen space for all dockers during the busy season. Additional temporary facilities were required in both industries to cover their respective high seasons. A mobile boiler was wheeled round the docks at midday from which men could make their tea with ready-boiling water. Men working in the shops could use their own fires for heating water instead of pipes and rivets. Those working on ships might be lucky enough to be friendly with a cook, otherwise the most they could expect was hot water from the galley.[42]

Much of the work of shipbuilding and repair and cargo handling was carried on out of doors and often involved physical exertion. A comfortable place to sit down to take their meals, particularly in the

winter, might have been thought a necessity rather than a luxury, but there was no obligation to provide rest rooms on a work site and none were provided. Many dockers were in the habit of visiting local cafes for a " mug of tea and a bun," and presumably a sit down. Ship-repairers on ships were not provided with anywhere to sit down.

The number of dockworkers employed daily varied considerably from day to day, and not all those employed in the morning were required in the afternoon, so overall the facilities were probably just adequate. Although toilets and wash basins were provided there was no where for men to shower until the late 1930s. The TGWU eventually persuaded the dock owners of the need for better washing facilities for men who unloaded "carbon black" (graphite), which was a dirtier job than coal bunkering. Having achieved this significant step forward, it was only with the utmost difficulty that the men could be pressed to use it. Therefore, it seems that the absence of complaints about the lack of facilities of any kind did not necessarily imply that they were adequate.

Conditions on board encountered by seamen depended upon the type and size of vessel sailed in. The luxury liners did not provide crews' quarters comparable with passenger accommodation, except perhaps in the days of steerage class travel, when some of the crew might have been more comfortable than steerage passengers. In general, the smaller and older vessels, particularly those in coasting and home trade, were those which offered the least in the way of amenities, but the small ocean-going freighters were also poorly endowed and poorly kept. The latter class of vessel had much much smaller crews than liners and often employed lascars and other Asian sailors when picking up crews from certain ports, but the age of a ship, regardless of its class, was a very important factor in the provision of crews' accommodation, and also in the attention given to their quarters by the crew. Even some of the largest ships provided little more than sleeping space. Many of the small vessels had no clothes drying facilities, no crews' mess, and only the most rudimentary sanitary arrangements. Men lived and slept in very close proximity to one another, and in most cases crews' quarters, and frequently washing places and toilets as well, offered absolutely no privacy.

The AMWU, led by Tom Lewis, made several attempts to draw attention to the poor state of crew spaces on passenger liners. There were no specific regulations for crew spaces laid down in the Merchant Shipping Act, but instructions were issued, from time to time, to surveyors appointed by the Board of Trade to ensure that where improvements and correction of faults was deemed necessary, these were carried out.

Even without compulsory regulations it is clear that BOT inspections were intended to raise standards and ensure the correction of defects, and in this they were assisted by the reports of the Port Sanitary Authorities (PSA). The Port Health Inspector was probably the AMWU's best ally in seeking better conditions for seamen on board.

Southampton PSA was constituted in 1893 and "exercised port functions in waters abutting the urban sanitary districts of Southampton and Itchen and the rural sanitary districts of the New Forest, South Stoneham and Fareham."[43] The Authority was responsible for deratisation, including the prevention of rats on ship and shore, and also for recording all vessels arriving from plague-hazard ports, as well as for the detention and fumigation of ships arriving with infectious disease cases on board. The inspection of crews' quarters was an additional function.

Although the Board of Trade instructions were recommendations only, there were certain minimum standards which both their surveyors and PSAs used as guides in their observations. These so-called regulations were not compulsory because it was impossible to make structural alterations necessary to bring older ships up to standard requirements and it was accepted that such ships should continue in service. However, a detailed examination of the state of crew spaces will show that defects and unsatisfactory conditions were not confined to the older ships, and in fact, a number of ships built between the wars did not satisfy either the BOT or the PSAs.

Of 2,451 vessels inspected by Southampton PSA in 1938 9.4 per cent were defective in the crews' quarters. 26 vessels were without stoves, 34 were insanitary and another 23 were verminous; there were 90 instances of insanitary W.C.s and washing places, and 46 vessels were without flushing toilets.[44] Southampton crews were also troubled by leaking ports and overdecks, leaking steam pipes (often the only heating provided) and leaking water pipes. The latter defects increased the chances of damp quarters and even resulted in water lying on the floor.[45]

In 1936 the PSA made specific reference in its annual report to three small vessels built in 1916, 1923 and 1924 which had "no W.C. accommodation." In one of them the crew was obliged to use a bucket in the mess room and "the bucket was subsequently used for other domestic purposes."[46]

The defects in WCs and wash rooms were frequently due to defective plumbing caused by wear and tear or inadequate provision of plumbing in the ship's design. In many vessels, including newer ones, where flushing WCs were provided they were flushed by a branch pipe from an overhead wash deck pipe, not from a supply tank, and were only flushed once in 24 hours. Such a system was not conducive to hygiene. However, insanitary

conditions might have been the fault of the men themselves in some cases. The high percentage of generally insanitary and unclean defects, not only points to a need for more attention to have been given to plumbing, as suggested by the plumbers' union,[47] but also for much stricter control and inspection of crews' quarters by ships' masters or officers.

The overcrowding in crews' quarters was a problem which it was difficult to deal with economically, but one line of reasoning might suggest that Southampton crews on some vessels were fortunate in this respect. The majority of passenger and mail liners, which formed a very large proportion of Southampton's shipping, were converted to oil fuel after the war, which considerably reduced the number of engineroom and stokehold men required. Whilst this created a problem of a different kind for the men displaced, it should have partly alleviated the ill-effects of overcrowding. However, another line of reasoning takes the view that since many of the recorded defects were of crews' quarters being used for stowage of ships' gear and stores, this may have been how space was filled after itsvacation by redundant crew following oil conversion. Lewis was adamant that overcrowding was chronic on luxury liners.

The PSA inspected crews quarters in less than a quarter of the total ships arriving in the port each year, and no indication was given in the annual reports as to the size of the vessels inspected. The size of Southampton's ships ranged from the mighty liners Majestic and Berengaria, each over 50,000 tons, affecting hundreds of seamen, down to the small coasting boats and yachts, some with crews of only three or four men.

The type of nuisances recorded reveals the condition of defective vessels, and Table 15 shows the main categories of defects. 67.2 per cent of the total for the years included in the Table were due to insanitary, verminous and otherwise unhealthy conditions; such as poor ventilation, lighting and heating, and overcrowding; a further 21.4 per cent were due to structural wear and tear, mainly those causing damp conditions, such as leaks and condensation, but also including missing and broken items such as doors. The remaining 11.3 per cent of the defects concerned potable water containers and food lockers, which were also risks to health when defective.

Despite the increasing inspection of foreign vessels in Southampton from the minimum of 204 in 1921 to the maximum of 956 in 1938, defects found and recorded were almost negligible.[48]

The Marine Worker, the journal of the AMWU, edited by Thomas Lewis, informed its readers in 1922 that "the accommodation provided for seamen on the swell liners of this country is a disgrace to humanity, and the evil effects of these conditions are evidenced by the heavy mortality and

Table 15. An Analysis of Defects Recorded in Crews' Quarters on British Ships Arriving in Southampton.

YEAR	Total number of vessels inspected	Number of defective vessels	% of total vessels inspected	Number of defects	% of total vessels inspected	TYPE OF DEFECT - NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL DEFECTS											
						Structural wear and tear. Leaks etc.		Ventilation Heating Lighting Overcrowding		Verminous beds and quarters		Insanitary WCs, urinals and wash basins		Potable water storage		Food lockers, etc.	
		No.	%			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1910	3,770	77	2.04	105	2.78	20	19.04	42	40.00			19	18.09	14	13.33	10	9.52
1912	2,817	77	2.73	110	3.9	30	27.27	46	41.81	1	0.9	29	26.36	2	1.81	10	9.09
1919	2,425	23	0.95	32	1.32	15	46.87	8	25.00			4	12.5	2	6.25	3	9.37
1920	2,421	51	2.11	98	4.04	19	19.38	30	30.61	1	1.02	46	46.93	1	1.02	1	1.02
1921	2,575	26	1.01	33	1.28	12	36.36	7	21.21			10	30.3			2	6.06
1922	2,650	15	0.56	20	0.75	3	15.00	8	40.00			4	20.00	1	5.00	4	20.00
1923	2,353	18	0.76	23	0.04	6	26.00	8	34.00			5	21.7	2	8.69	2	8.69
1924	2,497	30	1.2	43	1.72	16	37.2	17	39.53			5	11.62	1	2.3	3	6.97
1925	2,318	17	0.73	27	1.16	14	51.85	2	7.4	6	22.22	4	14.81	1	3.7		
1926	2,243	32	1.42	44	1.96	8	18.18	20	45.45	1	2.27	7	15.9	3	6.81	4	9.09
1927	2,457	41	1.66	64	2.6	33	51.56	17	26.56			9	14.06	3	4.68	1	1.56
1928	2,090	49	2.34	60	2.87	31	51.66	25	41.66			19	16.66	1	1.66	2	3.33
1929	1,927	118	6.12	179	9.28	38	21.22	106	59.21			18	10.05	5	2.79	12	6.7
1930-31	N/A																
1932	2,154	115	5.33	169	7.84	34	20.11	42	24.85	7	4.14	72	42.6	10	5.91	4	2.36
1933	2,137	126	5.89	178	8.32	35	19.66	46	25.84	35	19.66	53	29.77	6	3.37	2	1.12
1934-35	N/A																
1936	2,020	107	5.29	138	6.83	15	10.86	24	17.39	19	13.77	51	36.95	26	18.84	3	2.17
1937	2,192	207	9.44	382	17.42	55	14.39	84	21.98	39	10.21	153	40.00	25	6.24	20	5.23
1938	2,541	232	9.46	424	17.29	74	17.45	93	21.93	31	7.31	167	39.38	40	9.43	19	4.48
TOTAL	43,497	1,361	3.12	2,139	4.91	458	21.41	625	29.21	140	6.54	666	31.13	143	6.68	102	4.76

Source: Southampton Port Sanitary Authority Annual Reports.

and sickness experienced among seamen."[49] In November of 1922 The Marine Worker reproduced an undated article from John Bull which not only stated that "for nearly half a century the accommodation of seamen has been neglected," it also condemned named vessels. The Majestic, it said had "wonderful luxuriousness advertised ad nauseum...but step for'ard and peep between decks. She has two fo'c'sles for deckhands each containing twenty bunks so confined that men sleep with their faces twelve inches apart. Between these quarters and the bow are the latrines. There is no dividing door, nor has any ever been provided. Smells from these and from sweating bodies herded together...create a fetid atmostphere.

"...In the Homeric the glory-hole or stewards' quarters are so dangerously stuffy that the men always reckon on being ill at the completion of a voyage and have to depend on their few days ashore to restore their health.

"...In the Berengaria the firemen mess in dark and dismal quarters lighted only by two or three ports and a few electric bulbs.

"...In these circumstances it is not surprising to find that the death-rate among merchant seamen, especially from phthisis, is the highest known."[50]

Emanuel Shinwell, a member of Parliament in 1923, took the opportunity to raise the condition of seamen's accommodation in the House of Commons.[51] The voice of the AMWU was heard at this time because it was in the early stages of consolidating its ranks, but the NSFU had also lent its support to a movement to improve conditions in 1920, when they held a meeting in Southampton to discuss the post war reconstruction of shipping and seamen's accommodation on existing ships as well as new ones.[52] However, the president of the BOT was as much aware in 1923 as he had been in 1920 that existing ships could not undergo major alteration, but thought being cramped "was better than having no ships to go on."[53] Nevertheless, it was in 1923 that the BOT revised the instructions to surveyors on crews' accommodation and included existing ships.[54] Despite this, there appeared regularly in the Southampton PSA Annual Reports the sentence: "It is again necessary to point out that the standard enforceable for crews' accommodation upon British ships falls short of that required by many other nations."[55] The use of the word 'enforceable' seems to indicate that the BOT regulations were regarded as statutory, and indeed, it was expected that the minimum standards should be complied with.

The Mercantile Marine Department of the Board of Trade conducted an investigation of crew spaces on British ships arriving at all major ports between December 1927 and March 1928.[56] Included in the printed booklet are the reports of six surveyors for Southampton District,whose opinions

can be summarised briefly under the class of vessel visited.

Passenger Vessels

Only two of the surveyors inspected these and found their crew spaces "satisfactory" and "in very good and satisfactory condition" respectively. Clearly they were at variance with the view of Tom Lewis and other members of the AMWU, including oral evidence.[57]

Foreign-going Cargo Vessels

Post 1923 vessels were good, clean and satisfactory with separate mess, washrooms and sometimes even baths or showers, and reasonable care was taken of the accommodation by crews. Older vessels were not so well equipped and crews did not take the same care. These ships were not so clean or comfortable.

Home and Coasting Trade Vessels

There do not appear to have been any inspected at this time which were built after 1923, and one surveyor reported that a high proportion of the vessels he visited were "wood-built sail and auxiliary motor vessels on coasting work only" which were "not less than twenty years of age." These were very small vessels with inadequate lighting and with the ventilation stopped up by seamen to eliminate draughts. "WCs invariably consist of a seat and a hand bucket" placed under a shelter near the steering wheel.

Iron and steel vessels of this class were generally referred to as untidy and dirty, with crews complaining of too much ventilation, rather than too little. Only the larger vessels had galleys on deck, meals were generally cooked and eaten in the fo'c'sle sleeping quarters. One surveyor thought the untidy and dirty conditions were "impossible to remedy owing to the type of man and the class of work." The general impression was that this type of vessel increased in dirt and discomfort with its years.

Foreign-owned Vessels

Very few were inspected, but all except those from Latin countries were favourably described and were better cared for by their crews.

Very few of the vessels inspected were passenger liners, and those few were almost certainly not the giants. The transatlantic liners came to the port very regularly and once their crews' accommodation was noted it seems to have been accepted as it was. Structural alterations were out of the qestion even if conditions were cramped, and as these ships were so extensive, perhaps it was thought unnecessary to keep inspecting them. They should, however, have been checked for wear and tear and cleanliness.

The Board of Trade surveyors in Liverpool also found older ships to

be wanting in cleanliness and paint, which was a particular problem where coal was carried as cargo. The causes of the lack of care taken by crews were described as the quick turn-round, only the minimum number of men being engaged, the class and mentality of the men, and the frequent changes of crew. Liverpool's passenger vessels were described as satisfactory, but the comment that crew spaces on coasting vessels were cleaned "on the annual lay-up" suggests an inadequacy in that area.

A Hull surveyor said that where crews were retained for a number of voyages their quarters were kept clean, but added that "meanness in the provision of WCs makes spaces horrible and almost incapable of being kept anything like clean." One Medical Officer of Health thought the cause of poor hygiene was the BOT regulations being optional instead of compulsory.[58]

A spokesman for the Shipping Federation agreed with the BOT that it would be extremely difficult to raise standards in existing ships, but thought if his committee's recommendations were put to shipowners without coercion they would have good effect. Copies of these recommendations were accordingly sent to shipbuilders and shipowners by the BOT, but no action was taken by any of the parties concerned. The SEF believed the Shipping Federation approached them to show that they were taking the initiative in order to avoid having BOT regulations forced upon them.[59] The recommendations referred to included improvements to washing and sanitary conditions, berth construction, heating, lighting, ventilation and cleanliness, and the provision of effective mosquito protection. (See Apprendix 6).

The recommendations of the PSA printed in February 1930 also called for mosquito protection and more suitable bunk material to reduce vermin. Additionally, they wanted fresh water for washing instead of salt, and better storage of drinking water and food. (See Apprendix 7).

When the BOT technical advisors submitted their recommendations they were more extensive than the Shipping Federation. In addition to measures to improve the health and comfort of seamen they also included structural changes, use of different materials and regular maintenance, cleaning and painting of crews' quarters. (See Apprendix 8).

The fact that no action was taken on any of the recommendations was later blamed on the economic recession.[60] However, the BOT approached the Shipping Federation again in 1935 owing to the failure to implement any of the recommended improvements. So the Shipping Federation raised the matter again with the Shipbuilding Federation, suggesting a joint committee. The SEF thought this action came about for the same reason as in 1930, and they replied that crews' accommodation was 'essentially

shipowners' responsibility".[61]

The following year (1936) Southampton PSA undertook a special investigation of its own into crews conditions and tabulated details of some twenty four ships using the port, only fifteen of which were British.[62] The ships ranged from 123 net tons with 7 crew to 16,444 net tons and 441 crew, but it was such a small sample of Southampton's shipping that the ships may not have been representative of other vessels of their type, size and age.

Nearly all the vessels inspected accommodated seamen and firemen separately, but without making allowance for the watch system, so that one watch disturbed another. Stewards and catering department staff were separate from sailors and firemen. Only two British vessels provided facilities for hanging wet clothes, and one, a coasting vessel with a crew of twelve, had eight buckets in the mess for washing and only one WC; the other had two washbasins and one salt shower for a crew of eighteen. The watch system meant that the use of washbasins and buckets was staggered. In another vessel built as late as 1929, a 3,000 net ton ocean-going vessel, salt water for washing was laid on, but buckets had to be used and there were only two WCs for a crew thirty six.

The two British liners in the survey were not named, but the initials in the code suggest they were Union Castle Line vessels. They came into service in 1930 and 1936 and both were provided with running water, basins, baths and showers, and one even had hot and cold fresh water for the basins. The South African and Australian trade of this shipping line had carried it through the depression with less decline than experienced on the Atlantic passenger routes, and it embarked on an ambitious extension and modernisation of its Fleet. It is not likely that all its vessels were as commodious and well fitted out as these two, but it was evidently the intention to make them so.

A new Code of Regulations was introduced in September 1937 which stipulated that heated washrooms with hot water for bath or shower were to be compulsory on all new ships constructed, and there was to be one wash basin to every six men and one WC for every ten men up to a hundred, after which they were to be provided at the rate of one to four per cent. The problem of improving existing ships remained under the phrase "where alteration is practicable."

The NUS was delighted with the new Regulations and as far as keeping crew spaces "clean and homelike" was concerned in accommodation improvements, they thought this was more a matter for "proper organisation on board" rather than government regulations. The BOT had slips printed to remind masters that crew space was their responsibility and that crews

should be disciplined for failing to keep spaces clean when ordered.[63]

During 1938 the BOT began to assess ships with a different purpose in mind and the merchant fleet was listed according to age, potential speed and conditions of readiness for emergency.[64] However, some people were still concerned with living accommodation. A letter received by an official of the BOT graphically described some verminous London ships. "I was astounded at the appalling character of some of the accommodation. I would not dream of accommodating two ferrets in some of the places provided for eight British seamen."[65] The NUS suggested that seamen were in a verminous condition themselves quite frequently and took vermin on to the ships from lodging houses.[66] The Shipping Federation and the Officers' Society agreed that "cleanliness is very largely a personal matter", and the joint committee (referred to above) wished crews would take a pride in their "sea homes". However, since a large number of seamen did not care for the old ships in which they sailed the committee recommended routine daily cleaning which, if put into effect, should have cured the worst evils even in old ships. Unfortunately, the war interrupted further thoughts on comfort and convenience. (See Appendix 9 for proposed daily cleaning routine).

On passenger liners and freighters seamen's accommodation was below the water line in most cases, which was the reason for ventilation and lighting inadequacies. Officers, even junior officers, were more fortunate. They were provided with cabins which berthed two to four, situated in the more comfortable areas of the ship. On Southampton's passenger liners senior officers had private cabins, and chief officers had their own stewards as well as private cabins. Mess room and washing and toilet facilities were separate from the men's, but there was no guarantee that officers' facilities would not suffer from plumbing defects during a voyage. Many such defects were due to faulty design and were as troublesome to passengers as crew.

Officers on tramp steamers and the older small vessels probably enjoyed some privacy, but otherwise their accommodation and conditions were not greatly different from their crews.

* * * *

The expense likely to be incurred at a time when increased costs could not easily be absorbed was a deterrent to looking realistically at ways of improving conditions on existing ships. The eventual proposals on cleanliness issued and approved in 1939 did not greatly increase costs and could have been implemented much earlier had they been recommended.

Unfortunately there was a tendency to see the problems on existing ships as almost insoluable, involving strutural alterations and the creation of more space for crews, which on many ships was an impossibility. Consequently, the difficulties were written off as incurable and the comment that improvement should be made "as far as practicable" was allowed to suffice.

The fundamentals of cleanliness, as listed in Appendix Nine, were not mentioned until 1939, as if it had been thought unnecessary to do more than leave ships clean at the end of a voyage, rather than keep them clean during the voyage. BOT officials and shipowners blamed seamen for dirty and untidy accommodation, but if seamen had lower standards of cleanliness than shipowners, no one could suggest that a bucket of cold sea water was conducive to personal hygiene.

The NUS alleged that seamen took vermin on board from lodging houses. If it was so, and the NUS considered the standard of lodging houses in some ports were inferior, they could have taken up the matter with local authorities themselves. They did not need to wait until 1937 and then expect the BOT to chase PSAs and local authorities, which they suggested should be done.[67] In Southampton the Borough Medical Officer of Health reported on very numerous inspections of the thirteen or fourteen lodging houses in the town and always stated that "the premises generally were kept in a satisfactory condition."[68]

The Mercantile Marine Department of the BOT had many considerations beside crew spaces and it did not appear to be unduly concerned about the conditions on existing ships - priority was given to the accommodation allotted to seamen on new vessels. However, there was a gradual strengthening of authority from instructions to surveyors to the inclusion of existing ships in compulsory regulations, at least 'as far as practicable'.

Table 15 revealed an unhappy record as far as WCs and washrooms and verminous quarters were concerned. Very large increases were reported in 1937 and 1938, but there was by this time a much greater awareness of the problems generally, and possibly items which were then recorded as defective might have been disregarded previously. Of the PSA inspection cards held at Southampton City Record Office very few go back to the inter-war period, and regrettably not one of the famous luxury liner's cards has survived. There are no records of any inspections of these ships about which both the local union and the seamen complained.

A seaman's career, whether that of a fireman or a steward, was, in general, a short one. Seafaring was for young men. Constantly changing and shifting, they passed from ship to ship and port to port until they,

or their wives, chose a more settled way of life. Perhaps the knowledge that their maritime experience was not permanent enabled them to accept conditions as they found them, even when they should have been improved. Men have always been drawn to the sea, despite the harsh life it engenders, and perhaps willing seamen found no less than they expected. Indeed, conditions on some freighters are little more comfortable in the 1980s. For much of the period under consideration unemployment among seamen was high, and a job was welcome regardless of the conditions. Sir Joseph Maclay, who was Shipping Controller when the National Maritime Board was established, said the whole British mercantile marine should not be condemned because of a few black spots.[69] In fact, many seamen on the newer ships enjoyed greater comfort than some shore workers living in slum conditions, especially where stewards and catering staff on cruise trips were able to use the third class cabins on liners. Where poverty existed it was not uncommon to find overcrowding in dwellings; poor heating and lighting, and lack of privacy were familiar shortcomings of working class homes where regular employment was not the norm, and where low incomes and bad management left families below the subsistence level. In Southampton's Trinity, Town, St. Mary's and Northam Wards, and in Woolston on the eastern side of the River Itchen, which housed many casually employed workers, earnings were not constant and much of the accommodation was inadequate. In many cases food provision was insufficent as well.[70]

The BOT victualling scale[71] was designed to ensure that seamen's nutritional intake was adequate for their working needs, and the quantity of food provided on board was not much complained about in Southampton. Only one complaint regarding the quality of food was found in the Southampton press, and in this instance it was the way in which food was cooked and served which displeased the crew of a Royal Mail Steam Packet ship. Actual dining facilities for crews were seldom any better than those found by ship-repairers on board; deck and engineroom hands often had to eat in their sleeping quarters on the liners, and stewards seem to have had a preference for eating standing up in passageways, or in the kitchen.[72]

On Southampton liners the crews' stark, gloomy and often damp and fetid quarters were in sharp contrast to the magnificent decor, sumptuous furnishings and splendid meals provided for the pleasure and convenience of fare-paying passengers. It is not surprising they sometimes thought that greater consideration was due to them, particularly after their war service, which had received such praise they had been led to believe the quality of their lives at sea would be improved in peace time. Nevertheless, because of the difficulties of making any concerted efforts, as previously explained, widespread condemnation of conditions was not heard in Southampton.

Hours of Work

The hours worked in shipbuilding and dock labour before the war were not standardised, but by 1918 fifty three and fifty four hours were worked fairly generally as a normal week. Work was plentiful then and rates of pay were high in line with the cost of living, but already management and men were thinking about the demobilisation of servicemen and the increased employment which would have to be found once the war industries were no longer required.

The shipbuilding unions saw a shorter working week as one solution, and claimed that a thirty per cent increase in productivity on munitions had been made following the reduction of hours from fifty three to forty five and forty eight, and the FEST made an official application for a forty four hour week and shorter overtime, to start from the end of the war.[73]

Talks on a forty eight hour week had been suspended in 1914 and employers were not keen to resume them on a forty four hour basis. Joint conferences were held, nevertheless, and negotiations were put in motion between the SEF and the FEST, and also between the engineering employers and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the National Federation of General Workers.

War contracts were being cancelled daily and Sir Allan Smith, president of the engineering employers,stressed the urgency for a national settlement. Before the end of November 1918 and agreement was signed by both employers' organisations, the ASE and the FEST. The Agreement, to start on January 1, 1919 was for a forty seven hour week on a one break day, instead of the former two break system.[74]

Almost immediately discontent was registered in several shipbuilding districts, including Southampton. Regardless of the Agreement, just finalised by a vote of 292,340 in favour of 47 hours, and only 152,617 against, the Southampton men wanted a 44 hour week. Local votes had been a mere 143 in favour and 5,793 against, and William Bonner (Painters) and Matt Connor (Plumbers) claimed that the national vote had not been properly taken, but they did not state their grounds for saying so. Much of the dissatisfaction arose from the one break system and the FEST agreed to hold another ballot in February. In the meantime Southampton decided to work the scheme operating in SEF districts despite being an independent district at the time.

Discussions between the NTWF and port employers produced a recommendation for a reduction to forty four hours per week for dockworkers which, being accepted in principle by employers, was eventually put into effect

in Southampton on May 7, 1919 with 11½ four hour shifts being a standard week, wage and overtime rates having been adjusted accordingly to mutual satisfaction (after much hard negotiating by William Paul of the Dockers' Union).

This agreement and similar local agreements in other ports increased the pressure on the shipbuilding unions to obtain a further reduction, but as the engineering industry had settled for forty seven hours the employers were in a stronger position and the forty four hour application was adjourned and eventually abandoned.

From time to time there were complaints from employers that the full hours were not being worked, and the SEF conducted periodic campaigns to tighten up on this aspect. One such campaign in 1925 asked member firms to provide information on their rules and the notices which they posted for employees regarding rules and infringements. Not all districts replied, but of those which did the common penalties for deliberate loss of time were fines, with instant dismissal in certain circumstances.

Thornycroft of Southampton and Vickers of Barrow-in-Furness had identical rules which fined men from 6d. to 2s. 6d. for offences connected with hours of work. Offences included entering or leaving by the wrong gate, and not remaining at work. Other offences such as wasting lamps, candles and burners, committing nuisances in parts not allotted for it, and depositing ashes in the wrong place, were also liable to incur fines. More serious offences included smoking, drinking, idling, annoying or molesting workers, clerks or time keepers, hindering the progress of work, bringing people in or taking material out, and these could be dealt with by a 2s. 6d. fine or instant dismissal. All sums were deducted from wages and appropriate sums could also be deducted for bad or negligent work, injury to property, damaged or lost tools, and tools not kept clean.

Whilst not all offences related to hours of work they were, of course, kept together, and many had a bearing on productivity. Thornycroft posted notices in their yards warning workers that work checks (or tickets) were to be drawn and deposited at the proper time and "anyone found lifting or depositing other than his own will be prosecuted." The notice also warned that anyone leaving work before the buzzer would be fined 2s. 6d. or dismissed. The Upholstery Department had their own notice because the company regarded it as separate, as it was one of the few shipyard departments to employ women and girls.[75]

The SEF analysed the information returned and together with the unions compiled a poster to be exhibited in all British shipyards because of "the joint desire to remove evil conduct." The poster made specific reference to the need to observe the correct starting and finishing times.[76]

The hours of dockers and shipyard workers, including ship-repairers, were associated with engagement procedures, and a degree of supervision was required to ensure that the full time was worked. It was not always possible to supervise to the extent required. Seamen, however, worked within the regulations of a strict disciplinary code, and their hours neither provided for overtime, nor for sufficient time off duty. If it was any consolation to seamen, many officers also worked extremely long hours and had too few consecutive hours free from responsibility.

Hours of work on board were the same for all seamen with little variation from one vessel to another. The watch system applied to all hands on board except stewards and other catering panel personnel. On the liners the work of hairdressers and kiosk attendants, and so on, was probably dependent on the demand for their services, but if they worked a seven day week their hours were bound to be longer than their shore-based colleagues. Stewards worked from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. with seldom more than two consecutive hours off duty during the day.[77]

In 1919 the British government excluded seamen (along with agricultural and domestic workers and shop assistants) from the international proposal for a forty eight hour week, for which a Bill came before Parliament. The NSFU, the BSU, the Joint Seafarers' Council and the officers' organisations protested at the exclusion. By 1920 there was heavy unemployment among officers released from naval duty, and the mercantile marine had also been unable to absorb all the ratings who had returned from war service. Shorter hours meant that more men would be needed to cover for those off duty, and was seen by the unions and the officers' institutions as a solution to the surplus labour problem. The Imperial Merchant Service Guild claimed there were 20,000 officers and men unemployed in March 1920, many of whom could have been taken on to meet the requirements of a forty eight hour week.

The employers, quite rightly, argued that there was far greater expenditure involved with the shorter hours scheme than with increased wages. It meant employing more men, which meant providing them with more accommodation on board, which decreased the carrying capacity of the ship, whether it normally carried passengers or freight, which therefore, decreased its earning power. Employers saw the problem as an international one, which had to be viewed in the light of foreign competition. The conversion of ships from coal to oil reduced crews in certain departments, allowing scope to increase manning levels in others, but no shipowners agreed to increase either officers or ratings on oil-fuelled vessels.

The Maritime Conference of the International Labour Organisation in

1920 debated the question of seamen's hours, but failed to achieve the majority necessary to reach an agreement on reduced hours. Only the French were prepared to operate a forty eight hour week, and at a conference in Brussels the following January shipowners of various nations concluded that the situation in maritime transport was too critical even to re-open the discussion.[78] Tom Lewis ended an article in the Marine Worker with the prophetic words: "The eight hour day for seamen is a long way off unless seamen themselves take a hand in settling the question."[79] The French scheme was abandoned in September 1922.

The issue was discussed at the International Transport Workers' Congress in Hamburg in 1924, but when it was discussed at the ILO conference at Geneva in 1929 the NUS had been instructed by Havelock Wilson to vote against the introduction of a forty eight hour week. It was this knowledge which assisted Ernest Bevin in deciding to open a seamen's section of the TGWU, and although his union stopped organising seamen after Wilson's death, he retained his interest in their affairs. Aided by the improvement in economic conditions in 1936 Bevin was instrumental in bringing about the International Seamen's Charter, which had been campaigned for since 1920. Among its regulations was the reduction of working hours at sea from eightyfour to sixty four per week.[80] It was 1943 before a fifty six hour week was achieved.

* * * *

The Court of Enquiry into Wages and Conditions of Dockworkers confirmed the appropriateness of an eight hour day standard because their work was arduous, and it may have been partly due to the public attention focussed on the Enquiry, and partly because most ports of major significance to the industry had already established a forty four hour week. Shipbuilding and engineering employers negotiated their own hours of work without government intervention, and despite the concession to dockers were able to settle for forty seven hours. Some concession was necessary because they thought an increase in productivity was unlikely on pre-war hours, but shipbuilders had to consider international competition for orders, and they felt the forty four hour week asked for by the unions would put British yards at a serious disadvantage. In fact, as orders dwindled the whole thinking behind British shipbuilding put the industry at a disadvantage.

The NTWF and the shipbuilding unions made strenuous efforts on behalf of their workers to obtain reductions on pre-war hours. One of the aims of the AMWU was to obtain a forty eight hour week for all seamen, but the

union had no opportunity to take any steps towards achieving it. There was no other support, and when the main seamen's union accepted the view held by employers that a reduction in hours and an increase in manning levels would cost the industry too much, there was very little chance that seamen could do anything about it. There was not very much to do in free time at sea, except sleep; the big ships had libraries for seamen and the liner crews entertained each other, and passengers as well, in some cases, but work prevented boredom, and the long week was probably not so fearsome as it sounded. The difference in the working week of seamen and shoreworkers was the latter's ability to earn overtime, a luxury which was denied seamen.

Health and Safety

The greatest risk to dockworkers' health came from accidents. Referring to dockers in general Alan Bullock said: "safety regulations were inadequate and frequently ignored; the accident rate in dock work was exceeded only by that in the mines."[81] Southampton handled less cargo and employed fewer men than London, Liverpool, Hull and Glasgow but its ratio of accidents to work may have been much the same. Only serious and fatal accidents were recorded in the local press and company minute books, but no doubt there were scores of minor accidents which occurred due to negligence, or failure to observe regulations. However, many of the accidents in Southampton were those in which men fell from heights, either from railway wagons, or the side of ships, or into the holds.

The majority of cases reported in the local press regarding compensation were of employees, or former employees, seeking continuation of compensation, not contesting their right to receive compensation. In fact, the Southern Railway Company even paid compensation to the wife of a shipyard worker whose husband was killed by a car outside the dock gates at the end of his shift. The dock owners seem to have been sufficiently caring to provide immediate assistance, but they were not willing to deter the spirit of self-help by providing gratuitous long-term pensions.

The prevention of accidents was the area in which employers were best situated to act, but the prevention of accidents almost invariably entailed expenditure, and consequently employers were reluctant to take decisions affecting safety regulations.

Before the war Southampton Trades and Labour Council suggested that a First Aid Station should be built on the docks so that injuries could

be treated more quickly, but there was no response from the dock owners.[82] Regulations for safety in docks, which were separate from the Factory and Workshops regulations applicable in shipbuilding, concerned the protection of open hatchways and gangways, and regular maintenance of gear. In 1923, following joint discussions between the Home Office, employers' organisations and the TGWU, it was proposed to improve the methods of making sure that regulations were observed, and to establish some organised safety first measures and the provision of first aid equipment in ports.[83] There is no evidence of any positive response from Southampton to these discussions or proposals.

At the beginning of 1925 an increase in reported accidents caused the Southern Railway Company to decide it was wiser to dispense with the Corporation's ambulance, which they had used as and when required up to that date. The Corporation ambulance was housed too far from the docks. So they not only provided the docks with its own ambulance, they also began ambulance classes to train dockworkers in first aid. By August 1926 eighty four dockers had taken an examination in first aid and eighty two had passed. In 253 accidents during the first six months of 1926 the docks staff had rendered assistance at 250.[84]

The Home Office first began pressing for the formation of local safety committees in 1927, but it was 1935 before Southampton PEA took any decisive action. Each shipping line was to form its own safety committee and report to a central committee, but Cunard, White Star and Royal Mail Lines were the only ones to set up their committees. As already seen with the BOT regulations on seamen's accommodation on board, employers' acceptance of the idea was more to avoid further government intervention than because they felt there was a need for action. In the opinion of the PEA everything possible was being done to minimise accidents, and indeed, neither union representatives nor the men made any efforts to take advantage of the opportunity to improve safety factors in their jobs.

Shipyard workers did not have such high accident statistics as dockers, but nevertheless, many accidents occurred, and in Southampton a few dramatic rescues as well, when men fell from swinging stages into the water and were saved by colleagues who bravely dived in after them.[85]

The Safety in Factories Order 1927 was aimed at improving safety and first aid facilities in factories and shipbuilding establishments. It included supervision of works, machinery and plant; maintenance of appliances; making sure that operatives understood all devices for stopping machinery; and provision of first aid and ambulance arrangements with men trained in first aid in each department of the works.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Sir Gerald Pellhouse, communicated

with the executive of the SEF, rather than directly with the districts, whereas when he was dealing with the docks he had visited Southampton in person. In shipbuilding establishments the voluntary safety first measures proposed in 1925 broke down because the SEF was guilty of dragging its feet to avoid further expense. Those measures were to enable the Factory Act regulations to be applied to ship-repairing. In 1927 the Home Secretary considered that a compulsory order was necessary and this included the appointment of a safety officer which upset the SEF. The Home Secretary wanted employers' associations to establish definite safety routines, and use printed forms for reporting accidents and collecting statistics. The SEF wanted the Safety Supervisor appointment clause deleted from the Draft Order on Shipbuilding Regulations before they were prepared to associate with the other heavy industries covered by the National Confederation of Employers' Associations.[86]

The SEF prepared a detailed document setting out what they considered complied with the spirit of voluntary undertaking. A safety committee was to be set up in each establishment in each district, with responsibility for supervision and prevention in all safety matters; they were to ensure the availability of an ambulance and first aid, deal with record-keeping and provide a periodic report to the company regarding their experience of different classes of accident. The SEF also believed that it was wiser to confine the committee to managerial representatives, as they thought men would attempt to interfere with management matters if they were given representation. The latter was not the case on the docks where workers were represented on the safety committees.

By April 30, 1929 two of the three main shipyards in Southampton had set up safety committees, but J. Samuel White in East Cowes had not done so. Only one of four Mersey ship-repair yards had a committee, none of the four Bristol and District yards had complied, and only one of twenty two in the River Thames district.[87] One of the objects of setting up committees was to enable the Factory Inspectorate to collect and analyse local information in order to ascertain whether or not the accident rate was decreasing as a result of the greater attention given to safety measures. However, as was pointed out to Pellhouse by the SEF, the accident rate was related to the amount of work being undertaken, and in 1930 and 1931, when the information was requested, statistics were likely to be misleading.[88]

Probably the only time when the idea of voluntary safety schemes might have been considered seriously was during the brief period of increased orders in the second half of the 1920s. However, the SEF was well aware that the recession in shipbuilding had not truly ended, and by

the end of the 1920s it was too late. Furthermore, there was a powerful lobby against the introduction of compulsory orders. For example, a proposal to prohibit the use of white lead paint, first raised in 1911, was pursued vigorously by the unions, assisted by the Admiralty, which was willing to give a lead in prohibiting the use of lead paint. The construction industry was as unwilling as the shipbuilding industry to incur additional expenditure through restrictions on the use of lead paint, but eventually in October 1927, when new White Lead Regulations came into operation shipbuilding establishments were excluded from the Regulations.

As well as accidents, which were common to all three port industries, some of the routine jobs were also hazardous to health, particularly in the case of dockworkers. Among such jobs were the discharging of meat and produce from cold chambers, and handling hides and skins.

The Southampton district delegate to the docks trade groups of the TGWU reported that "men develop rheumatic tendencies which are progressive in character."[89] No protective clothing was provided by the International Cold Storage Company, and it was confirmed that "only the less useful and capable men in the port were available" for that kind of work.[90] In Bristol and Glasgow men also refused to work in cold chambers because of suffering from rheumatism and asthma, and in Liverpool a class of labourers known as "handymen" were usually engaged specially for meat handling.

The greatest risk on board ship of contracting anthrax came from handling the South American hides brought in on Royal Mail Steam Packet ships. Because this commodity was often not stowed in the holds, discharging entailed carrying the bales down ships' alleyways, involving a much greater degree of handling than should have been permitted.[91]

Men working perpetually on coal bunkering, even with the reduced usage of coal in the port, were at risk from respiratory diseases associated with coal dust. The Port Sanitary Authority did not record annual statistics for these ailments, but neither rheumatism nor chronic fibrosis of the lungs were easily recorded on an annual basis without monitoring the stages of development or progression.

Seamen's health hazards were often associated with their accommodation conditions, such as damp bedding, wet clothing, overcrowding, faulty or inefficient ventilation. Tuberculosis and V.D. were also common complaints among seamen, and penalties for contracting V.D. prevented sufferers from seeking medical assistance.

When seamen were discharged in a foreign country because they were unfit for duty owing to illness they were paid medical expenses, but not wages, and therefore, the family allotment was not paid either. Seamen discharged in this way were left to make their own way home, which meant

joining a ship with a suitable vacancy. However, the man had to live until he was well enough to work and able to find a place on a ship. This put him at a disadvantage compared with shoreworkers who were not paid wages or medical expenses, but who could live at home and draw state benefit, and possibly union benefit as well, if they were entitled to any. It was not until 1941 that an alteration in the ruling for seamen was introduced, which included payment of wages during illness abroad.

* * * *

The facilities provided for shoreworkers at their place of work depended on local conditions to a large extent. Despite the philanthropic interests of a number of Southampton's leading employers of port labour, they were not prepared to incur expenditure on facilities for workers, nor advocate such expenditure by company management. In fact, whether the improvements were for shoreworkers or seafarers made no difference, because economic stresses due to declining trade occurred in each industry. The BSU, followed by the AMWU, probably made as much effort as anyone to obtain improvements for seamen, but the improvements gained were slow and scarce, and did not have a great deal to do with the Southampton union, and even less to do with the NUS. The reason was the difficulty of altering a ship's internal structure. Shipbuilders were not keen to put up the cost of building new vessels either, and seemed to be little interested in the proposals to increase and improve crew spaces.

The suggestion was made by the Southampton PSA and the BOT that foreign vessels were generally cleaner than British vessels. This was partly due to inspections taking place at the end of voyages on British ships after the crews had just vacated their portion of the ship, whereas foreign ships in British ports were inspected while still in full commission. However, there does appear to have been a definite laxity in regard to cleanliness during voyages, which it should have been the responsibility of masters and officers to correct. Then ships would not have been found so wanting at the end of voyages.

Unfortunately, the NUS, instead of seeing in what way it could improve the situation, was content to applaud the BOT improved regulations for new ships and condemn seamen as dirty and verminous. Furthermore, Joseph Havelock Wilson had been long dead when those allegations were made.

In matters of health and safety employers were censurable because of their procrastinations over certain aspects. However, the Southern Railway Company provided an up-dated ambulance service and initiated a first aid scheme which the men became proud of. Although Ernest Bevin was

concerned about the number of accidents in which dockworkers were involved, they were not sufficiently worried themselves (at least not those working in Southampton Docks) to make any demands regarding safety, nor press for a safety committee when the opportunity occurred. When Home Office pressure finally succeeded in establishing a local safety committee, supported by individual firms' committees, workers were represented and were able to make their comments. The indications are that Southampton's accident rate was not high, and that it was reduced between the wars, but carelessness was difficult to legislate for.

It is not easy to decide whether Southampton's workers accepted facilities and safety factors at work because they were considered to be satisfactory, because they had been as they were for so long they were automatically accepted with the job, because nobody was really interested, or because the unemployment which existed at the time made port workers pleased to have a job whatever the conditions. Where 'danger money' was paid as a bonus for dangerous work there was possibly less incentive for workers to seek improved health and safety measures. However, there were no specific references by the PEA or LJC regarding the payment of 'danger money' to workers in Southampton.

1. Southampton Times, October 4, 1924, described in an article which appeared in connection with the publication of Dock Labour and Decasualisation by E.C.P. Lascelles and S.G. Bullock.
2. See Bevin Papers for information on Transport Workers' Battalion. MRC, University of Warwick/TGWU Library, Transport House.
3. Minute in MOL file of 1918. PRO: LAB2 1041 DPL 131/Part I.
4. Letter from secretary of Southampton Port Labour Committee to MOL Demobilisation and Resettlement Department, dated December 9, 1918. PRO: LAB2 1041 DPL 131/6.
5. Minute from Southampton Surplus Labour Conference of the Port and Transit Committee, February 1919. PRO: LAB2 1041 DPL 131/6.
6. Southampton Port Labour Committee. I have not traced any revision of this arrangement, but as the MOL wished the tallies to be replaced by an employment book scheme (which Southampton failed to do), they may not have continued to pay for tallies after the war.
7. Southampton Port Registration Committee. Minute from MOL June 9, 1931. PRO: LAB2 1050 ET 3995/1931.
8. In 1921 White Star were allocated tallies for quay labourers, but in later years they sent requisitions to the Railway Company as other port users did.
9. The rotary system, which was only used by the Railway Company, was a deterrent to looking elsewhere for work, because if men were not at the stand when their numbers were called their names were crossed off and they were assumed to be employed, thus becoming ineligible for benefit that day. This meant that any man attending a call at another stand and failing to obtain employment required proof that he had attended the call. Foremen were reluctant to sign notes for this because of the delay it caused. Dockworkers objected to the rotary scheme and notified the Port Labour Committee of their objection in December 1920 (PRO: LAB2 DPL 100/4/1920), but the company persisted.
10. Oral evidence of Harold Smith; George Tatford, a retired TGWU shop steward and former president of the Southampton Trades Council, who was employed in Southampton Docks as a stevedore from 1925, after giving up his seaman's career; and Oral History Project, Southampton City Museums. Researchers: Carl Major and Philip Ferguson.
11. Cunard engaged all quay labour through the Railway Company and formed their own stevedores' department, after using the services of J. Rose in the early 1920s.
12. This number of tallies was allocated to Rose in 1921, but the number

employed by him may have increased later as the number of calling vessels increased.

13. In 1922 a new bicycle cost from £9-£11, so a dockworker earning £2-£3 per week was unlikely to buy a new one. However, secondhand cycles were advertised at very low prices.

14. Oral evidence of George Tatford, who was regularly employed by the Union Castle Line.

15. Evidence of J. Hart, TGWU delegate, from Minutes of Evidence taken before the Port Labour Committee, October 13, 1930.
Information regarding Southampton registration scheme and the engagement method in operation is taken from: visit by Leslie Bullock (MOL) to Southampton PRC February 15, 1930 (LAB2 1050 ET 3995/1931), Southampton PRC files dated June 22 and July 27, 1931; scheme of registration provided by J.W. Gillott, secretary, Southampton PRC, July 4, 1930; Port Labour Decasualisation and Unemployment Inquiry 1930; Minutes of Evidence taken before PRC, 8th day, October 13, 1930 by the Maclean Committee. (PRO: LAB2 1050 4825/9/1930).

16. Oral evidence of H.C. Stevens. Dockers' pay was always described as 'daily', and no specific instances relate to payment times other than 5 p.m. However, men engaged for four hours expected to be paid at the end of that time. As Head Cashier Stevens was thoroughly familiar with the system, and he referred to many occasions when he paid nightshift workers at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning.

17. Rules, Rates and Conditions of Labour (Stevedores and Quayside) for the Port of Southampton, Rule 5, p.4. (Blue Book).

18. There were very few cases of more than one employer per shift.

19. PEA Minutes, June 9, 1920.

20. Oral evidence of George Tatford.

21. Oral evidence of George Tatford, confirmed by H.C. Stevens, who added that Cunard opened another pay window when they could see the likelihood of this happening.

22. SCESEA Minutes, October 27, 1921 and January 22, 1922.

23. SCESEA Minutes, December 1, 1932.

24. Oral History Project, Southampton City Museums. Researchers: Carl Major and Philip Ferguson.

25. Merchant Shipping Act (Reports) 1920 Vol. XXI, Section 247.
Constitution of the District Maritime Boards was:
Mayor or Provost and Stipendiary Magistrate.
4 members appointed by the BOT from local inhabitants within seven miles, and 6 members elected by shipowners every three years.
Merchant Shipping Act Section 244 7th Schedule 1920 Amendment.

26. A modern definition of Lascar is "seaman from islands south-east of India." (The Oxford Guide to the English Language). However, in 1922 it was stated (Hansard Mar 7, 151-1100) that "Lascars include Asiatics and East Africans whether British subjects or foreigners employed on vessels trading between India and this country, or entirely in Asiatic or Australian waters and serving under agreements which terminate in Asia." The Under Secretary of State for India, was later asked about the usage of the word. "The term 'lascar' is being used indiscriminately to mean all Indians earning a living at sea, and unless corrected publicly will cause injustice to a large class of Indians, including Goanese. It should mean only coastal seafaring people of India who have always been reliable and efficient seamen." The reply indicated that the term had come to mean any Indian on board "because the distinction has been obscured between the hereditary class of seamen proper, and firemen and attendants on passengers." At the same time it was pointed out that the term had never been legally defined. (Hansard July 31, 1922 157-1025).
27. Merchant Shipping Act 1920 Vol. XXI, Section 247, paragraph 125.
28. Oral evidence of H.C. Stevens.
29. Merchant Shipping Act 1920 Vol.XXI. Report on the work of the National Maritime Board. Appendix III.
30. Hampshire Independent, July 24, 1920. Many of the deserters were stewards who worked a one-way passage to try their luck in the new world and enjoy the prosperity of the big city hotels. Another lucrative job in America was the construction of sky-scrapers, work which appealed to seamen with good heads for heights.
31. Southampton Times, January 21, 1921.
32. Hansard, June 12, 1923 165-227, July 17, 1923 166-2021.
33. Hampshire Independent, July 24, 1920.
34. Southampton Times, July 14, 1923.
35. Southampton Times, August 11, 1923.
36. Southampton Times, June 23, July 14, August 18, 1923; Times July 18 and 23, 1923; Hansard June 12, 1923 165-227 and June 17, 1923 166-2021.
37. Times, July 23, 1923.
38. Southampton Times, July 21, 1923.
39. National Maritime Board Minutes, Vol. X 1925. NSFU and Catering Panels. January 16, 1925. MRC ref: MSS 175/6/NMB/4/22).
40. The union indulged in strike-breaking while still the NSFU. It became unnecessary after 1926.
41. Southampton Times, July 12, 1922.
42. Oral History Project. Southampton City Museums. Researchers- Carl Major and Philip Ferguson.

43. Southampton PSA Annual Report 1919. The definition of the Authority's jurisdiction was printed each year, together with details of its boundaries, which were extended in 1935.
44. Southampton PSA Annual Report 1938. Southampton City Record Office ref: SC/HI/31-60).
45. Southampton PSA Annual Report 1929.
46. Southampton PSA Annual Report 1936.
47. Sea-going Plumbers and Ships' Plumbing, papers prepared by the United Operative Plumbers' Association Assistant General Secretary and handed to the Board of Trade during September 1921. EETPU Archives, Plumbers Section, Hayes, Kent.
48. The highest number of defects recorded was 16 in 1912 (3.29 per cent), then 10 in 1920 (4.6 per cent) and 8 in 1929 (1.1 per cent). Other years recorded 0-4 defects.
49. Marine Worker, August 1922.
50. Marine Worker, November 1922. It is doubtful if the writer had any substantive evidence of his final claim.
51. Hansard, July 18, 1923 166-2447.
52. Hampshire Independent, March 29,1920.
53. Hansard, July 18, 1923 166-2447.
54. Instructions as to the Survey of Masters' and Crew Spaces 1923, issued by the BOT. PRO: MT9/2709/M14998/30.
55. Southampton PSA Annual Reports.
56. Departmental Paper No. 492. Accommodation of Crews on British Ships, Mercantile Marine Department, BOT, 1928. PRO: MT9/2759/M10977/29.
57. G. Musk, Canadian Pacific, David and Charles, Newton Abbott. 1981 p.38 Oral evidence of John J. Shaw, assistant butcher on the Empress class liners of Canadian Pacific, who also described the overcrowded and unpleasant glory hole conditions and fo'c'sle accommodation on the White Star liners, on which he also sailed. Oral evidence of unsatisfactory conditions was also given by C. Croucher, Southampton Area Official, EETPU, Plumbers' Section, and Commander James Brown R.N. (Retired). Although a naval officer he was familiar with many of the ships in the mercantile marine between the wars.
58. Report by Newport Medical Officer of Health. PRO: MT9/2709/M14998/30.
59. SEF Minutes, April 26, 1935. NMM, Woolwich Arsenal.
60. File on Crew Space. PRO: MT9/2851/M6293/1938.
61. SEF Minutes, April 26, 1935. NMM, Woolwich Arsenal.
62. Southampton PSA Annual Report 1936.
63. Crew Space file. PRO: MT9/2851/M6293/1938.
64. NMB - Consideration of Statutory Effect to Voluntary Agreements. PRO: MT9/2960/M14794/1938.

65. Letter dated March 2, 1938. PRO: MT9/2851/M6293/1938.
66. Shipping Federation Conditions of Service. PRO: MT9/2912/M10346/38.
67. ibid.
68. Medical Officer of Health of the County Borough of Southampton, Annual Reports, 1912-1939. Southampton City Record Office.
69. Hansard, July 26, 1938.
70. P. Ford, op. cit. pp.121-128. The Southampton Times suggested some children went to school early because it was warmer than at home, December 27, 1924.
71. The BOT Victualling Scale dated from 1906 and it was not revised until 1940, when the nutritional value of food and levels of vitamins and protein were improved. Between the wars the scale was not strictly adhered to, and it was thought to be of a higher standard on most Southampton ships.
72. G. Musk, op. cit. p.38
73. SEF Minutes, July 26, 1918. NMM, Woolwich Arsenal.
74. SEF Minutes, November 22, 1918. The National Federation of General workers were not signatories to the Agreement because of friction between unions at that time over dilutees, the non-indentured workers who became machine operators to avert a wartime labour shortage.
75. SEF file on Uniformity of Rules. NMM ref: 3857 al. Woolwich.
76. Hampshire Advertiser, December 23, 1926.
77. G. Musk, op.cit. p.38
78. Marine Worker, July 1922.
79. ibid.
80. Alan Bullock, op.cit. p.578.
81. Alan Bullock, op.cit. p.117.
82. Hampshire Independent, November 4, 1911.
83. TGWU Docks Trade Group Committee Minutes, April 25/26, 1923. TGWU Library, Transport House.
84. Hampshire Advertiser, August 7, 1926.
85. One example was a presentation made to a man who dived 70 ft. from the Aquitania to rescue a colleague, and with a touch of irony Councillor Blanchard (local painters' delegate), making the presentation, said he hoped that when the man acquired a job the gold watch would keep him on time. Hampshire Advertiser, October 29, 1932.
86. The Engineering and Allied Employers National Federation and the National Federation of Iron and Steel Manufacturing had also put forward proposals, and the SEF was willing to associate with these organisations.

87. SEF Safety file. Report of Conference and Works Board, June 11, 1928. NMM ref: 3785a, Woolwich Arsenal.
88. SEF Safety file, December 24, 1930. NMM. Woolwich.
89. TGWU Docks Trade Group Minutes, October 14, 1927. TGWU Library, Transport House.
90. PEA Minutes, December 14, 1937.
91. TGWU complaints about the handling of hides and skins were made by the Southampton delegate at Docks Trade Group Committee meetings. Suggestions were made for the prevention of the disease, such as washing after handling and avoiding contact with broken skin. The most useful suggestion was that hides should be disinfected in the port of origin. Cases of the disease did occur from time to time, but they were not numerous.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASUAL LABOUR AND THE DECASUALISATION QUESTION

Although there were some areas of work in which men were permanent, weekly paid employees, permanency was not the most notable feature of employment in the port industries. Clerical staff of the shipping lines, shipbuilders and dock authorities were permanent, as were some ancillary grades in the docks, for example, cranedrivers and checkers, but even ships' officers, who enjoyed the greatest security of the seafaring occupations, were liable to find themselves redundant if their ships were taken out of commission. Permanent dock work was provided by the larger Dock Authorities to a small percentage of their labourers, and some skilled shipyard workers also had a reasonable degree of permanency. However, the majority of the vast body of labour employed in cargo handling, shipbuilding and repair, and those who signed on as ships' crews, were subject to regular re-engagement as described in Chapter Four.

It was generally understood that dockworkers were employed as casuals, a fact which produced a dual response. On the one hand there was sympathy for a class of labour which, through no fault of its own, was unable to obtain full employment and which was, therefore, destined to suffer the hardships which were inherent in such an unsatisfactory system; and on the other hand dockworkers were regarded as deliberate idlers and shirkers who cultivated irregular habits for their own convenience. In fact, casual workers did not always suffer hardships. As Noel Whiteside points out, skilled or specialist dockworkers had developed work patterns of alternate labour and liberty partly because the strenuous effort of their work needed to be balanced by a period of rest, and partly because the majority of experienced dockers rarely worked for more than one employer, and their labour was not required all the time.[1]

Seamen were not in precisely the same situation, even though they could choose whether to go to sea or stay ashore. They were not casually employed in the true sense, because they had a signed contract of employment, but the insecurity of their jobs was none the less real. Re-engagement at the termination of a voyage depended on the continuation of the sailing schedule. Even passenger liner crews, normally on 'running agreements', were obliged to seek new engagements in the event of sailing cancellations or interruptions to normal schedules, particularly during the 1930s when falling passenger numbers reduced manning levels on board. Cargo ship crews often had to compete with coloured labour employed at cheaper rates, which made British seamen less attractive to freighter lines

desperately searching for cargoes and ways to cut costs.

Shipbuilding workers, as observed in the previous chapter, were usually employed for long runs of work. It was the ship-repair workers who were in a more precarious position, being prone to short-duration jobs which were extremely variable from ship to ship and week to week. The only common factor was the speed at which work had to be carried out to enable ships to meet sailing schedules. This encouraged a pattern of employment which was concentrated into two or three days per week, involving overtime for a number of reliable and specially skilled craftsmen, punctuated by frequent unemployment. Above all, it meant that employers required a pool of labour for spasmodic employment which, at the same time, would not be a drain on their resources when work was scarce. The engagement procedure was a little different from the dockers', but the work pattern in many instances was similar. These characteristics of irregularity were prominent components of Southampton shipyard labour, where more than half the work force was involved in ship-repair. There was an elite corps of workers who found regular employment, but the less fortunate sought daily engagement in much the same manner as dock-workers, with little assurance of being engaged (except in the busy season), and equally little assurance that their employment, if obtained, would last a whole day. Shipyard casualism, however, was not treated to the public concern shown to dockworkers, nor was it made the subject of government enquiries.

Consideration had been given to decasualisation of labour before the war, particularly by William Beveridge who had suggested introducing government control by manipulation of the Labour Exchange system. "Casual labour was expensive, unreliable...a threat to industrial productivity and, therefore, to national prosperity,"[2] and dock labour was an extreme form of casualism with a huge labour force involved. It was the docks which attracted the most attention.

Dock labour presented a continuous problem, regardless of the size of the surplus. Shipbuilding, on the other hand, shared its craftsmen with other fields of industry, and although workers did not regularly inter-change industries, it was possible for shipyard workers to seek employment in engineering, house building or municipal public works. The opportunities open to them created a more diverse and flexible work situation than the dockers'. The management of a labour force which exceeded even the maximum requirement of a fluctuating demand presented an administrative and financial complexity which had been eased during the war only by the loss of labour to the armed services and mercantile marine, and by the reduction of trade. After the war when dockers returned to their

former occupation and 'war service' hands tended to remain in their new occupation, labour out-stripped trade and re-newed the surplus labour problem which had been severe before the war and was still not solved by the second world war. The state evaded its responsibility towards these workers which put the onus onto employers to eliminate casualism by self-determination. That was as unwelcome to employers as state intervention, so the solution did not lie in voluntary effort.

Employers argued that "permanent labour was inherently less productive than casual by virtue of its greater security."[3] Some employers also believed that because casualism deterred efficient union organisation it prevented unions obtaining the intrinsic power of the closed shop, thereby providing less opportunity to strengthen union structure and keeping militancy at a low level. Some of the more influential employers, including the majority of Southampton's PEA, realised that weak unions were not conducive to increased productivity if weakness allowed groups of dissatisfied workers to take independent action in support of their demands. They came to favour the theory that a union strong enough to control its members was necessary to maintain stable relations, even if this meant giving greater bargaining power to the union. The degree of power which Southampton PEA was willing to accord fell short of agreeing that unions could control the engagement of labour, although they were obliged to concede to the union's participation in tally revisions and to a small proportion of tallies being distributed by branch officials.

Due to Ernest Bevin's persistence and later to the Treasury's concern over port labour's increasing share of the nation's unemployment insurance benefit, casual labour was subjected to official, as well as union, study between the wars. The remainder of this chapter is, therefore, devoted to an examination of some aspects of casualism in the docks, with particular reference to Southampton, and consideration of some of the main decasualisation proposals put forward.

The first point to consider is why employers and employees alike wished to perpetuate a system which was inefficient in its use of labour, and which could be brutish in its treatment of men. In fact, violent behaviour was not a thing of the past. The evidence of those who experienced unseemly conduct at the call stands between the wars and even afterwards, testifies to the need for change.[4] Moreover, casualism left the way open to corruption. Unadulterated bribery as a means of obtaining employment waned after the war, but the influence over foremen of relatives and shared neighbourhoods and interests, for example, often took precedence

when recommending men for registration, and perhaps even over useful qualities gained in previous experience.

Wherever there was a casual labour market surplus labour existed. As well as the regular men of the industry there were those who were unable to obtain employment elsewhere. These turned to the casual market in the hope of obtaining at least an occasional day's work. Southampton, like other ports, kept surplus pools of labour because each employer retained a list of men adequate, or nearly so, for his own busy period. Regardless of the type of shipping passing through the port, labour requirements were not the same from day to day, or even from hour to hour, and as labour requirements were known to vary there was always a need for spare labour and always the chance that work might be available. Goods in ships' holds did not all require the same amount of handling; for example, grain bushelling in Southampton allowed one man per gang extra so that a rest period could be taken, but despite this, the job was labour intensive and slow. Discharging fruit boxes by conveyor belt (an innovation during the 1930s which often involved piecework) was faster than discharging the same produce in slings to a trucker (a quayside worker with a hand truck), a method still used simultaneously with modern mechanization. In some of the large holds on Union Castle's liners more than one gang could work at the same time; on other ships there was only space for one gang. The number of quayside men required depended upon the type of goods being handled and the speed with which they were brought out of the ship. Timber, coal, meat and other cold store goods were specialists' cargoes, but specialist labour was not necessarily required on every ship. Sometimes a company had more than one ship in port at the same time; Union Castle frequently had two mail liners (one inward and one outward) working at the same time, as well as one of their intermediate ships - liners not carrying mail and sailing between the mail contract schedules; at other times there was only one Union Castle line ship in port. A similar situation of uncertainty existed with the Southern Railway Company's cross-channel and Channel Island routes. During the winter months permanent gangs only needed to be strengthened by preference men on the busy nights of the three sailings each week, but night arrivals and perishable cargoes, requiring same day despatch, often provided overtime work. In the summer, with daily sailings and the increase in seasonal produce, 1,000 extra quaymen and some 250-300 stevedores were required per day, thus establishing an under-employed pool to work the short sea or home trade routes.[5]

Port employers argued that they were justified in registering as dock-workers sufficient men of the right type to meet peak requirements. The

implication was that unless they allowed for peak periods labour shortages could occur, involving them in wasted time and greater expense. In fact, at the twenty six major ports investigated by the MOL between 1924 and 1937 there were always more men at the calls than could be engaged, yet despite this, shortages occurred. The cause can be found in the multiple call stand system and poor communications in ports, rather than in the overall number of men in attendance. Only by operating a casual system was the degree of flexibility required by employers possible, emphasised by the dockworker's own reluctance to change his habits; employers were not willing to pay for labour they were unable to use on a half daily basis, but which they wanted to be available when needed.

Dockworkers were opposed to interference with the established routine of casualism. The irregular work habit criticised by opponents of the casual system was seen by them as a regular pattern of 'work-no work' which suited many, and which was similar to the regularly, but not wholly, employed ship-repair craftsmen. In any case, dockers were suspicious of change, and those whom the system suited were loath to lose the independence it gave them - that independence called by the Shaw Report "the liberty to do nothing which they have come to prize."[6] Furthermore, they resented the prospect of increased mobility within the port. It was customary for men to work for one employer and remain unemployed when not required by him, which meant they were always available when needed by their usual employer. It was also customary for specialists to remain idle until their own skills (paid at enhanced rates) were called for. Inter-changeability, or worker mobility, was likely to become a standard requirement of engagement if the surplus pool was no longer at hand to take the dirty and unpleasant cargoes which many refused to touch. In any case, it could not be overlooked that not all jobs were interchangeable because of the experience and skill required to handle certain commodities.

Some ships could provide a run of several full days' work with over-time required; other jobs were only for a day or even half a day. By accepting a short job to finish off a ship meant the possibility of losing the chance of a long run, or working on general cargo could result in loss of earnings if it meant giving up another cargo which paid enhanced rates. It was this freedom to choose when to work and when not to work which was the independence dockers did not want to see jeopardised by registration books, central call stands, or a decasualisation scheme which they did not fully understand. "The casual habit is preferred by those who have not known anything else," wrote G.H. Ince of the MOL Industrial Relations Department,[7] and this preference caused Bevin to complain on more than one occasion that he had to fight hostility from his own side as well as from

management.

Employers were not, therefore, being pressed by dockworkers to hasten the end of the system which had come to be regarded by many outside the docks as iniquitous. Even the casual fringe in Southampton, those at the tail end of the register, or not on the register at all, were opposed to decasualisation, because they believed it would prevent them from being given the opportunity to seek work in the docks and qualify for unemployment benefit when work was not available. Those who thought change was for the good had in mind their own particular view of improvement. Unfortunately each party favoured a different proposal, unacceptable to the others. The Ministry of Labour was in the best position to take the initiative, but they were restrained by the probability of the industry encountering adverse affects from the volatile body of dockers, if they were aroused by unfavourable action.

The Immediate Post-war Situation

Noel Whiteside indicates that by 1919 the MOL had lost the conviction that the management of labour and decasualisation were subjects for legislative involvement.[8] Nevertheless, some members dealing with Employment Exchange affairs had not relinquished the idea of bringing about decasualisation. The Southwestern Divisional Controller of Employment Exchanges complained that he and his colleagues were merely collecting the expenses "and have nothing else to show how this port labour business benefits the department." He was duly informed "we are committed to a policy of decasualising dock work as part of the work of the department, and we must presumably develop it like any other branch of the department's work."[9]

Co-inciding with the evident interest of some civil servants was Ernest Bevin's determination to make a major issue of casualism at the Enquiry into Wages, Rates and Conditions of Men Employed in Docks and Waterside Labour in 1920.[10] This Enquiry was the result of NTWF activity to increase wages and establish collective bargaining for the industry. The ten proposals put forward by the Federation concerned a new arrangement for a national minimum daily wage, together with hours and overtime claims, but there was no mention of decasualising the labour force. It soon became apparent, however, that it was Bevin's intention to include the subject, and whether his aim in doing so was to achieve 100 per cent union organisation, or whether he had in mind the benefit of all dockers, so convincing was he in his arguments that by the end of the Enquiry he had aroused wider interest

in the idea.

War conditions, which introduced temporary registration, also reduced the labour surplus, one of the main obstructions to enroling a regular and permanent workforce, and by 1918 the situation prevailing was at its most favourable for decisive action, possibly entailing a degree of legislation. It was, of course, necessary for registers to be retained to prevent non-tallyholders from swamping the market and allowing the surplus to be re-admitted to the industry in post-war conditions.

During the war the NTWF had wanted all dockers to be registered and partake of the benefits of regular work and pay. Employers were sceptical both during and after the war that the Federation's ideas would bring them any benefit in the form of increased productivity, and they also doubted their ability to pay even for minimum labour requirements if wage advances and cargo bonus payments continued to be awarded. As it happened, neither employers nor unions favoured compulsory registration and without the support of the industry the Minister of Labour declined to act. The men, as we have seen, were not in favour of any interference with the way their lives were ordered, and the advantages gained during the war therefore faded and were lost.

The MOL had seen post-war registration as a means of limiting the number of dockworkers who could obtain work in the industry, but neither registration nor port labour committees could prevent men who were unlikely to find work from joining the crowds at call stands, nor could they prevent employers engaging non-registered men if they so chose. These shortcomings in the system were liable to persist while casualism existed.

Southampton PEA were unequivocal in their insistence that to place full responsibility upon the industry for its labour was totally unacceptable. The fluctuation of peak and slack demands, and the difficulty of forecasting labour requirements were obstacles to the suitability of a permanent labour force. It was also the PEA's opinion that since the docks' industry benefited so many other industries it should not be solely responsible for maintaining its under- and unemployed.

Southampton's registration scheme continued after the war under the control of the PLC, and although the register certainly increased beyond requirements, the number of labourers obtaining tallies was fewer than the total employed before the war.[11] William Paul, who was Distict Secretary of the DWRGWU at the time, not only used his influence to secure tallies for his members, but evidently also obtained work for them at the expense of the NUGW. The District Organiser of the latter union claimed his men were asked to show their union cards as well as their tallies when reporting for work, and if they were NUGW members they were not offered work. A

complaint was made to the PLC and E.P.C. Lascelles of the MOL found evidence of union rivalry in Southampton which he sent a Ministry representative to investigate. His final decision was that there was "no systematic opposition by Dockers' Union to NUGW men being employed."[12] It appears that local dockers objected to a certain man who, having already belonged to other unions, had fallen into arrears with his contributions to the DWRGWU and refused to pay his debt. He had inflamed the situation by joining the NUGW and complaining to the local press that of the 3,000 odd tallyholders in Southampton only 12 were members of the NUGW.[13] Lascelles' concern over the affair was prompted by its reflection on registration in the port. He was satisfied, however, that "we can clearly show that any action taken by the dockers against the National Union has nothing to do with our Dock Scheme and that the machinery of the Dock Scheme is not being used for such action."[14]

Lascelles may have believed that to be the case, but registration did provide an opportunity for discrimination against a minority section and, except where non-tallyholders were employed, NUGW members seem to have been excluded.[15]

Southampton did not escape the congestion which occurred in ports during the boom period after the war, but the build up of goods on quaysides and warehouses came a little later than elsewhere. The reason for the delay was the slow start to commercial shipping and the Admiralty presence in the port which helped to keep congestion to a minimum. Land transport and communications were not necessarily better than in other ports, but fewer goods were brought to the port, and as ships were not trapped in tidal basins there was scope for movement in and out of Southampton Water.

To deal with the increased work load brought about by the need to clear held-up cargoes, and because dockers were not in the habit of working a full week, it was necessary to engage more men and issue more tallies for them to enable employers to meet demands out of the total number of registered men. Even so, some non-tallyholders were still engaged by the Railway Company while registered men were left unemployed.

War time development of the dock labour system was benficial and the benefits were carried into succeeding years. Registration was a distinct improvement, and despite the over-large registers it checked a number of former ills. However, it was not, by itself, the formula for casual labour reform.

Some Decasualisation Efforts from 1920

The Shaw Enquiry opened on February 3, 1920 with an equal number of employers and representatives of the NTWF (See Appendix 10). Bevin, for the Federation, put a great deal of effort into his preparations, and his presentation of the workers' case earned him not only the title of Dockers' K.C., but also the respect of Lord Shaw and Sir Lynden Macassey,[16] the employers' K.C. The latter may not have been over-familiar with dock labour, but he had been Director of Shipyard Labour, an Admiralty appointment, during the war, and as such had been made aware of the difficulties which could arise in an industry when exposed to workers' opposition. Sir Lynden was not given the same opportunity as Bevin to prepare his case. He was not engaged until the beginning of January, and it was mid-January before his questionnaires were sent out to the ports.[17] Senior members of the employers' side (representatives of the larger shipping organisations) were keen to avoid examination of financial aspects of their business at the Enquiry and made their wishes known to their K.C. Nevertheless, Bevin had done his homework on the subject and company profits were given a good airing.

The union side's request for 16s. per day to be paid to dockers raised a number of complicated arguments and counter-arguments which stretched beyond the question of wages. Much was made of the fact that dockers could seldom expect a full week's work, but contradictory claims were also made that accidents, sickness and death were due to the long hours of work undertaken, as well as being due to under-nourishment. The Southampton witness for the Dockers' Union, Bill Paul, explained to the Court that men who obtained work "stayed on the job until it was finished...if they went to sleep they might not be engaged on that ship again."[18] This was, in fact, the way many dockers liked to work.

The employers argued, as already mentioned, that the increased wage was too great a burden on the industry, that it would increase the cost of living when it was passed on to consumers, as it inevitably would be, and also that the standard minimum rate claimed was only "the base of a superstructure of differentials,[19] which had not shown any signs of diminishing with regard to extra payments and special tariffs, even if the tendency since 1914 had been towards levelling wage rates. Employers' arguments were also contradictory here and displayed their parochial attitude, because although they deprecated port differentials, they claimed that standardisation of wages was inappropriate due to the different circumstances in different ports.

Bevin set out to demonstrate that under-employment was a cause of

poverty, and he also hoped to show that casualism (a cause of under-employment) was an unfair and unnecessary system. His arguments were based on two points. The first was that dockers should not be regarded as the dregs of humanity, and the second was that employers could afford to pay a maintenance wage to registered dockers when they were not employed.

Since the 19th century dockers had come to be regarded as a labouring class made up largely of men who could not obtain work elsewhere. No references were needed to work in the docks and the occupation was known as the dumping grounds of the unemployed.[20] The plight of society's needy had been publicised by Henry Mayhew in his social survey London Labour and the London Poor, 1851-62, passages of which were reproduced in the Hampshire Independent to remind readers of the indignities of casual labour.[21] Bevin was eloquent in his endeavour to eradicate the impression created by Mayhew and he stressed the dockworkers' cultural aspirations.

Bevin's second point was his firm belief that employers could not only afford to pay higher wages, but that they could also afford to pay maintenance to the under-employed and provide weekly wages to all the men on their registers, given the financial assistance of port levies on goods and passengers. Employers and the Treasury found a number of drawbacks to the levy idea, and the cost of such a scheme, if implemented, was likely to be much greater than suggested by Bevin. The burden would be placed entirely on the industry under a scheme which provided for the unemployed out of its own funds. This would mean increasing unemployment as trade contracted, so that costs would go up as revenue fell. The maintenance proposal was outside the scope of the Enquiry and the employers did not look favourably upon it. The chairman, on the other hand, showed much interest in the arguments.

The Report of the Enquiry was sympathetic towards dockworkers, and although the recommendations did not cover all Bevin's ideas, they gave a consideration to the workforce which it had not received before. It clearly defined the better standard of living to which dockworkers were entitled as "a right to have life ordered upon a higher standard, with full regard to those comforts and decencies which are promotive of better habits, which give a chance for the development of a greater sense of self-respect, and which betoken a higher regard for the place occupied by these workers in the scheme of citizenship."[23] It was indicative of the belief that dockers' social behaviour could be improved by giving them a high standard of living. The Report also dwelt on the problem of casualism which had brought the majority to agree that "casual dock

labour...was entitled to claim a substantially higher rate of wages than regular labour,"[24] despite some of its labourers being employed regularly. Contrary to the opinion of management the Report stated that "the time has come when the industry out of which payment of wages will come must also bear a charge in respect of maintenance of unemployed casuals,"[25] because "labour frequently or constantly under-employed is injurious to the interests of workers, the ports and the public, and it is discreditable to society."[26]

The recommendations of the Shaw Report were:

1. 16s. per day for a 44 hour week. [The week was divided into eleven shifts of four hours].
2. Registration to be introduced as the first step towards maintenance.
3. The maintenance principle was approved.
4. Wages to be paid weekly at the earliest date.
5. A Joint Industrial Council to be set up, with similar joint negotiating committees.
6. That these bodies, failing agreement by both parties, settle incidental matters.

Southampton employers' reaction to the recommendations were predictable. They regarded the payment of 16s. per day as "an economic impossibility and unwarranted" and its effect on "more skilled labour in every industry would be disastrous to the welfare of the country."[27] In their opinion local port variations made a national settlement of wages impracticable, despite their earlier belief that an overtime rate disagreement with the local union official could only be settled by putting overtime on a national basis.[28] They thought maintenance was covered by unemployment insurance and the workers' own benefit fund. They did not object to registration, providing it did not interfere with their right to choose their own employees, and they actually favoured the weekly payment of wages, with the proviso that the computation of money due must remain on the half daily basis.[29]

Sir Joseph Broodbank and Frederick Scrutton presented a Minority Report, the tone of which was closer to the attitudes of employers represented by the NCPLE than the more generous inclination of the Shaw Report, and certainly more in keeping with the feelings of Southampton PEA. However, providing there was increased port mobility of the workers, even the Minority Report approved the recommendation for maintenance.

The National Joint Council for Dock Labour was set up eventually according to the Court's recommendations, which intended that it should be responsible for dealing with the maintenance issue. However, from the

outset the National Joint Council for Dock Labour's meetings were concerned with individual port queries, rather than matters of national significance,[30] and Bevin later claimed that at the first meeting the employers had dismissed the maintenance question.[31] In fact, employers were very reluctant to carry out matters left over from the Shaw Enquiry. Sir Alfred Booth of Cunard wrote to the General Manager of White Star who was acting chairman of the NCPLE, suggesting that as it was already long past the end of the enquiry "we must show willing if our bona fides are not to be suspected, and Bevin's proposals are much easier to criticise than be driven to preparing one's own."[32] Although the Joint Council was brought into being the employers erroneously considered it to be a negotiating committee of their own National Council of Port Labour Employers, instead of a separate joint negotiating body.[33]

As the dust settled on the Shaw Report registration schemes deteriorated and port labour committees became ineffective. There was no marked improvement in output, time-keeping or labour relations, and the NJCDL recorded the apparent lack of effort on the part of workers at the major ports.[34] The situation in Southampton was similar to other ports and even the union reported that "in Southampton registration is very lax - it has not been enforced for a long time."[35]

The failure to capitalise on the wartime gains in controlling labour was at least partly due to the government's inertia. In fact, the state became increasingly reluctant to take effective action and Phillips and Whiteside suggest that the "absence of planning, administrative co-ordination and sustained purpose" were as much to blame as concern over the cost of new dock schemes and the level of public expenditure.[36]

Following the onset of the slump in 1921 wage reductions that year and in 1922 did not help industrial relations. "Discontent remained unsatisfied, and the employers had not bought industrial peace with their enormous expenditure on increased wages [in 1920]. So long as the casual system continued, employers might expect the same unrest, the same broken agreements, and the same ca'canny and bad time-keeping that had caused losses in the past..." As employers had suspected differentials remained, being hotly defended by union officials, "and the Transport Workers' Federation cannot give effect to its agreements."[37]

Liverpool had the best developed registration scheme in 1922 according to the MOL, but it carried a very large surplus of under- and unemployed. Early post war registration in Bristol still operated the inefficient war-time registration scheme with a large surplus. Furthermore, "a serious fault in the system was that men registering for dockwork were obtaining employment in the shipbuilding yards, etc."[38] Fraudulent mis-use of tallies was also reported, although dockers probably did not

regard it as fraudulent to pass unwanted tallies to relatives, or use lost tallies they were lucky enough to find.

Hull had also operated a wartime registration scheme administered by a port labour committee, but it was "ineffective even as a means of preventing further casuals."[39] Eventually employers and non-union men broke up the scheme, saying it was an interference with liberty.[40] The non-union element were the lightermen who split from the TGWU in an unofficial dock strike in the summer of 1923. When London and Hull lightermen rebelled against the TGWU, led by communist influenced agitators trying to overthrow moderate socialists, Bevin was unable to control them. This unofficial strike prompted D. Ross Johnson, General Manager of Bristol Docks, to suggest that the only way to prevent trouble from the "submerged fringe" of unemployed was to give them something to lose if they broke their agreements, and he advocated the adoption of the maintenance recommendations in the Shaw Report.[41] Bevin had earlier recommended that "a kind of status" for dockers should be established through registration in order to make men aware that if they lost their positions through misdemeanours they were "really losing something."[42] Registration had clearly not provided either the status or the belief that there was anything to lose and Ross Johnson had in mind a material loss, rather than a mere abstract relation. He did not define at this point how he thought a maintenance scheme should be constructed.

A national dock strike in February 1924 sparked renewed interest in maintenance, and as part of the strike settlement dockers were granted a further investigation into casualism. This time under the chairmanship of Sir Donald Maclean.[43] The Maclean Committee was to examine and report on the port transport industry, and in its interim report of July 1924 comment was made of the lack of information available due to the failure of port registration committees (PRC) to keep records. It was also realised that the cost of maintenance could not be determined without knowing the number of men "normally and regularly seeking a livelihood at Docks."[44]

The Maclean Committee recommended [45]

a) that registration schemes should be made operative in all ports.

b) that the Trade Union was the best organisation to determine initially who should qualify.

c) that it should be made clear that initial registration did not confer permanent rights.

d) that registers should be constantly reviewed and only include regular port workers.

e) that the registration scheme should be subject to review in the light of experience.

In order to encourage the adoption and effective administration of registration schemes the MOL agreed to the provision of secretarial and clerical work for record-keeping, registration cards or books and stationery, and the use of premises for PRC meetings to be made available to ports whose PRC constitutions received Ministry approval. The necessary funds were to be provided by the Treasury.[46]

The MOL monitored progress in the industry and the Maclean Committee continued to meet, but it had insufficient power to influence either side and the recommendations of its Interim Report were largely disregarded. In 1924 Lascelles and Bullock wrote of "a feeling of hopeless disillusionment." After fifty years of agitation by parties connected and unconnected with the docks "the casual system continued unashamed; want, uncertainty and demoralisation remain the normal incidents of dock life; and the crowd of hungry, anxious faces still waited round the calling-on stand."[47]

The appointment of the first Labour Government co-incided with a short respite in the trade recession, but it did not bring about the promised social reforms. It may, however, have been instrumental in enabling the TGWU to conclude the national strike with some financial benefits for those who were actually employed in docks. It did not, any more than its predecessor had, move nearer to solving the long-term problems of all workers registered in the industry when they were unemployed. Apart, that is, from the benefit of unemployment relief.

Civil servants at the MOL directed their efforts towards reducing the number of registered men as this was thought to be the biggest stumbling block to finding a workable solution, but despite persistent unemployment, Southampton's employers did not consider their tally-holders to exceed requirements. Paradoxically, the over-large register was a standard argument against maintenance, but the PEA was not afraid of contradiction when it was to its own advantage. The MOL was aware that employers "had little if anything to gain by reducing the pool of available labour,"[48] and that they had "no direct inducement to further the scheme,"[49] but the MOL actually accused Southampton PRC of not restricting tallies to men "who got a fair share of work" and of "not taking any steps towards decasualisation."[50] Nevertheless, the whole period between the wars saw a gradual reduction in men and a growing difficulty for workers in other trades to get into the docks, except at those times when excess labour was required over and above normal requirements - or during seasonal peaks. This change began soon after the war and registration and employers' attitudes towards engagement procedures, together with better union organisation had much to do with it.

One of Southampton's failings was its poor record-keeping and the Maclean Committee suggested the port should adopt a system similar to Bristol's which used employment record books.[51] The PEA ignored the invitation to change their system, and at the start of the second world war Southampton, Liverpool and Garston were still using brass tallies - the only ports which had not changed to employment books.[52]

Another way in which it was hoped surplus registered men could be reduced was by eliminating the multi-call stand method of engagement, which encouraged the creation of individual surplus pools. The central stand could either be used for the purpose of engaging labour for the whole port, or a clearly defined area of the port, or it could be used as a mustering point for those remaining unemployed at the end of the call. This then put the surplus at the disposal of any employer who still needed men. The Maclean Committee found that "lack of sytstem and co-ordination in calling on was a material factor in the continuation of casual labour."[53] It was this lack of system which allowed unregistered labour to be engaged when registered men were still available, even where employers were abiding by general registration procedures. "It was admitted by those conversant with the problems of the industry that the central call stand was the most effective method of ensuring that unregistered labour was not taken on,"[54] because if there were only one stand everybody could be in the right place at the right time.

The use of a single call stand had been discussed and tried briefly by Southampton port labour committee in March 1919, but after a trial period it was abandoned because lack of co-ordination resulted in confusion.[55] No definite arrangement was made to locate surplus labour in Southampton until a shortage occurred in December 1928 when White Star unexpectedly had an extra ship to handle. From then on when foremen needed to draw on surplus labour their time-keepers telephoned other companies to ascertain where labour could be obtained. Such an unsophisticated arrangement was only successful because there were so few shortages, and so few men involved.

Leslie Bullock, the secretary of the Maclean Committee, referred to Southampton as a "rather special case." As already observed it was a major port in national trading terms, but as so much of its business was in passengers, its dock labour force was small and handled large quantities of baggage and mail, with smaller quantities of freight per ship than the other leading ports. Its small number of employers was also a significant difference regarding the management of labour, particularly as much of it was engaged by just one employer. Another factor which may have made the port special to the MOL was that the

secretary of the PRC was also the Employment Exchange manager. Bullock was surprised that this officer did not persuade employers to the Minister's way of thinking, because he considered that Southampton should "make a better showing in the regulation of its labour supply," particularly by the implementation of central calling on.[56] However, after a meeting with William Nelson on July 27, 1931 he commented that Nelson and Gillott, the Exchange manager, had adopted an attitude which proclaimed that the Southampton port labour scheme was so good no useful purpose would be served by changing it. "I do not subscribe to this view," wrote Bullock, "but it is quite clear that we shall have some difficulty in getting employers at Southampton to bring their methods into line with other ports."[57]

Bullock's opinion that Southampton employers were diffcult was not without foundation,[58] but he was not being fair to the port when he suggested that it was not in line with other ports in introducing central call stands. Out of 29 principal ports fourteen had individual call stands and fourteen had either central or surplus stands.

Table 16. Methods of Engaging and Distributing Labour in 1930

Central or Surplus Stands	Individual Stands or Shipsides
Ardrossan	Ayr (intending to change)
Barrow (2)	Cardiff
Barry	Fowey
Bristol	Goole
Dundee	Greenock
Garston	Hull
Manchester	Leith
Newport	Liverpool (1 or 2 central)
Port Talbot	London
Preston (2)	Middlesborough
Swansea	Southampton
Weymouth	Plymouth
Workington (Cumberland Ports)	Gloucester and Sharpness

Source: PRO: LAB 8 204 10 ED/121/1959

Southampton trade union officials supported central engagement. They declared that it could eliminate the engagement of unregistered men, and that there was less chance of a foreman being left with quaymen when he needed stevedores. A central stand with Employment Exchange facilities could also solve the problem faced by those whose tallies were

on the Southern Railway Company's list. At the time of the arrears investigation in 1922, which had dislodged Bill Paul as district secretary, union officials from Head Office had recommended "a strong and determined move to secure a central calling on stand for all shipping company and railway men hired,"[59] and the idea had been approved by those who subsequently became the branch leaders. Unfortunately, the same measure of enthusiasm was not found among the rank and file members or non-union dockers.

The main argument of the Southampton employers against central engagement was the time wasted in getting men to their ships to start work, but they were also worried by the non-availability of suitable premises to use as a central call stand which could also serve as a clearing house for 'paying off', and Employment Exchange business. This involved the outlay of capital and by the end of the 1920s there was already a heavy commitment on capital for the new dock construction. Some employers could see greater port efficiency arising from central engagement and regularised labour, but Southampton PEA appeared to pay lip service to the principle of decasualisation, of which central engagement was only a part, whilst being content to keep their reserve pools of labour at minimum cost to themselves. The employers of port labour were, in most cases, the representatives of shipping lines, and of even greater importance to them than cutting labour costs was the need for fast turnround of shipping in order to meet passenger and mail schedules and minimise the dock and harbour charges of Southampton's enormous vessels. There was always the possibility that without their reserve of labour they might not be able to meet the uncertain demands made on goods handling in the port.

The feasibility of using a central stand, or even more than one centralised stand, depended upon the layout of the docks as much as the attitude of users. London, Liverpool and Hull, each of which stretched along many miles of river, needed an arrangement different from that which suited the confined dock areas of Southampton, Bristol and Garston. Liverpool introduced two central stands, one of which was unsuccessful because of the non-cooperation of one employer; whereas Garston established its own register and operated a one stand system without difficulties.

In 1925 Southampton's port labour committee was reconstituted and renamed, and throughout the rest of the period it took a more active interest in maintaining the register. It did not, however, make any far-reaching changes or even comply with some of the specific wishes of the MOL officials. Neither did the committee feel that it was necessary to revise the register more often than every other year, despite numerous

suggestions in the Minutes of the PEA that it would be beneficial to do so.

At much the same time Bristol's engagement method was also revised, but Bristol took the opportunity to introduce a new system. The register was divided into A class and B class men, similar to the method used by the PLA. The scheme was declared by the Bristol Dock Authority to be so successful that fraud and mis-use of registration disappeared, and the percentage of A men fully employed gradually increased between 1925 and 1930. A small number of B class men were retained as surplus to meet seasonal fluctuation. The scheme, which was accepted by workers as well as employers, included a review of the register at six monthly intervals and established a comfortable mobility between the three port areas of the PRC administration. The PRC also kept detailed records of the work being obtained by each man on the register. The new scheme did not eliminate the casual fringe, nor cure unemployment; it did not bring an end to fractious industrial relations; however, it demonstrated that a small work force could operate a joint scheme which in a large measure regularised employment. The extent to which the union was agreeable to the scheme and by which it hoped to achieve the closed shop, no doubt contributed to its success.

A new scheme was also started in Hull in 1925 with a new PRC which met every six weeks. Of the 252 employers who used the scheme some of the time, Ellerman and the L.N.E.Railway employed about 60 per cent. Only the latter two stamped dockers' employment cards so that no check was kept on work obtained by the remaining 40 per cent. By 1929 the register had been reduced from 9,000 to 7,687 men, but on a day when MOL officials counted workers only 3,057 were in attendance at call stands in the five dock areas, leaving 4,630 registered men unaccounted for. There was no mention at the time of any men having been engaged for the duration of a ship's work and not needing to be re-engaged until completion. The very poor attendance suggests that considerable use was being made of unemployment benefit and shows the extent to which dockers in Hull were content to cling to their casual habits.

Both union and MOL agreed that Hull's scheme functioned very badly. Although record books were exchanged twice yearly reducing the register and keeping checks on men had proved difficult because of the refusal of the Master Stevedore's foreman to use the scheme.[60] The men of Hull had been amongst the most militant dockers during the union troubles of 1923 and were again militant during the general strike, but a good deal of the disorder in the port seems to have been the fault of employers not following the Employers' Association regulations, presumably because they were not members. The TGWU's problems in this port were only temporarily

alleviated between 1929 and 1933 by the organising ability of Dan Hillman (Southampton's area secretary at the time), but he did not succeed in regaining all lost members.

Some of Glasgow's union officials spent six weeks in Liverpool in 1925 in an effort to satisfy their misgivings about registration by seeing for themselves how it worked. The result was a hardening of their resistance and antagonism. Five schemes were proposed and rejected, and although the employers (collectively the Glasgow Ship Owners and Dock Labour Employers' Organisation) were keen to introduce registration, being members of the NJCDL, they were no more successful than the MOL or the TGWU in persuading local dockers to even consider a scheme.

Glasgow branch officials of the TGWU began charging an entrance fee of £50 to new members, which effectively prohibited men not already in possession of a union metal badge, known as a 'button'. Button men made sure they got first preference for all work. Bevin was unable to control the union men and relations with the London-based union gradually broke down from 1928 when the branch refused to recognise the Central Office or the Docks Trade Group. In 1932 they formed the Scottish TGWU. In Glasgow about 250 men were weekly-paid regulars, and a large number of others were regularly employed by the coasting companies. Men were usually engaged to 'finish' a ship, which meant they did not need to attend calls until the job had been completed.[62] A very large number of call stands were widely scattered, but this evidently suited the random engagement method.

The situation in Glasgow was that, left to its own devices, the labour supply regulated itself, and by this 'natural selection' kept itself in fairly regular employment, by simply disregarding the casual fringe. However, it did so through the militancy of the rank and file members, not through control by officials of the Scottish TGWU. The men believed that registration would bring unwanted competition by giving non-union men the right to seek jobs. There was not enough work for all the button men to be fully employed - it had not been normal practice for all men to be employed - and they were afraid of outsiders being admitted, because they knew employers would not restrict the register to union members.

To obtain the most efficient use of labour in any port adequate communications were essential, particularly where centralised engagement was not normal practice. For example, in Hull, where dockers worked mostly from lighters, a vast number of employers, each requiring only a small number of men, operated ship-side call on. The PRC reported that men used the docks as a convenience when there was no other work available, which certainly may have accounted for some of the missing men, but the

huts at the dock gates which were supposed to be used as surplus stands were not connected to the ships by telephone, so the shortages were not known to the workers and the surplus was not immediately available to the foremen. Similarly in Glasgow, since some of the call stands were on street corners rapid communication with the docks must have been impossible. One of the main aims of employers was to improve productivity and speed up the turnround of ships, and perhaps more regular use of labour and a better check on those attending calls might have achieved greater efficiency. Lack of communications was not confined to Hull and Glasgow, the same could be said even of the smaller, enclosed ports like Southampton.

As work became scarcer union officials became more reluctant to risk men losing jobs, and at the local level branch leaders were only willing to support central engagement stands, registration and other reform ideas if they did not in any way interfere with their members' jobs. Even a guaranteed week could not be accepted if it meant sacrificing either jobs or members. For this reason they were unwilling to let old men give up their tallies or employment books. The reduction in the size of registers, therefore, contributed to a rise in the average age of dock-workers and the Maclean Committee investigated the age situation.

In general dockworkers were of an older age group than seafarers. The strenuous nature of the work was not suitable for very young men. In 1918 only 574 of the 3,320 registered dockworkers in Southampton were of military age (18-41 years). More than 80 per cent were over 40.[63] These figures show a larger percentage of older men than is given in the 1921 Southampton Census returns, which put the number between the ages of 45-55 as 35.6 per cent of the stevedores and 30.2 per cent of the other dockworkers.[64] However, the MOL returns of 1918 referred to men actually employed on a specific date, whereas the Census included anyone describing himself as a dock labourer. The Census puts the maximum age group of dockworkers some twenty years older than the maximum group of seafarers.[65]

In his survey of the late 1920s Percy Ford found evidence of many seafarers entering the docks industry on leaving the sea. Forty per cent of the tally-holders at the time of his survey had been to sea at some time, and a large percentage of those applying for tallies were over forty years old. Seamen leaving the sea before the age of 35 were likely to become stevedores, after that age they were more likely to be quayside workers.[66]

The effect of registration, by holding back the recruitment of new workers, did slightly increase the average age of dockworkers and in 1929 the age range of the largest group of dockers in London was 45-54 years.[67] In Bristol the PRC was worried in the early 1930s because of the increased

age of registered men, and the port certainly had one of the largest percentages of workers over 65 years. (See Table 17). In Southampton the average age of "other dockworkers" in 1921 was given as 47 years, and it is unlikely that there was a significant increase even by the end of the period as far as the average age can be ascertained, but the percentage of dockworkers over 65 had increased by 1938.

Table 17. Age distribution of dockworkers in several ports showing the percentages of men in various age groups.

Year	Port	Less than 30	30 - 64	Over 65
1933	Southampton	9.7	89.3	1.0
1934		8.2	90.6	1.2
1935		9.5	89.1	1.4
1936		8.4	89.7	1.9
1938		11.3	86.2	2.5
1933	Bristol	2.1	89.2	8.7
1934		3.5	88.0	8.5
1935		5.4	87.0	7.6
1936		6.9	84.7	8.4
1938		11.2	78.4	10.4
1933	Liverpool	15.3	80.8	3.9
1934		14.1	80.2	5.7
1935		18.2	77.3	4.5
1938		21.1	72.8	6.1
1933	Hull	15.5	81.6	2.9
1934		13.9	82.8	3.3
1935		14.4	83.0	2.6
1938		16.1	80.0	3.3
1929	London (Under 34)	25.5 (35-64)	70.0	3.7
1933		13.2	81.8	5.0
1934		15.0	80.1	4.9
1935		14.0	80.5	5.5
1938		15.0	78.6	6.4

		20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-64	Over 65
1935	Southampton	9.5	25.2	25.0	27.6	11.3	1.4
1936	"	8.4	24.8	26.4	26.9	11.6	1.9
1935	Bristol	5.4	13.6	27.7	34.2	11.5	7.6
1936	"	6.9	12.9	26.3	33.4	12.1	8.4

Sources: PRO: LAB 2 1048 ET 4283/9/1930; LAB 8 182 and 184; PIN 7 115; Bevin Papers, TGWU Library.

During the 1930s there was also an increase in the under 30 age group in some ports, as well as an increase in the over 65s. Unfortunately, there was not so much interest in age during the early part of the period, and although some statistics are available for the second half, they do not appear to have been compared with the 1920s age groups. It is significant to Southampton, however, that in 1939 only 19 tally-holders and 20 temporary tally-holders out of a total of 2,615 were under the 'reserved' age for military service. This means that only 1.5 per cent of the counted labour force was under 25 years.[68] Recruitment had always been from among men who were probably over 25, so there may not have been a great change overall, but the older age range had a tendency to extend during the interwar years as a result of registration and union reluctance to allow old men to be replaced.

Among the schemes for maintenance or a guaranteed week which were proposed during the period one which was studied by both sides was put forward by the TGWU in 1930 and made provision for this older age group. Other points covered in the scheme included registration, multi-stand engagement with central stands for surplus men where appropriate, record-keeping by the NJCDL, local administration and record-keeping by local joint committees (LJCs), qualifications for receiving maintenance and penalties for failing to attend calls, rules to safeguard continuity of work, better distribution of labour, and a programme to make the union responsible for the supply of labour when shortages occurred. It was a very comprehensive document and it introduced a new dimension to the concept of maintenance in the form of a retirement pension to registered men at the age of 65.[69] To fund the scheme the union recommended contributions from employers and employees, a levy on goods and passengers (an idea to which Bevin was committed), and the suggestion that the state's contribution should be paid from the unemployment insurance fund, since fully employed dockers would no longer need to look for relief outside the industry.

The NCPLE's reply to these proposals was to point out that the estimate of the cost given by the government actuary was greatly in excess of the current cost of benefit. They described the scheme as "rigidly statutory," and they thought voluntary effort was more appropriate to encourage the transfer of small groups to weekly working. The burden on trade and industry of the levy was as unacceptable in 1930 as it had been in 1920. The employers' solution was a stern trimming-down of unemployment and transitional benefits. They also wanted a clear distinction to be made between un- and under-employed.[70] Neither the maintenance nor the pension schemes made any progress at this time.

When the Maclean Committee was reconstituted by the second Labour Government in 1930 Bevin took the opportunity to strengthen his hold on the control of dock labour by refusing to co-operate if other unions were also to be involved.[71] MOL officials were agreeable to continue negotiations with Bevin, but even so maintenance schemes all foundered on the same issue, namely, the large number of men still seeking work in the industry. Some ports managed a degree of shrinkage in the labour force and in general registers contained fewer names, but there were still far more men than could hope to be found work. Southampton's total of registered labour appears to have fluctuated with the total business of the port. The exact figures for every year are not known, but one can say that the decrease in 1921 reflected the slump, and the improvement in trading in 1924 shows a corresponding increase in the register. The number fell again between 1930 and 1935 and increased at the end of the period. The register followed the movement of the trade cycles in general and finished the period with slightly fewer men than in 1920. (See Table 18)

Table 18. The number of dockworkers stated as registered in the Port of Southampton at certain times between 1918-39

Year	No. of Registered Men	Year	No. of Registered Men
Pre-war*	3,800	1929	2,930
1919	3,000	1930	2,888-2,930
1920	2,900-3,000	1931	-
1921	2,480	1932	2,444-2,644
1922	-	1933	2,347
1923	-	1934	2,240
1924	2,700	1935	2,332
1925	-	1936	2,382
1926	-	1937	-
1927	2,909	1938	2,539
1928	2,917	1939	2,473

* This pre-war estimate was given in 1918.

Sources: (See FN 72)

Ernest Bevin was a member of the NJCDL, the Maclean Committee and the Standing Advisory Committee on Port Labour, which was set up to keep the work of the Maclean Committee alive, and he worked tirelessly to forward

what he called "the realisation of this great social development,"[73] which he knew largely depended upon the attainment of manageable registers. Unfortunately, the reduction of manpower to such levels could not be made without shedding men by enforced redundancies. Proposals for maintenance schemes carried with them innuendoes of such redundancies and neither unions nor management were willing to risk creating a crisis in the industry. Despite under-employment dockworkers were better off than before the war. The standard of living of the majority of dockworkers rose during this period and unemployment benefit helped to make casual work less of a financial hazard. Even the casual fringe from outside the industry was prevented from growing, and in fact even shrank, because the lack of opportunities for labourers in other industries kept regular dockers in the docks. Thus, by 1937, after a short span of time in which trade appeared to be improving and work was becoming more plentiful, pressure from TGWU branches induced Bevin to incorporate a substantial wage increase in his renewed demands for decasualisation, and this wage increase was of more interest to union members than maintenance.

So the increased demand for labour in 1937 - in Southampton it was at its maximum for the period - made wage deals more attractive to workers than ways of solving under-employment. However, by this time the PEA had come to the conclusion that a maintenance scheme was the lesser of two evils, and they supported the scheme at last proposed by the NCPLE. To avoid another stalemate Bevin accepted as a basis for negotiation these decasualisation proposals, which were also accepted by the National Amalgamated Stevedores' and Dockers' Union (which was the London breakaway union of lightermen and dockers formed in 1923), and the NUGW. The employers' scheme put men into three categories:

i A class, who were to be guaranteed twenty days pay at time rate every four weeks, subject to attendance at calls. These men were to be offered any work available prior to categories ii and iii.

ii B class, who were to be preference men after A class. The Minister of Labour was to be approached regarding his contribution from the unemployment insurance fund for their relief. At such time as this was ascertained employers were to negotiate a smaller guaranteed sum.

iii C class, were the unavoidable casual fringe who could not be covered by a guarantee, but recruits for A and B classes were to be drawn from C class men.

Dependent upon the acceptance of these proposals employers were willing to discuss with the union "some scheme which would assist the older men who are dispossessed of their registration tokens."[74] In response the union decided that each port should work out a joint scheme suited to

local conditions, based on a draft scheme which now included holidays with pay as well as pensions.

Alfred Waygood reported the union decision to the LJC in Southampton, but the employers were very slow about their deliberations and were unhelpful. Eventually the chairman of the PEA pointed out that "unless a proper scheme is worked out the union can come back for a larger wage, and it was desirable to present a scheme which would cost employers less than a wage increase."[75] The delay was not entirely the fault of the employers because progress was blocked by the failure of the MOL to communicate its intention regarding the share of the wages which it was expected would come from the Unemployment Insurance Fund. The Minister eventually informed a joint meeting of shipowners, MOL and NJCDL that he was sympathetic, but needed time to investigate.

When the Southampton scheme emerged it was similar to the NCPLE scheme with A class men being guaranteed wages and B class men being given preference after them, while the remainder were to be known as C class. The third class of registered men were also to be guaranteed wages, but at the lowest rate of three graded wage scales. However, without the assurance of a Ministry financial commitment the total number of men to be included in the scheme could not be agreed. In Southampton, as elsewhere in the country, negotiations again faltered. As all parties concerned with port transport became more and more involved with preparations for war there was less and less time for thoughts about maintenance, and the likelihood of achieving anything conclusive faded.

Eventually, seeing that a national settlement was unlikely, Bevin put in the wage claim deferred from 1937, and interwar voluntary decasualisation discussions ceased.

* * * * *

Before the first war the possibility of decasualising dock labour had been the concern of the BOT, and recurrent labour unrest high-lighted the difficulties which beset an industry employing its labour by casual methods. The partly itinerant work force was frequently precipitated into militant action largely as a result of the discontent engendered by the under-employment and inequality of casualism. Considerations for dealing with the labour situation at that time centred on the possibility of a solution being embodied in a health insurance scheme which William Beveridge hoped to bring to fruition.

War time developments in port transport required the involvement of

the MOL to control the labour force in order to ensure that sufficient labour could be made available where it was needed. This development of labour distribution, together with the changed pattern of work required by war, resulted in a greater efficiency, but did not change the system nor provide a method which contained an intrinsic solution to the heart of the problem, namely, casualism. Nevertheless, the war time direction of labour formed the basis for on-going discussions and proposals between management and unions, supported by a number of civil servants, during following years. The response to suggestions and proposals put forward was either enthusiastic or antagonistic and the lack of co-operation between labour and management prevented any real progress being made towards restructuring the industry's engagement procedures.

During the interwar years in broad terms the attitude of successive governments towards port transport was to avoid situations which might arouse industrial militancy. Not only were dock strikes detrimental to trade and industry, they also had an unstabilising effect on other workers, particularly those with whom the dockers' union was closely allied. The state was, therefore, willing to support ideas which offered the likelihood of industrial peace.

The main concerns of management were to increase both their trade and the speed of their shipping turnround, which measures were more cost effective than keeping a low wage bill. They were not averse to increasing wages in response to improved productivity if this were achieved in advance, and if it could be seen to go hand in hand with good industrial relations. However, their prime need in order to meet their objectives seemed to them to call for a ready supply of labour which could be kept available at no extra cost. Although employers in general came to understand the value of trade union co-operation in labour affairs, the unpaid pool of labour was a matter on which they could not agree with either unions or the MOL.

Trade union leaders for their part, particularly Ernest Bevin, were seeking ways to strengthen their unions, increase their bargaining power and exert greater control over the management of labour. The general weakening of the trade union movement after the general strike turned the casual labour question into a useful method of approach for the TGWU. Bevin was willing to negotiate with either state or management, but no union officials would readily sacrifice members' jobs, and if that was the only way their aims could be achieved, Bevin found them wanting in support for whole-hearted decasualisation schemes.

Dockworkers, whether union members or not were, on the whole, anxious to maintain the status quo when it came to threats of compulsory attendance

and mobility, although they were pleased enough to accept unemployment relief. It was not necessarily that they regarded casual labour as the best system, but it was the method they knew and were used to; the habits of the casual system had been tailored by the nature of the work itself and suited the majority.

Thus, the conflicting desires and needs of the protagonists, together with the constraints imposed by the period's economic situation, worked against the chances of arriving at a satisfactory solution.

When the maintenance proposal was recommended at the Shaw Enquiry in 1920 to have expected it to be accepted almost at once by either employers or workers might have been carrying optimism to its limit. A period of aclimatisation to the idea was necessary, but after twenty years of fruitless enquiries, investigations, proposals and discussions, those who cherished the belief that casual dock labour could be terminated might be forgiven for thinking their patience had been tested to its limit.

The 20th century has proved to be a period of accelerating developments in many fields, but dockwork between the wars was only slightly affected by improvements in mechanical handling, and the level of manual labour involved was not greatly reduced by this means. Broadly speaking, the problems found in 1938, which prevented decasualisation from becoming a practical solution to dock labour difficulties, were the same as those found in 1920; namely, because there were too many men in the industry it proved too costly to trim down the registers to the satisfaction of all parties. These difficulties included the reluctance of the dockworkers themselves to change their ways, the conflicts which sometimes arose within specific groups on one side or the other, and the lack of direction or lead given by the Ministry of Labour. The economic climate played a significant part in prolonging these difficulties, and the brief upturns which provided more work for dockers made it appear as if extra men were needed on the registers to meet the exigencies of sudden trade expansions.

Large scale unemployment reduced the negotiating strength of the TGWU Docks Trade Group, and it also reduced workers' earnings at the same time as the depressed port trades and shipping industries reduced employers' profits. Growing unemployment did not soften employers' attitudes towards labour's demands when it simultaneously provided an eager surplus of labour, and it did not stimulate workers' interest in a visionary promise of a better future from a system they had never experienced.

In 1925 the MOL Industrial Relations Department suggested that legislation might be necessary in order to overcome the failure of either side to take positive steps to decasualise the industry. However, the government did no more than give the impression that it was endeavouring to

solve the industry's problems, and it might be accused of bureaucratic inertia over its failure to take any decisive action. In fairness, it should be remembered that the MOL was engaged in finding out how many men it was necessary to legislate for, since this was thought to be an essential pre-requisite to the implementation of schemes which involved paying men for not working, but even in the MOL there was not total support for the principle of decasualisation.

MOL and TU officials were aware that the lack of progress on a maintenance agreement was partly due to the excess of manpower in the industry, whereas employers were more inclined to place the emphasis on adverse economic circumstances when apportioning blame. T.W. Condon, (London TGWU and member of the Maclean Committee) expressed his view of the situation in a scheme which he prepared himself in 1931. "The present position of unemployment among casuals is not due to the depression, but mostly to the peculiarities of employment in the industry, which permit excessive bodies of men to attach themselves to it on the flimsiest of grounds."[76] He was stating that the reserve pools of labour were really surplus to requirements, but were unlikely to be eliminated by employers' voluntary efforts. He wanted the compulsory removal of unnecessary men from the registers, and a statutory obligation on the part of employers to take on only registered men, except when the supply was inadequate. Even Condon could not deny that the fluctuating demand for labour at times created a need for extra men, and this proviso left the door open for either non-registered men or a reserve of occasionally employed men who might or might not be registered.

Bevin upheld the success of registration by claiming that it had brought about a measure of decasualisation.[77] There is evidence of a degree of regularisation in Southampton where the same well-tried gangs tended to be called regularly, but such had been normal practice before registration. Any reduction in numbers of men less frequently employed should have been an improvement, had they not still been attached to the industry as the casual fringe.

After the part restoration of the Shaw Award in 1924 the minimum daily wage rate was high enough to attract men to the docks whether there was work or not, and the MOL thought that a lower rate should have sufficed. Indeed, men paid a lower rate regularly might have been better off than when receiving a higher rate at infrequent intervals. In two short statistical surveys of Southampton undertaken by the MOL, a percentage of men did no work, or practically no work, on each occasion, and this situation must certainly have applied across the country. So the ten or fifteen per cent at the tail end of the employment scale would

have made a big difference to the industry's total work force had they been removed from the registers, and it would probably not have inflicted too great a hardship upon them as they were not really deriving a satisfactory income from the industry. They were, however, dependent upon the industry to keep them entitled to receive unemployment benefit. Unfortunately, remaining records of casual employment do not show whether the very low earners were regularly the same men, or whether they were spread among a larger percentage of the total work force. Southampton's record-keeping was weak and there is very little likelihood that any men, other than the Southern Railway Company's rota men, had their hours of employment recorded. Whatever system of wages computation was used to record amounts payable to individual dockers, according to the MOL the results were not produced in a format available for use as employment records. However, the wider the spread of the under-employed, the wider also was the need for unemployment benefit. Although much was said about the unscrupulous use made of unemployment relief by dockers, the amount of benefit paid to claimants between the wars was never more than enough to cover the most humble needs of a family. Even where part-week earnings were also available for family spending in addition to part weeks, or alternate weeks, of benefit, the casual system did not work to the financial advantage of every docker. It could be said that some were fortunate when others chose to take a days' unemployment benefit since, at least, it gave them a chance of a day's wages.

The traditional fluctuation both in the availability of labour for work, and of work for labour, made it unlikely that any scheme could have been made acceptable to employers which did not allow for a margin of reserve labour, and Lascelles and Bullock approached the question along the same lines as Bevin in saying the priority was "not how to abolish casual labour, but how to remedy the evils of under-employment."[78]

If a legislative policy of maintenance was a realistic solution to the industry's problems arising from this casual tradition, it might be asked when was the most appropriate time to have imposed it? For maximum efficiency whatever measures were decided upon needed to be put into effect before the industry reverted to its accustomed pre-war bad habits. Changes might have been successful before the post-war slump set in, but unfortunately, neither the industry nor the MOL were ready then.

At the beginning of 1919 Southampton's employers were already preparing themselves for resistance to change, and in doing so they were taking their lead from Liverpool and London, along with other large ports. When the economic climate went against them Southampton PEA dug

in their heels and were laggardly in carrying out the recommendations of the MOL. However, in the final stage before the second world war the port did give a lead in producing a scheme to solve its own deadlock on decasualisation. It might well have proved to be a workable scheme had the government been willing to provide a source of financial assistance.

Ultimately, the second war temporarily solved the port's guaranteed week difficulties, and those of most other large ports. When Ernest Bevin was Minister of Labour in 1940 he was able to appoint a National Dock Labour Board to set up and administer schemes for the regulation of port transport workers. This did not decasualise the industry nor terminate the problems associated with it, furthermore, industrial relations clashes returned with a vengeance once the war crisis was over. The Dock Labour Board produced a scheme for the Port of Southampton in 1941 which became operative on March 23, 1942. Its object was "to regulate port transport by continuous employment...by the provision of covered control points and by the payment of wages weekly."[79] This guaranteed weekly payment under a joint Board continued to form the basis for the management of labour after the war.

1. Dr. Noel Whiteside, "Welfare Insurance and Casual Labour: A Study of Administrative Intervention in Industrial Employment, 1906-26." Economic History Review, Vol. XXXII No. 4, November 1979. p.518
2. ibid.
3. G. Phillips and N. Whiteside, Casual Labour. The Unemployment Question in the Port Industries. 1880-1970. OUP p.55
4. Oral History Project, Southampton City Museums; George Tatford; Prof. T.S. Simey, (Gen. Ed.) The Dock Worker, (Manchester), Social Research Series, LUP, 1956. The latter provides evidence of rough behaviour as late as the 1950s, and the researchers suggested that the loyal comradeship and solidarity found among dockers was due to a guilt complex as a result of their behaviour at the call stand.
5. Southern Railway Company records (1922). PRO: RAIL 651 9
6. Report of the Court of Enquiry concerning Transport Workers' Wages and Conditions with Minutes of Evidence and Appendices (Shaw Report). P.P. XXIV 1920
7. Maintenance Scheme prepared by MOL Industrial Relations Department, dated February 4, 1925. PRO: LAB 2 1054 ED 8634/1925
8. Noel Whiteside, op. cit. p.515
9. Minutes of Bristol PRC. PRO: LAB 2 1038/1005/1920. The 'port labour business' referred to was the registration scheme in Bristol.
10. The Shaw Enquiry.
11. According to the MOL which gave the number as 3,800. PRO: LAB 2 1044 DPL 176.
12. PRO: LAB 2 1038 DPL 100/4/1920
13. These men had been permitted to work because they were engaged by International Cold Storage Ltd., to work in the cold chambers - jobs avoided by dockers.
14. PRO: LAB 2 1038 DPL 100/4/1020.
15. Phillips and Whiteside, op. cit. p.159 n52 and p223 n40.
16. Sir Lynden Macassey had a very poor opinion of the Labour Party and did not rate trade unionists very much higher. Labour Party, False and True. (A Study in Economic History and Industrial Economics), Thornton Butterworth, London 1922.
17. "Considering the unorganised condition of the employers when the Inquiry began and the resulting difficulty in obtaining accurate information, I think the case...was marvellously complete." Letter from Sir Lynden Macassey to Sir Alfred Booth dated April 19, 1920. Cunard Records. Liverpool University Archives. C1/285
18. Minutes of Evidence to the Shaw Enquiry, pp. 156-58
19. Minutes of Evidence to the Shaw Enquiry, p. 51

20. Southampton Times, July 5, 1924
21. Hampshire Independent, April 17, 1920
22. Phillips and Whiteside, op. cit. p.171
23. Report of the Shaw Enquiry, section 10, p.7
24. E.C.P. Lascelles and S.G. Bullock, Dock Labour and Decasualisation, P.S. King & Son, London 1924. p.159
25. Report of the Shaw Enquiry, section 16, p.8
26. Report of the Shaw Enquiry, section 17, p.9
27. Southampton PEA Minutes, April 12, 1920
28. Southampton PEA Minutes, April 10, 1919
29. Southampton PEA Minutes, April 12, 1920
30. Minutes of meetings of the NJCDL, May 19, June 28 and October 8, 1920 and January 20, 1921. Cunard Records. LUA C1/285
31. Times, February 13, 1924
32. Letter from Sir Alfred Booth to H. Concannon, acting chairman of the NCPLE, dated August 13, 1920. Cunard Records. LUA C1/286
33. NJCDL Minutes, January 20, 1921. Cunard Records. LUA C1/286
34. Output and Infringements. Summary of Reports. NJCDL Meeting January 20, 1921. Cunard Records. LUA C1/286
35. TGWU Records. Docks Trade Group Committee Minutes, July 11, 1922. TGWU Library, Transport House. During this period the Dockers' Union passed through its local administration crisis in Southampton.
36. Phillips and Whiteside, op. cit. p.173
37. Lascelles and Bullock, op. cit. p. 161. 'Ca'canny' was a dockers' term used particularly in London Docks to describe a deliberate system of working to a pre-planned limit of output within a shift.
38. Bristol PLC Minutes. PRO: LAB 2 1049 ET 4825/5/1930
39. PRO: LAB 8 52 ED 9855/1924
40. Bevin Papers, TGWU Library, Transport House.
41. Letter to the Times, July 25, 1923 from D. Ross Johnson, General Manager, Bristol Docks.
42. Shaw Enquiry. Vol.ii Appendix xliv
43. The investigating committee was known as the Maclean Committee.
44. Southampton Times, July 5, 1924.
45. Southampton Times, July 7, 1924.
46. MOL Port Labour Enquiry, Report of the Maclean Committee, 1931 pp.40-41.
47. Lascelles and Bullock, op. cit. p.174.
48. PRO: LAB 8 204 10 ED/121/1959
49. PRO: LAB 2 1042 ED 2100/1928
50. PRO: LAB 2 1055 ED 6869/11/1927

51. Appendix 1 of the Maclean Committee Report, July 1924. PRO: LAB 8 204 10 ED/121/1959
52. TGWU Records. Docks Trade Group Committee. TGWU Library.
53. PRO: LAB 2 1046 ET 6734/1930
54. PRO: LAB 8 204 10 ED 121/1959
55. Southampton PLC Minutes, May 6 and May 26, 1919. PRO: LAB 2 1041 DPL 131/6. Confusion arose because engagement took place at the Town Quay as well as at the main Docks.
56. Southampton PRC file, June 22, 1931. PRO: LAB 2 1050 4825/9/1930
57. Southampton PRC file. PRO: LAB2 1050 4825/9/1930.
58. When the MOL wished to record a series of statistics for a period of six months in 1930 the S.W. Divisional Controller warned them to "Keep the PRC out of this business, the employers' representatives will definitely raise objections. We can obtain the statistics you want without them knowing about it." (Southampton PRC file: LAB 2 1050 ET 3995/1930). The subsequent extension of the record-keeping was also carried out "without the knowledge of the PRC...because of their attitude."
59. Bevin Papers. TGWU Library.
60. Hull PRC Minutes. PRO: LAB 2 1049 ET 4825/5/1930
61. The Scottish TGWU was not permitted representation on the NJCDL, which was not surprising while Bevin was joint chairman.
62. Board of Inquiry into Glasgow and Aberdeen appointed by the MOL, 1937 PRO: LAB 8 9.
63. Number of men and their ages employed on March 8, 1918, based on the returns of April 1918. PRO: LAB 2 1044 DPL 176.
64. 1921 Census. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
65. The average age of the largest group of seafarers was 25 years and the average age of the largest group of stevedores and other dock-workers was 45 years.
66. Memorandum by P. Ford, University College, Southampton, on port labour in Southampton. PRO: LAB 2 1048 ET 4283/9/1930.
67. Bevin Papers, TGWU Library.
68. Southampton PEA Minutes, November 14, 1939.
69. TGWU Maintenance Scheme 1930. PRO: LAB 2 1048 ET 4283/21/1930.
70. NCPLE reply to TGWU proposals. PRO: LAB 2 1048 ET 4283/21/1930.
71. PRO: LAB 2 2076 ET 2668/1930.
72. PRO Files:

1918	LAB 2 1044 DPL 176
1919	LAB 2 1052 DPL 296
1920	LAB 2 1038 DPL 100/4/1920

continued

1921	LAB 2 1049 ET 4825/6/1930
1924 and 1933	LAB 8 204 10 ED/121/1959
1927	LAB 8 51 ED 3754/1924
1928 abd 1930	LAB 2 1050 ET 4825/9/1930
1929	PEA Minutes October 22, 1929
1932	LAB 2 1050 ET 3995/1931
1934	LAB 2 1054 ED 14085/1923
1935	LAB 8 182
1936	LAB 8 184
1938 and 1939	LAB 8 284

73. TGWU records. Docks Trade Group Committee, Report by National Secretary for quarter ending June 1931.

74. Special Meeting of TGWU Docks Trade Group, NJCDL, NUGMW and National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers' Union, August 11, 1937. Bevin Papers, TGWU Library.

75. PEA Minutes, October 21, 1937.

76. T.W. Condon's decasualisation proposals. PRO: LAB 2 1047 ET 2326/1930

77. Report on the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance. Secretary's report for the quarter ending December 1932. Docks Trade Group Committee. TGWU records, Transport House.

78. Lascelles and Bullock, op. cit. p. 120

79. National Dock Labour Corporation Ltd., Essential Work (Dock Labour) Order 1941. Dock Labour Scheme for the Port of Southampton.

CHAPTER SIX

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In the previous two chapters various aspects of labour were considered which can be grouped under a general heading of 'the quality of employment'. However, the quantity, as well as the quality, inter-acted with working conditions and labour relations, and this chapter is, therefore, concerned with an examination of the amount of employment available in the three port industries, as far as can be either determined or estimated.

In industries which employed most of their labour on a casual or intermittent basis, the number employed could vary from day to day, and hour to hour, and even if it were possible to ascertain the exact size of the labour market and the number employed daily, it would not indicate how many of those employed one day were also employed the next day. Nor would it indicate how many, having worked some days and satisfied their immediate needs, deliberately remained unemployed for some days.

The levels of recorded unemployment reflect the number of men seeking work who were unable to obtain it, but in a casual market they do not provide any information about the number finding work. However, for this period in the shipbuilding industry, unemployment statistics are the only ones available for analysis by districts.

Both employment and unemployment trends are discussed in the light of the main factors which relate to the volume of employment, namely, cyclical and seasonal fluctuations in the industries concerned, and to a lesser extent structural change, affecting long-term industrial opportunities, which applies more to shipbuilding than to port transport and shipping.

The influence on port trades of the unstable situation in international market forces, which entered two major recessions during the inter-war period,[1] was not offset by the import demands of the domestic consumer and manufacturing sectors. Cyclical fluctuations, as seen in Chapter One, were clearly revealed in all three industries, and are, therefore, important to a consideration of employment prospects. It will also be seen in this chapter, however, that seasonal fluctuations played a large part in determining employment levels in Southampton. Seasonality was a common factor in port industries everywhere, but the problem was emphasised in Southampton by the port's volume of passenger traffic.

Employment and unemployment levels in Southampton are compared with other ports in order to ascertain whether cyclical and seasonal fluctuations were as distinct in ports where freight transport and shipbuilding were the main features of employment, contrasting with Southampton's passenger

transport and ship-repair dominance.

The industries are considered separately because of the differences in the size and type of labour market and the work involved; and because the statistics available, which include coverage of the comparative ports and districts, used different methods of computation.

In the docks industry a series of written evaluations is used to estimate the volume of employment, as well as some more precise unemployment statistics. As explained in Chapter One, the number of seamen engaged per month in each port is the only way we have of comparing seamen's employment, because it was not practical for the Board of Trade to make a regular count by any other method.

Ship construction can be measured by tonnage, but the volume of ship-repair and the employment it provided can only be estimated with difficulty. There are no individual port statistics of employment available, and the MOL unemployment statistics have been used to estimate employment in this industry.

In considering casual employment every effort has been made not to give misleading information. Estimates should be regarded as a means of enabling trends to be gauged and comparisons to be made.

Section 1. DOCKS

The cyclical trend of dock employment outlined in Chapter One, was based on written evaluations of the amount of employment obtained in different ports. It was not based on numerical evidence of employment. However, the evaluations supplied by trade unions, employment exchange officials and local correspondents, which were published monthly in the Ministry of Labour Gazette, provide a continuous record of the amount of work actually available within a given period, albeit based on arbitrary statements. The preference for using this type of estimate[2] is because, although the grading from "very bad" to "good" varied from writer to writer and only represents an opinion of the state of trade, it does refer to the specific availability of work for that class of labour which was recognised as dockwork. Despite the possibly dubious reliability of these estimates, when they are compared with other sources they are remarkably consistent. It is likely that similar criteria were used by all assessors as the terminology most probably related to the percentage of the total work force employed in the port during the period under review. A number of trade unions[3] used the method to collect evaluations of the state of trade and employment from their own branches, and reporters were probably proficient

in the use of the method. That such data sent to the MOL by trade unions might have been used to make political statements cannot be ruled out.

The evaluations were covered very largely by eight different terms, each of which has been given a numerical value for use in this study, "very bad" being 1, "bad" 2, "slack/poor" 3, and so on, with descriptions of increasing employment to "good", which has been given the value 8. Values have been adjusted where more than one description occurred in the same month. Tabulation of the numerical values permits inter-port comparisons, as well as monthly and annual comparisons of individual ports. (See Appendices 11a-11d).

The data has not been used for comparisons with either London or Liverpool. The MOL data for London was divided into three areas, the PLA, Thames, and the Southeast, and the resultant employment and registration information is extremely complex, and is not likely to be very helpful in assessing the situation in Southampton. Similarly, the size of the work-force in Liverpool, and the huge surplus which was known to exist, make comparison of the written comments of doubtful use. Although the clearing house in Liverpool provided information on the number of men employed and the wages paid, there is no comparable information for other ports.

The continuity of the reporting method for the ports examined enables comparisons of monthly employment levels to be made over the entire inter-war period, and although the analysis does not make allowance for cyclical fluctuations, it establishes a regular pattern of seasonality in Southampton which can be attributed to passenger transport.

The application of the Unemployment Insurance Act did not vary much from port to port, but its effect on the casual docks industry was important because of the bearing it had on decasualisation, as well as the large share of the nation's benefit which was paid to the industry. Dock employment did not suffer a continuous decline, as occurred in shipbuilding until the second war emergency, for example, but its level of unemployment and its seasonal demands did not assist those who were attempting to find a way to reduce unemployment claims and end the casual system.

Cyclical Fluctuations

The first inter-war study of Southampton dockworkers' employment was carried out in 1920 by the Employment Exchange (MOL), as part of their investigation into port registration schemes.[4] The study covered a period of 24 working days from September 13 to October 9, and calculated the number of days worked by 2,913 tally holders, including 90 permanent (weekly paid) Union Castle employees, who were deemed to have worked all 24 days.

Conditions in 1920 were abnormal, owing to the remaining Admiralty restrictions. Thus, the investigation was made at a time when the port was not able to provide the labour capacity which might otherwise have been expected from a port of this size and character.

E.P.C. Lascelles of the MOL found certain limitations in the statistics he received from the Exchange, and it was not possible to make a complete assessment of the volume of work performed by the port's registered labour force even over this very short period. The three main problems were 1) the employment records of the 90 permanent men were omitted, 2) it was inaccurate to assume that individual engagements corresponded to full days of work, but no indication was given of the engagement lengths, and 3) it was not necessarily correct to assume that all tallies recorded as not engaged throughout the investigation belonged to dockworkers who had remained unemployed all the time. Lascelles thought such tallies included men who had died, taken other employment, or for other reasons were not seeking work in the port.[5]

If the permanent men were omitted from the reckoning the returns showed that a total of only 31 (1.1 percent) of the registered casual men were engaged on all 24 days, whereas 460 (16.3 percent) did no work at all. Furthermore, 152 men only worked 1 day. By dividing the 24 days into three 8-day periods we find the resultant table more heavily weighted at the lower end of the scale.

Number of days worked excluding permanent men.	Number of men.	Percentage of total men. %
8 or less	1,058	37.4
9 to 16	945	33.4
17 to 24	820	29.0

Lascelles was not impressed by a port in which a quarter of the tally-holders worked less than four days in a four week period. If the 460 who did no work were removed from the calculations the average was raised to 3.3 days per week, but this was still not the correct picture, because "allowing for the reality of half instead of full day working, the total was likely to have been less than three days per week."[6]

This conclusion agreed with the trade union report given to the Shaw Enquiry in February 1920, and it also indicated that the situation in Southampton had not deteriorated from the beginning of the year, despite the fact that the nation had entered the severe post-war slump before September 1920. In that year it was still anticipated in Southampton that trade and employment would improve once commercial activities were in full swing again, and 1920 had shown improvement over 1919.

The handling of cargo, mails and passenger baggage were the factors

which created work for dockers. Additionally, the docking of vessels also provided work, and in this respect the number of vessels entering and leaving the port is relevant to employment levels.

Figure 17 shows the correlation between the number of passengers, tons of cargo, number of vessels, and availability of dockwork. These have been calculated on a scale of 1-17 representing the 17 years from 1921-37, in which 1 is the lowest annual figure, or poorest year of business, and 17 is the best year. The similarity between dockwork, cargo and vessels is striking. The decrease in dockwork in 1925 was not followed by the other activities which continued to rise until 1928. Employment was recorded as abnormally slack during the second quarter of the year which was usually a busy time. The MOL evaluations indicated an improvement in June, at which time Southern Railway men were usually supplemented by extra hands. The Southampton delegate to the TGWU Docks Trade Group Committee was unequivocal in his report that employment was the worst for some years, particularly for the Southern Railway shed men. He did not mention an improvement in June.[7]

Southampton Chamber of Commerce stated in their annual report for 1925 that it was "the worst year on record for shipping." However, the report also stated that "notwithstanding the depressed state of industry throughout the country during the period under review, the year 1925 has proved a record one for traffic so far as Southampton Docks are concerned."[8] Since it was not a record year for dockwork the implication is that already Southampton's passengers were showing their effect on the port's shipping. When other port's suffered Southampton's shipping increased, and as there was clearly not an increase in freight, the liner trade was showing better prospects for seamen's employment than dockworkers'.

Southampton was not alone in experiencing a check to its dock employment in 1925, and the TGWU reports described work shortages in a number of other ports. For example, in Bristol during the second quarter of the year it was reported that "hundreds were signing the book for five and six weeks at a stretch," and Liverpool reported that "it was the worst quarter on record and contributions had suffered accordingly."[9] This was the year in which a much firmer control was being established over the labour supply, with reconstituted committees and attempts to improve registration.

Trading figures increased again in 1926 and the General Strike provided a backlog of work for dockers, which volunteers had been unable to handle. In Southampton 1927 was another exceptional year, with the best employment recorded by the Gazette until 1936. More tallies were issued in 1927 than since 1920 (2,930), and the Employment Exchange officer maintained that not more than 1,200 ever claimed benefit.[10]



Figure 17. The correlation of annual increases and decreases in Southampton port trade on a comparative scale of 1-17, showing estimated dock employment on the same scale.

Source: MOL Gazette and Southampton local press.

Between 1928 and 1934 the number of tallies issued decreased, in line with the decline in dockwork, and many of the tally-holders could only have obtained irregular employment. In 1928 an increase in the number of passengers embarking was thought to be due to the large number of vessels using Southampton as a base for cruising.[11] This increase had actually begun in 1927. Cruising voyages helped to keep ships at sea and maintained activity in the port when freight and transatlantic passengers were not as plentiful as wished for, but non-cargo carrying cruise vessels did not greatly assist dockworkers. There was still some work to be obtained on docking and undocking of cruise vessels, and with the increase in total vessels calling in 1928, it is surprising that dockwork declined in advance of cargo.

1929 was the first year in which Southampton post-war timber trade reached the shipping headlines in the local press. January and February saw increases in the trade and by July the Hampshire Advertiser claimed that "cargo lost during the war is now beginning to reach pre-war level, and the main revival is timber."[12] It was, indeed, true of timber, but the Advertiser was over-enthusiastic about total freight tonnage.[13] Timber had increased 148 percent over 1926 and a considerable amount of building had been carried out on the docks to accommodate imports. Timber was generally regarded as specialist stevedore work, but anyone either fortunate enough, or perhaps, willing to be 'taken on' to handle this difficult commodity, could acquire the experience to become a specialist. Special pieceworking rates were an added bonus to the intrepid docker. In 1930 general cargo as well as timber improved a little, against the trend.

The cargo carried by the Southern Railway Company provided a considerable quantity of work, even if it was not very well spread throughout the year. A decline in cross channel and Channel Island freight in 1928 and 1929 may have contributed to the decline in dockwork during those years. Naturally some cargoes required more handling than others and provided work for a greater number of men and ships. The company's busy period was labour intensive, involving the handling of large quantities of fruit, vegetables and flowers in small packages. During this time each year extra steamers were chartered, extra trains were required and the dock labour force could be increased by as many as 1,000 men per day. Approximately 65-70,000 tons of potatos were landed from Jersey during a season at the average rate of 500 tons in 10,000 packages per day, plus an additional 1,000 tons or more per day from St. Malo.[14]

Details of the Channel Island and French ports' cargoes are only available in the Railway Company's records from 1926, but compared with Southampton's total freight tonnage the S.R. Company share represents less

than 20 percent at best (1926), decreasing to 8-9 percent from 1936. In employment terms, however, the Railway Company tonnage certainly made a major contribution to the seasonal May-August boom.

With reference to the fall in dockwork in 1928 the total S.R. Company cargo of 207,584 tons represented a drop of only 3.9 percent against 1927. However, 1929 saw a substantial drop of 17.7 percent against 1927.[15] The company's passenger services were assets to the port, but provided less in the way of employment than the freight side of the company's business. The decline in foreign-going passengers in some years can be observed by the corresponding increase in the percentage of continental passengers as a contribution to the port's total passengers. (See Appendix 12).

The general trend in employment in Southampton docks was expansion from 1921 to 1927, with a slight check in 1925. The three comparative ports, Hull, Glasgow and Bristol, each experienced a decline in work in 1925, but Hull's decline started in 1924 and was reported as a more sustained shortage of work. As the written evaluations were remarking upon the amount of work available, as well as counting registered men or union members, the fact that Hull's registration and union organisation were in disarray should not have affected the reports. In fact, if there was no method of controlling the number of men applying for work, for example by registration, or local union restriction, unemployment recorded was likely to be high. Hull's poor labour relations may well have contributed to the loss of freight as well.

Shipping in the three ports also decreased during 1926, but Glasgow with the fourth largest total of foreign-going passengers, found a remarkably stable level of dock work until 1931. From 1930-31 vessels and tonnage began to move in a downward direction in all four ports, and the inevitable result was revealed in the decrease in available employment.

The trough of the depression occurred in different years in each port. Southampton - 1932, Hull - 1934, Glasgow - 1933, and Bristol - 1930, but Southampton dockers were the only ones to make a continuous recovery from 1932-37. Glasgow's dock work was again reported as rather more stable than Hull's and Bristol's, and it was not unlike Southampton's pattern of employment. However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the peculiar circumstances in Glasgow affected the reporting,and it is possible that it was not an entirely accurate picture which was reflected.

It was in 1930 that the MOL made a six month investigation of dock labour in Southampton. An analysis of this investigation showed that 75.5 percent of the registered tally-holders worked 60 percent or more of the period under review - approximately two thirds of the working time available; 24.5 percent worked only one third or less of the time.

The investigation was carried out from May to October, which included the busy season, indicating that the register was still over-large. However, compared with the earlier investigation conducted in 1920, when 37.4 percent worked one third or less of the time, 1930 shows good progress. (See Table 19).

Table 19. Analysis of work performed by Southampton dockworkers May 1 - October 31, 1930.

Amount of work carried out %	Number of men	Percentage of registered men %
100	735	25.3
90	29	1.0
80	143	4.9
70	217	7.5
60	251	8.7
50	316	10.9
40	498	17.2
30	121	4.2
less than 30	589	20.3

Source: Southampton PRC. PRO: LAB 2 1050 ET 3995/1931.

The third of the labour force which worked the smallest amount of time probably did so in the first half of the investigation period.

In 1930 the Union Castle Line was fortunate in being able to extricate itself from the financial difficulties which beset the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, its partner since the 1912 amalgamation.[16] With the aid of four ships chartered from Lamport and Holt, Union Castle brought record cargoes of fruit and eggs, which helped to stave off the depression in Southampton, at least as far as dockwork was concerned. Even so, it was as early as January 1930 that the Employment Exchange used by seamen, dockers, and coal porters was transferred to the old tobacco factory in Albert Road, because of the large number of men signing the register.[17]

Southampton Chamber of Commerce thought the depression was not so harsh in Southampton as in other ports,[18] however, there is no doubt that unemployment was a serious threat to casual workers who could have expected to obtain some work in better times. "Those industries which were nationally amongst the most depressed were locally responsible for over 50 percent of unemployment during the slump."[19] In other words, with such a large percentage of the working population of Southampton employed in the depressed port industries, real hardships were suffered by local men and their families as the amount of available work declined.

By 1933-34, when other ports were still experiencing employment difficulties, Southampton's new docks were in use, and the additional capacity was able to take up some of the slack in casual under- and unemployment by spreading tally-holders over a wider area. The number of tallies had been reduced and much of the unemployment among dockworkers concerned the seasonal card-holders and those without tallies who continued to attend calls in the hope of obtaining an odd day's work here and there to enable them to remain eligible for unemployment benefit.[20] The new docks increased the tonnage of shipping dealt with annually, and Union Castle added many vessels to their fleet between 1934-39,[21] which gave considerable zest to the port's dock work.

The peak of inter-war prosperity was reached in 1937. By 1938 the tide had turned in all four ports examined, but the decrease in reported employment was greater in Southampton. Where shipping and passengers increased they did not necessarily increase the freight brought on the liners, and because of the different handling methods for different commodities even an increase in freight tonnage need not have been accompanied by an increase in labour demand. Overall, conditions in the port's shipping may have been seen as more robust at various times in the 1930s than ports which did not transport foreign-going passengers, but this type of shipping provided very limited dock work. Employment in 1921 was extremely poor because the mining dispute accentuated the economic crisis arising from adverse world trade. Southampton was particularly badly effected on this occasion because of its own difficulties of starting up after the war, its shortage of berthing space, and its overflow of dockworkers. The 1930s produced a crisis no less severe in which recovery was markedly slower. That there were fewer men registered as dockers by the second slump did not help the overall employment situation in the port, because the limited opportunities elsewhere in Southampton kept too many willing to try their luck at the call stands. The introduction of the flying boat service provided additional work for a few dockers as TGWU stevedores were engaged to load and discharge passenger baggage. By and large dockworkers did not derive very much benefit from Southampton's shipping which did not attract exports and which remained interested in passenger transport without developing the freight potential which existed.

Seasonal Employment

Transatlantic crossings during the winter were very unattractive to passengers, and Southampton's established winter overhaul season indicates

a regular reduction in winter shipping. The Southern Railway Company also operated reduced winter schedules, and there is good reason to examine dockworkers' employment for signs of seasonal fluctuation. Because of the daily variation in employment the maximum and minimum numbers employed may have occurred in the same month, but given the pattern of shipping which existed in Southampton, it can be anticipated that a greater number of men could be employed overall during the summer months, leaving a surplus pool largely unemployed during the winter.

By using the written evaluations of employment converted to a 1-8 scale, as described above, the monthly averages for the years 1921-38 can be calculated. These immediately indicate that seasonality was a feature of Southampton dock work. (See Table 20).

Table 20. Average monthly dock employment availability for 1921-1938 based on the 1-8 scale of written evaluations for Southampton.

Jan	3.7	Jun	6.2	Nov	4.8
Feb	3.7	Jul	6.4	Dec	4.8
Mar	3.8	Aug	5.7		
Apl	3.8	Sep	6.0		
May	4.3	Oct	5.8		

Source: MOL Gazette.

N.B. The table represents a numerical code, not the number of days worked per week or a percentage of men.

The clearly divided winter and summer periods can be seen, with the slackest months of January and February co-inciding with the busiest months of the ship-repairers. The peak months of June and July occurred during the S.R. Company's fresh produce peak. As the transatlantic and South African citrus fruit season (May-November) came to a close at the end of the year, work was maintained at a lower level by Union Castle's cargoes of deciduous fruit, which lasted from December to June approximately. These were the main imports, but other cargoes were discharged,either in part or wholly, throughout the year, coming from many parts of the world.

The pre-war years showed a similar pattern of seasonal employment according to the MOL Gazette (see Table 21), with January and March and November/December offering only a "quiet" rating, while the summer period, which extended from April to October was described as "moderate". February was surprisingly brisk in 1910 and 1913, as that month was normally within the overhaul season.

Employment in the pre-war and post-war years was not precisely

Table 21. Average monthly dock employment availability for 1910, 1911 and 1913, based on the 1-8 scale of written evaluations for Southampton.

Jan	4.6	Apl	5.3	Nov	4.6
Feb	5.3	May	5.3	Dec	4.3
Mar	4.6	Jun	5.6		
		Jul	5.0		
		Aug	5.0		
		Sep	5.0		
		Oct	5.3		

Source: MOL Gazette.

identical, and there was a wider variation between maximum and minimum in the post-war years. Nevertheless, there was quite clearly a two season structure of employment, but on the whole, the pre-war, non-registration years provided slightly more regular employment at a lower level than the peacetime years following the introduction of registered labour.

Three pre-war years is insufficient time in which to establish an employment pattern, and unfortunately the pre-war reports, as indeed, the early post-war reports, were more a reflection of the region than the Port of Southampton on its own, and factors in other places may have been influential, Southampton not having the degree of prominence before the war that it had afterwards. The implication is, however, that in the pre-war years, when the total cargo coming into the port exceeded the totals of the post-war years, and when there were fewer foreign-going passengers,[22] seasonality was less noticeable than in the years when freight was less and passengers were greater. This view is endorsed by the maximum seasonal variation of the inter-war years occurring between 1924-28, the period of maximum foreign-going passengers through the port, except for 1937.[23]

When the inter-war years are divided into groups of peak and depressed years, as seen in the cyclical fluctuations, not only are the averages altered, but in the depression years 1921-23 the seasonal pattern is also slightly altered. The months show a steady increase in employment throughout the year, with a variation from "bad" (2.6) in January to March to "moderate" (5.3) in October, and only a small reduction in the last two months. (See Table 22). November and December consistently offered better employment than January and February, but this was not the case in the pre-war years. The change in the pattern suggests the possibility of a change in the overhaul season having occurred in conjunction with the increase in post-war shipping. The obvious change was the increase in the

volume of repair work provided by the great liners. However, from the dockworkers' point of view, while these ships were laid up their work was curtailed, and the smaller pre-war ships were unlikely to spend so long in dry dock.

Table 22. Average monthly dock employment availability for groups of years denoting cyclical fluctuation in Southampton.

Month	1921-23	1924-28	1929-34	1935-38
Jan	2.6	4.0	2.6	5.7
Feb	2.6	4.0	2.6	6.0
Mar	2.6	3.2	3.0	6.5
Apl	3.0	4.0	2.8	5.7
May	3.0	5.0	3.6	6.2
Jun	4.0	7.8	5.6	6.7
Jul	4.3	6.8	5.3	7.7
Aug	4.3	5.6	5.3	7.7
Sep	5.0	6.0	5.6	7.5
Oct	5.3	6.0	5.0	7.5
Nov	5.0	5.2	3.5	6.5
Dec	4.6	5.4	4.0	6.2

Source: MOL Gazette

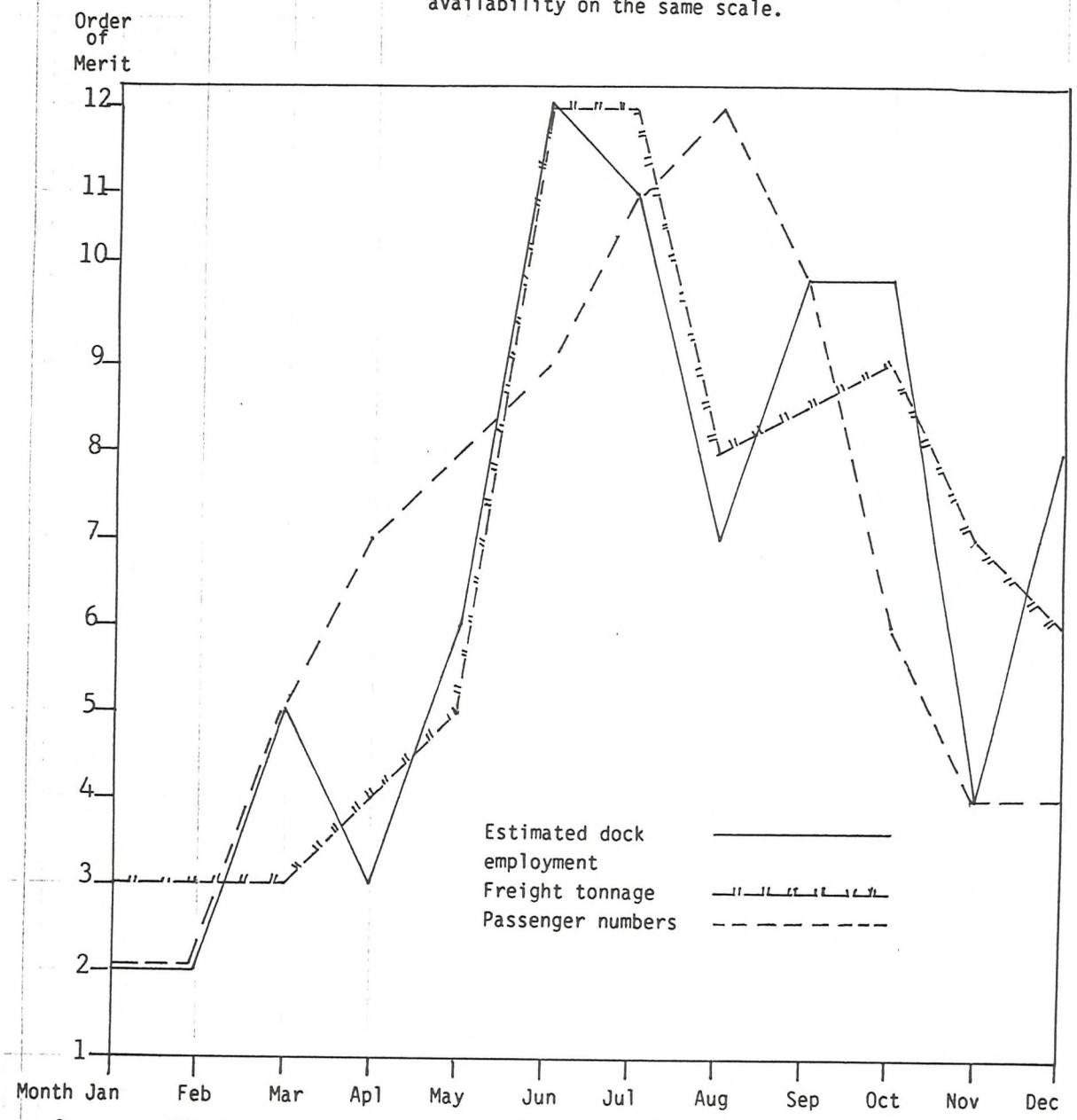
The seasonal pattern of dock employment was supported by similar seasonality in freight tonnage and passenger numbers.

In Figure 18 the twelve years 1921-34 are shown as a correlation of monthly averages of trade and employment availability (as recorded in the Gazette), in which 1 represents the lowest average month and 12 represents the busiest month.

The decrease in dock work in August was not consistent with passenger traffic, which saw August as the peak month, but it was shadowed by a decrease in freight tonnage. In general the three port activities shown followed a similar seasonal pattern, apart from the increase in December dock work. The number of vessels using the port in December was regularly greater than in January and February, but in the peak months of June, July and August the total was often nearly double the monthly total of ships entering and leaving the port in winter.

Thus, a seasonal pattern was clearly evident for dock employment, and with it came the associated problem of uneven employment opportunities, aggravated by the tendency of each employer to request tallies to meet his maximum seasonal requirements. Unless there was a seasonal review of the

Figure 18. The correlation of average increases and decreases in Southampton port traffic, on a comparative scale of 1-12, showing dockworkers' employment availability on the same scale.



Sources: MOL Gazette; and statistics provided by the Southern Railway Company and published monthly in the local press.

N.B. The graph is only taken to 1934 because not all the monthly statistics are available after this date.

register, the summer maximum would inevitably become a winter surplus. And yet, even with this pool of reserve labour, additional men were taken on during the peak season. They were called "green card men" because they were issued with temporary cards permitting them to work in the docks without tallies. They were also known as "fruit men", which is self-explanatory. However, the rush only lasted from six to eight weeks, and then, as well as the green card men, tally-holders also risked long-term unemployment. Even the preference men were not assured of work, but they

were the men called first when work was available.

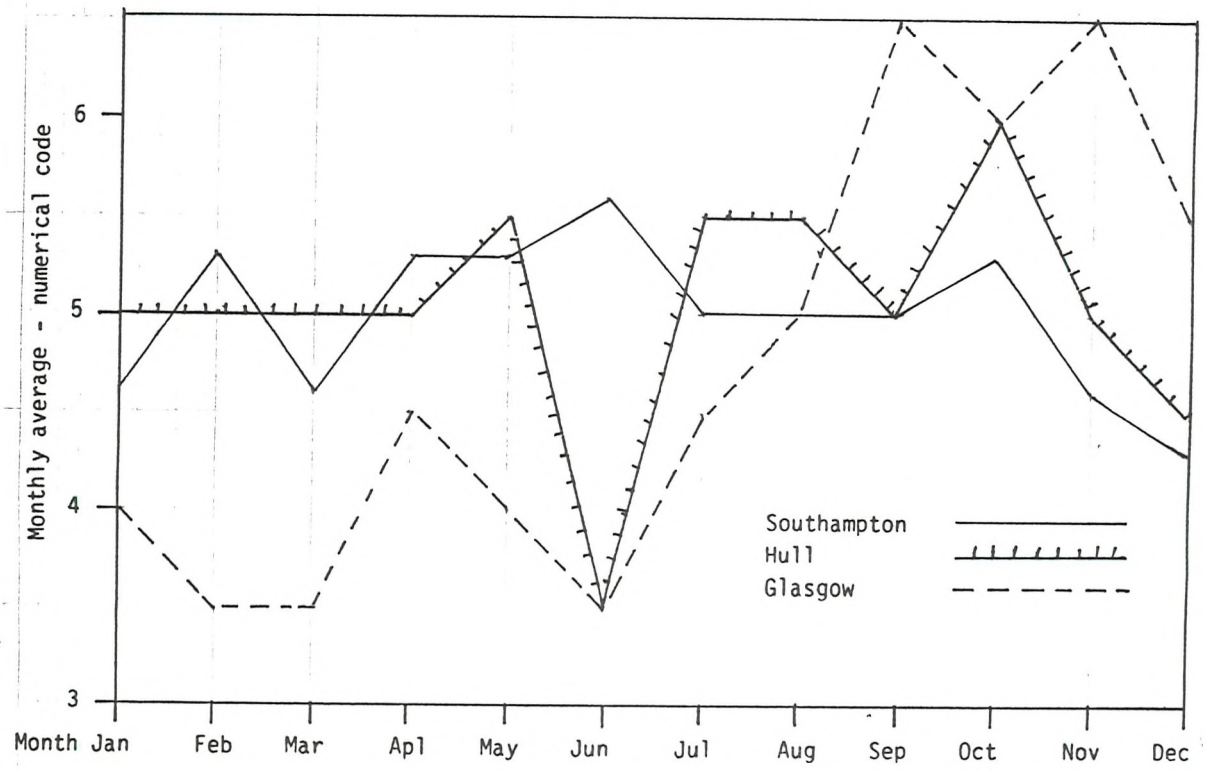
Despite the demand for dockers during June and July it was still possible for unemployment to occur among tally-holders at that time. The system of engagement was not conducive to orderly and regular employment. Green card men, who might have been laid off from the shipyards, or who might even have been waiting several months for a job, were probably especially eager to catch the foreman's eye, and by judicious pushing in the shed this was possible. There was always the chance that tally-holders were 'resting'.

The decline in winter passengers was not entirely offset by winter freight imports and a larger share of the nation's trade might have been beneficial to dockworkers' winter employment. However, this raises the question of the extent to which other ports, which handled a significantly greater proportion of freight, were subject to seasonal fluctuation.

Seasonality - port comparisons

There is already an indication that Southampton's work levels were seasonally influenced by its passenger trade, with the summer peak being accentuated by the Southern Railway rush period. In the pre-war years examined Southampton's seasonal variation appears considerably less than than either Hull or Glasgow. (See Figure 19).

Figure 19. Estimated dockworkers employment in selected ports based on the written evaluations for 1910-13, showing seasonality.

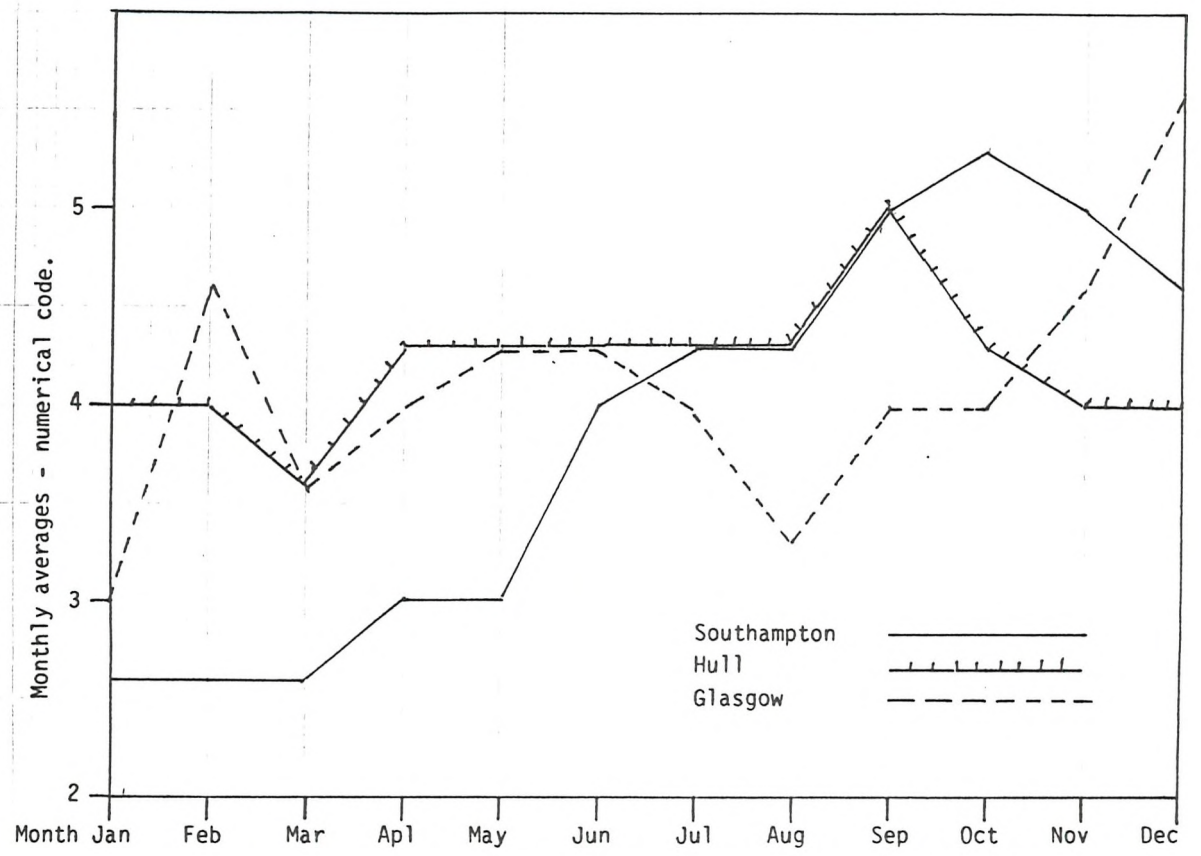


Bristol's seasonal range during these years from 2.5 in March to 8.0 in August and December was enormous, and like Glasgow, showed an overall increase from the beginning of the year, rather than two distinct seasons. Hull was similar to Southampton with a small seasonal range and a steep decline from October to December. The uncharacteristic mid-year depression in Hull may have been the result of labour unrest, because it was only in 1911 that the estimate of work available was so low. Neither Bristol nor Hull transported foreign-going passengers and the rising employment offered throughout the year was a reflection of its freight trade, which evidently had a tendency to increase in quantity during the year. The fall from December to the following January does not indicate that imports were of a winter/summer seasonal nature. Glasgow, with a smaller variation than Bristol, was rather similar in trend, with less work available from January to March, and a steadily increasing amount from June.

During the pre-war years when Southampton had less shipping and less passenger trade, seasonality was not a major feature of dock employment, and seemed not to be more prone to it than other ports.

In the years 1921-23 Southampton's average employment took an upward course from beginning to end of each year, but this was particularly apparent in 1921, when all Southampton's port trades were so poor in the early months. (See Figure 20).

Figure 20. Estimated dockworkers' employment in selected ports based on the written evaluations for 1921-23, showing seasonality.



Bristol repeated the trend of its pre-war employment with a greater range of variation than Southampton. Significantly, the lowest averages in Southampton and Bristol were well below the worst averages in Hull and Glasgow. From January to June employment in Hull and Glasgow was described as largely "quiet", while in Southampton and Bristol it was "bad". The relatively even flow of work in Hull as reported to the MOL showed no sign of the unofficial dock strike which occurred in that port during the summer of 1923, and there is very little evidence of seasonal activity, either in increase or decline. It is worth remembering that 1923 was the year in which Hull received its maximum tonnage of foreign-going shipping.

Figure 21. Estimated dockworkers' employment in selected ports based on the written evaluations for 1924-28, showing seasonality.

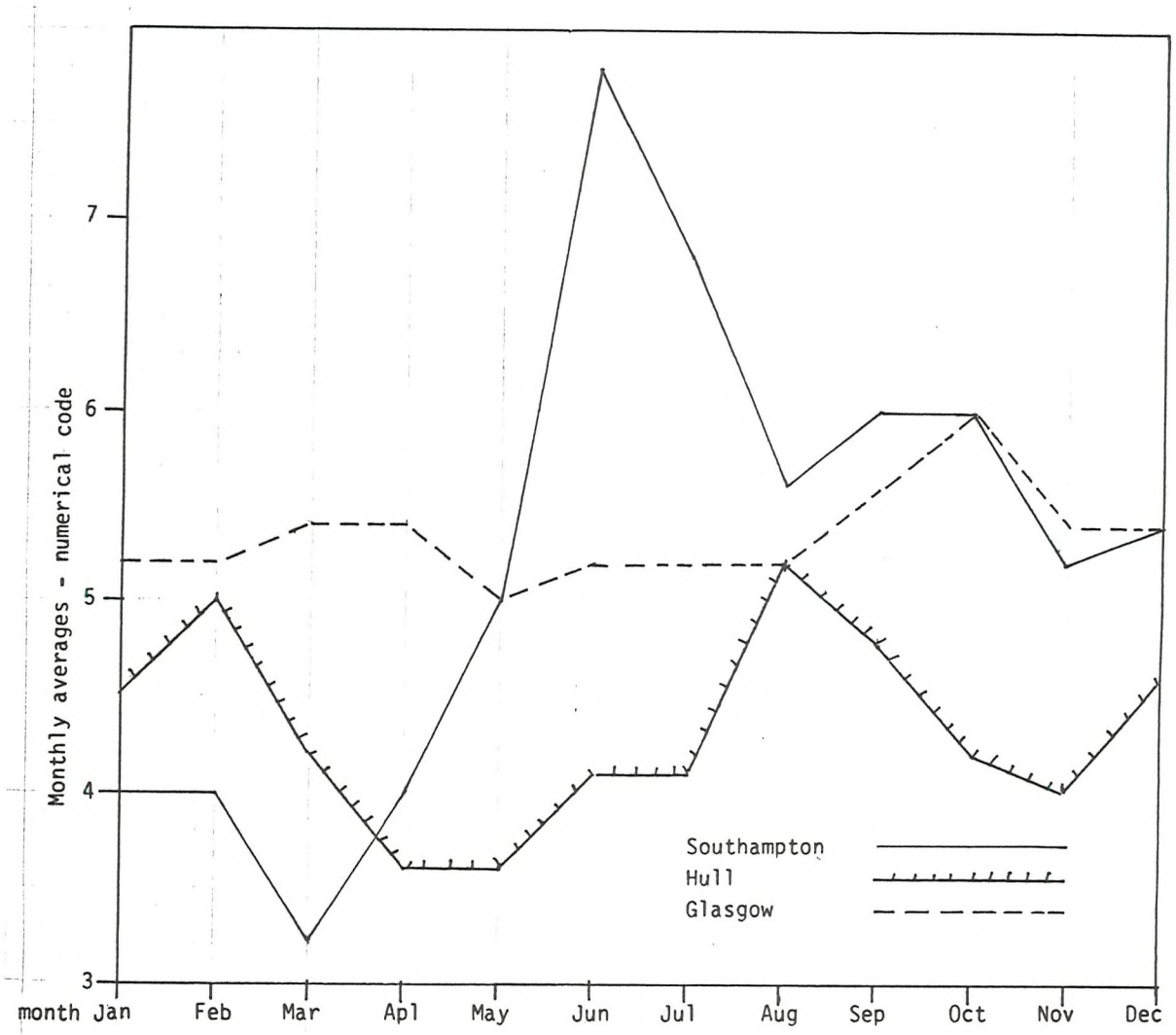


Figure 21 shows the seasonal variation in the group of years which represented the best of the 1920s in Southampton. Again the slack period at the beginning of the year was well below employment levels in the other three ports, but in these years the boom of summer traffic is reflected in the amount of dock work available. In these years shipping decreased in

Hull and made very little gain in Glasgow, and since it was foreign-going freighters which provided the bulk of the work for dockers these two ports did not fare so well. In both, dock work was reported as "moderate" or less, except for Glasgow in October, which reached "fair". There was far less variation between maximum and minimum employment than in Southampton and Bristol. The latter did not significantly alter its established pattern of steadily increasing employment throughout the year.

The next group of years (Figure 22) represents depression, and for the first time shows an alteration in Bristol's employment levels, denoting a decrease in foreign trade.

Figure 22. Estimated dockworkers' employment in selected ports based on the written evaluations for 1929-34, showing seasonality.

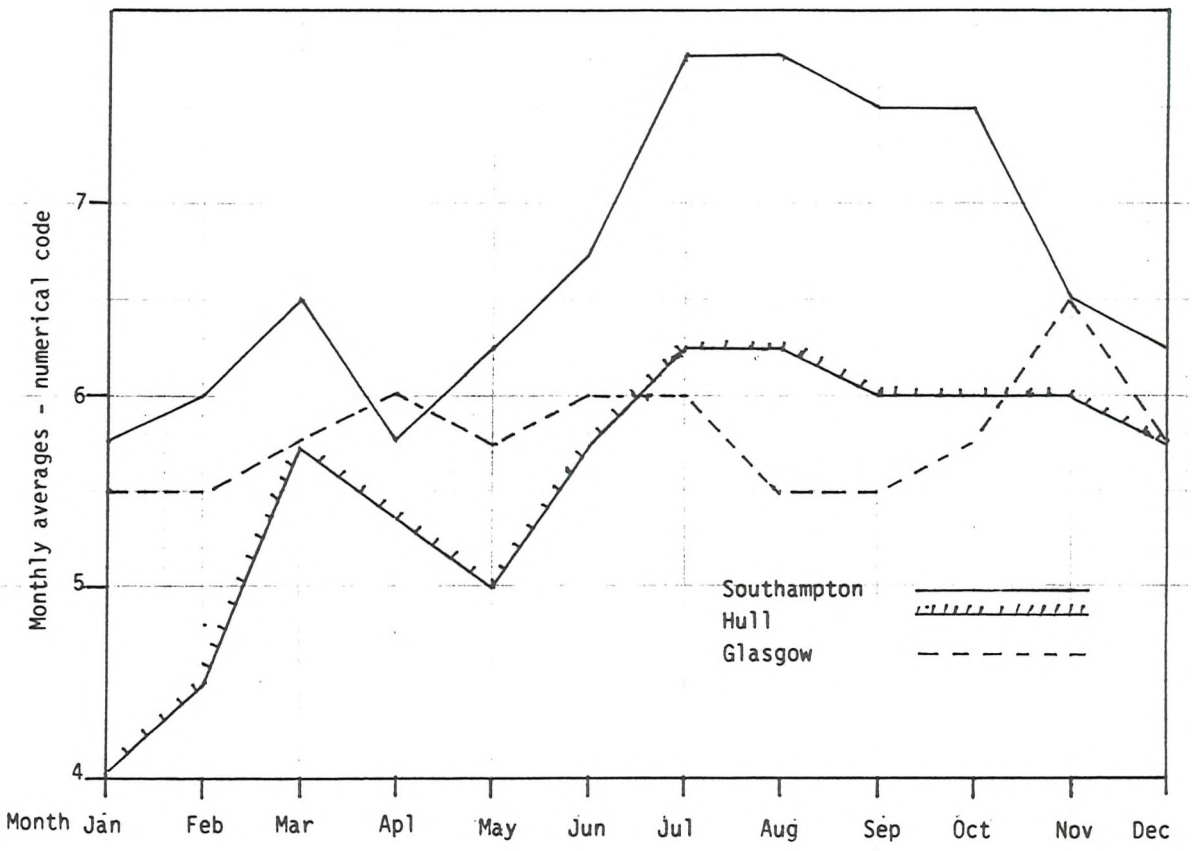


Southampton's seasonal pattern is as clear as in the previous group of years, but only in the peak months was the employment level reported as better than before. From January to May and October to December dock work available was decidedly poor in Southampton. Bristol's rise was from January to December as in previous groups, but now in an erratic fashion and with a much smaller overall variation. The reduction in shipping and the loss of cargo traffic during the depression affected Hull and Glasgow no less than elsewhere, (Glasgow was one of the most depressed areas), but despite this, dock work was reported as a reasonable level and was remarkably

stable.

In the boom of the late 1930s (Figure 23) Bristol returned to its familiar pattern, but with January offering more work than previously, giving it a more even distribution of work than the Decembers which followed. After a quiet start to these years in Hull it eventually levelled out into a relatively small variation range, like Glasgow.

Figure 23. Estimated dockworkers' employment in selected ports based on the written evaluations for 1935-38, showing seasonality.



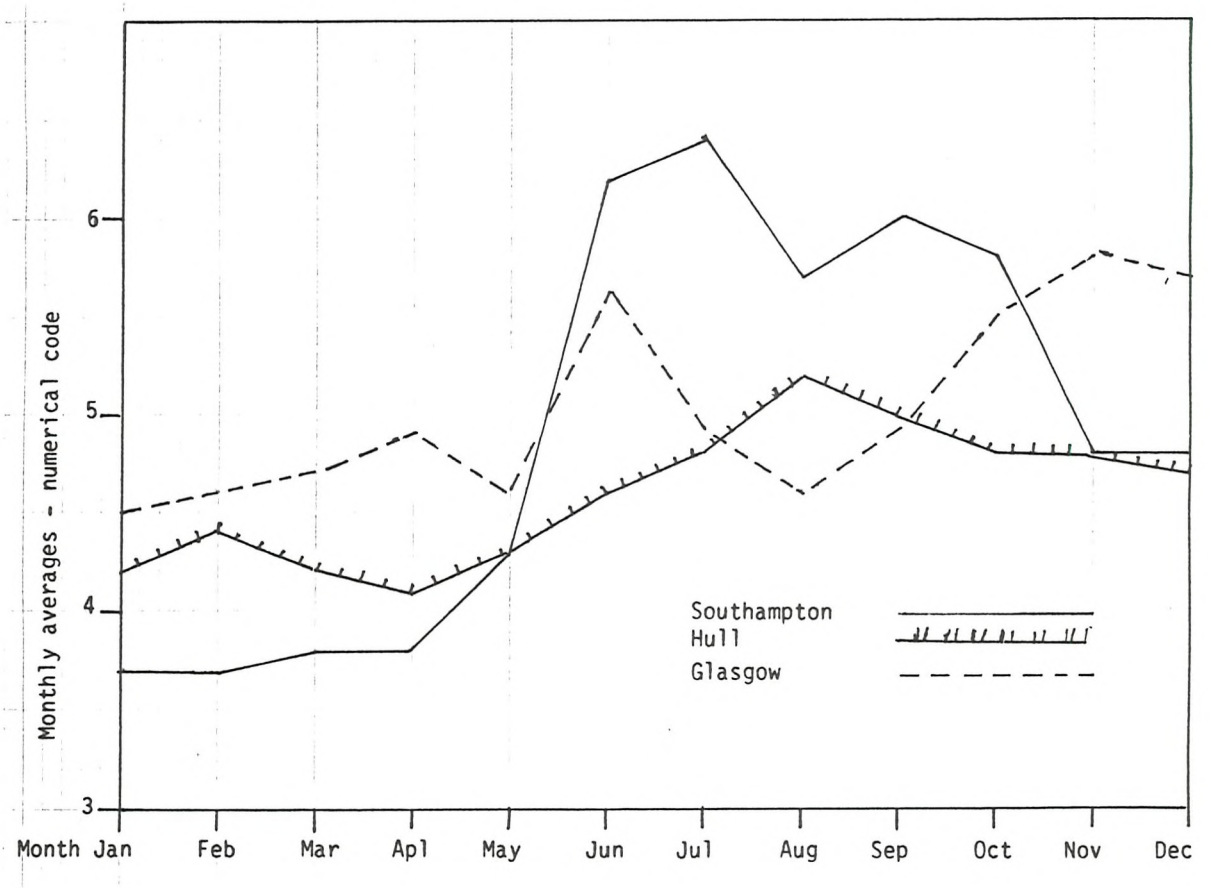
The level of available dock work was so much improved in Southampton in these years that the reporting painted a glowing picture for most months in the year, but the summer peak was outstanding. We know that in these years not only was there a boom in passenger traffic, but also the new docks assisted an increase in freight volume as well. The additional spread of the docks also contributed to the better distribution of work among dockers on the register.

As Southampton's seasonal variation did not occur before the war, and because it was strongest in the years when passenger trade was at its height, it is fair to say that passenger shipping directly contributed to the port's seasonal fluctuation. However, there were also other causes of seasonality, such as that found in Bristol, which appears to have been its annual import/ export pattern. This divided between the beginning and end of the year,

rather than summer and winter, but it is very likely that it caused an unemployment problem among the tail end of the registered dockers, or perhaps, the over-age men on the register.

Comparisons between ports as far as overall employment levels are concerned is a little unfair, because we cannot be sure that what was seen as "moderate" in one port was not regarded as "fair" in another and "slack" in a third. Nevertheless, the seasonal trends of ports, such as they are, are clearly indicated, and Figure 24, showing the whole period, demonstrates Southampton's unmistakable seasonality.[24]

Figure 24. Estimated dockworkers' employment in selected ports based on the written evaluations for 1921-38, showing seasonality.



Unemployment

Two interesting social surveys of poverty in ports were made during the inter-war years. The first, already referred to, was Percy Ford's study of Southampton from 1928-32. The second was Herbert Tout's Bristol Survey[25] taken in 1937. Of the whole sample in Bristol only 4.5 percent were casually employed, and the difference between economic circumstances in 1931/32 and 1937 was considerable. Almost certainly, a survey of Southampton in 1937 would have produced different results, at least regarding

unemployment.

Ford's poverty datum line for a family of man, woman and one child under five was 30s. per week in 1928, which included a flat rate of 8s. per week for rent. He altered the figure to 26s. 3d. at the end of 1931 to take account of the fall in prices.[26] According to Ford 21 percent of working class families in Southampton in 1931 were estimated to be below this line, which he described as "exceptionally heavy." He pointed out, however, that if unemployment had been at the level of 1928 it would probably have reduced poverty to about 13 percent.[27] He regarded even this as high.

The poverty measured was primary, that is, when total family earnings were insufficient to provide minimum essential requirements for physical efficiency. In addition to this, secondary poverty related to insufficient family income being spent on essential requirements. Ford added a third category. He called this potential poverty and defined it as releasing the head of the family from the liability to maintain older children at work, and releasing those children from the obligation to contribute to the support of younger children. He then examined the data to see to what extent heads of families were able to support immediate family with younger children out of their own income. In this category he found 34 percent in poverty.[28] Thus, the view of poverty in which the family's pooled income is taken into account, the requirement of the Means Test,[29] produced fewer families in poverty than when chief earners and subsidiary earners were counted separately.

The scales of Public Assistance Relief did not favour Southampton's distressed casual workers as much as their colleagues in some other ports.

	Southampton	Liverpool	Hull	Newcastle
Man, wife	18s.3d.	20s.	23s.	22s.
Man, wife, four children	28s.6d.	33s.	35s.	28s.6d.

The above figures for May 1930 did not compare well with Ford's poverty datum line for 1931.

Ford discovered that unemployment was responsible for 35 percent of the primary poverty in Southampton at the time of his survey, and that of those in poverty for this reason 47 percent were labourers, only 7 percent were seamen and stewards, and 4 percent skilled shipyard workers. We cannot read into this that all the labourers were dockworkers, but in 1930 16,000 of the insured people of Southampton were engaged in shipping, 4,000 in shipbuilding and ship-repairing, and 4,200 in dock and port work, only 900 were employed in the tobacco factory and other manufacturing firms; so it would be fair to say that the majority of the labourers in poverty were likely to be dockworkers, or casual workers.

In his survey from May-September 1937 Herbert Tout found that Bristol "enjoyed a high and secure standard of living compared with other towns." He also found that the main causes of poverty, where it existed, were the absence of an earner, or the unemployment of the chief earner. Tout was looking at the town of Bristol, rather than the port, and perhaps his sample was not taken from the part of town which housed the families of port workers, hence his low percentage of casuals. Whether he would have found more than the 12.4 percent in poverty reported in his survey had he sampled nearer to dockland remains unanswered. The elasticity of Bristol's industries, as Tout called it, cushioned Bristol from some of the problems of high unemployment.

The social evils which stemmed from unemployment were not so easily escaped in a port such as Southampton in less advantageous years. There the greater proportion of its working population were dependent upon the port industries with fewer suitable alternatives. Even so, Southampton did not have all its eggs in one basket, and some of the workers were employed in relatively secure jobs, particularly in vehicle and aircraft building, tobacco products and cables, while the less fortunate majority were clinging to that uncertain way of life connected with port industries between the wars.

While Ford was carrying out his survey he collected unemployment figures from Southampton Employment Exchange for the three port industries, and these show that from January 1927 to June 1930 there was much less seasonal fluctuation among dockworkers than the other two industries. Nevertheless, the unemployment trend closely followed the reverse of the employment trend already observed in the evaluations. (See Appendix 13).

During this time the MOL Registration and Guaranteed Week Committee (which was an alternative name for the Maclean Committee), carried out a survey of unemployment in 26 major ports, including Southampton, from May to October 1930, for the purpose of recording the amount of unemployment benefit being paid to port transport workers. Table 23 shows some of their findings.

One of the smallest averages of men receiving benefit was Southampton, and theirs was one of the smallest average payments. The Liverpool register was known to be grossly over-large and there was little hope of employing all their tally-holders. In London the percentage of registered men in receipt of benefit was probably kept low because of the influence of the PLA dockers, who were in a more comfortable position than many. Hull's register being very large in proportion to the number of insured persons in the industry was, on its own, responsible for a high percentage of unemployment. However, many employers there did not engage

registered men and the situation was particularly bad in 1930. Probably a larger percentage of unregistered men were working regularly in Hull than in other ports (except Glasgow), thus raising the percentage of registered men seeking benefit. The MOL had also discovered that, owing to the breakdown of the registration scheme men were failing to attend calls regularly. The level of employment availability was low in 1930 and in all probability Hull dockers were "playing the system to their advantage."[30]

Table 23 Summary of Returns, May to October 1930, showing the number of port transport workers and the amount of unemployment benefit being paid weekly.

1	2	3	4	5	6 %
London	50,974	36,925	8,277	17s. 6d.	22.4
Liverpool	20,766	19,937*	11,307	18s. 4d.	56.7
Southampton	4,509	2,893	762	14s.10d.	26.3
Hull	7,985	7,775	2,889	16s. 6d.	31.1
Glasgow	4,444	-	882	14s. 8d.	19.8#
Bristol	4,292	2,777 (A)ϕ 380 (B)	1,458	16s. 5d.	46.2

Column 1 - Port

Column 2 - Total number of adult male dockworkers recorded as insured persons.

N.B. This includes all men 18-64 years normally employed in port transport including insured persons permanently employed, who in some cases, are not included in registration schemes.

Column 3 - Average number of workers on the register.

Column 4 - Average weekly number of benefit payments.

Column 5 - Average amount of each payment.

Column 6 - Percentage of registered workers in receipt of weekly benefit.

* Not more than 15,000 were employed daily.

\# Percentage of insured workers receiving benefit, there being no register.

ϕ The registration scheme in Bristol provided for A workers who were preference men, and B workers who were engaged when all A men present had been called.

Source: PRO: PIN 7 115.

There being no register in Glasgow the unemployed counted were all those who claimed to be attempting to earn a living from the docks. The low level of claims for benefit reflects the written evaluations, which indicated that work was not too scarce in the port in 1930. Despite the alleged efficiency of Bristol's registration scheme which had supposedly eliminated many surplus dockers, the claims for benefit were excessive.

However, the reports gave 1930 as the worst year for employment in Bristol, apart from 1921.

Port-by-port monthly unemployment statistics were collected by the MOL from August 1931, and these included London and Liverpool, details of which have so far been largely excluded because the employment data was not in comparable format for these ports. It should be noted that the men who worked for the PLA were mostly quayworkers, and a great many were regularly employed from a preference list, whereas those who worked for the ocean-going shipping lines down the river, whether stevedores or lightermen, were less certain of engagement. Non-preference casual dockers swelled the numbers at call stands on all the London docks.[31]

When the MOL began collecting the unemployment statistics it was found, although not for the first time, that "the non-classification of the port transport industry proper is a snag."[32] To make the information obtained more meaningful port labour was classified according to the place of work, as well as by benefit status.

Group RT 1 was the old category of canal, riverside and harbour workers.

Group RT 2a became regular port transport industry registered casuals, irrespective of the number of stamps in their books, and other casuals with more than twenty stamps.

Group RT 2b became unregistered casuals with less than twenty stamps of contributions for 1930-31.

The statistics for category RT 2b are extremely erratic and appear to have represented a very unstable surplus labour pool in all the ports examined. The high percentages of unemployed in this category in Southampton indicate that very few unregistered men were being employed in 1931.

Table 24. Average annual unemployment of RT2b workers in Southampton.

1933	64.0	1936	54.3
1934	47.6	1937	61.8
1935	73.5	1938	74.3

Source: Calculated from PRO: LAB 2 2177 STATS 297/1935

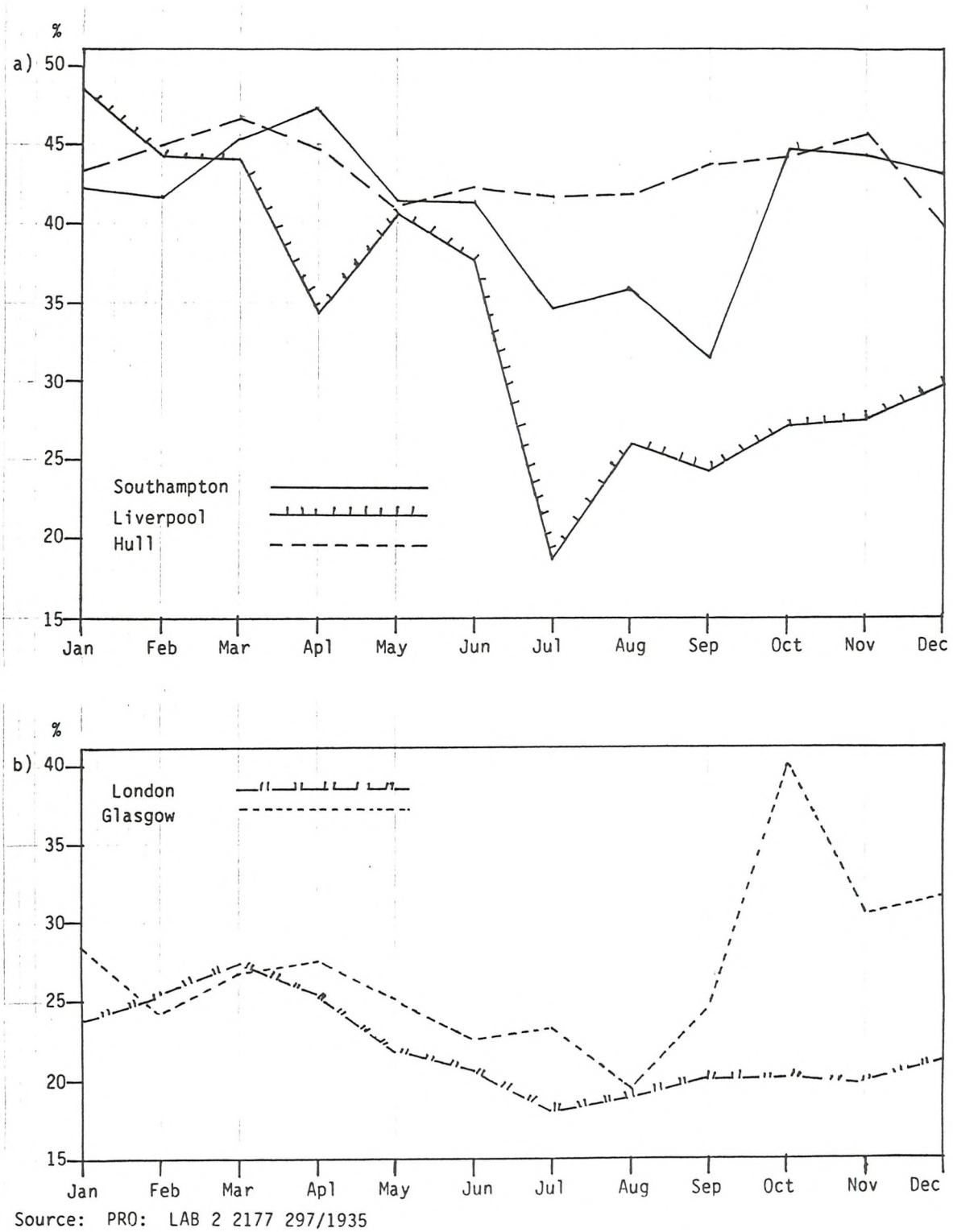
There was no correlation between the volume of work available and the percentage of unregistered men unemployed, the good years of 1937 and 1938 do not show either more or less than the not so good years of 1933 and 1935. Nor did any particular seasonal trend emerge.

The unemployment figures were collected at regular monthly intervals and are, therefore, consistent trends in all ports, but in Southampton the bulk of the work was provided by the liners, which meant mid-week for most of

the work. Week end employment was provided more by the Southern Railway Company and International Cold Storage. Thus, unemployment levels recorded regularly on Wednesdays might have been different had they been recorded on Fridays.

Statistics were only available for part of 1931 and 1932, but as might be expected, unemployment was higher in Southampton in the closing months of 1932 than in the same months the previous year.

Figures 25a and 25b. Monthly percentages of unemployed dockworkers in selected ports for 1933.

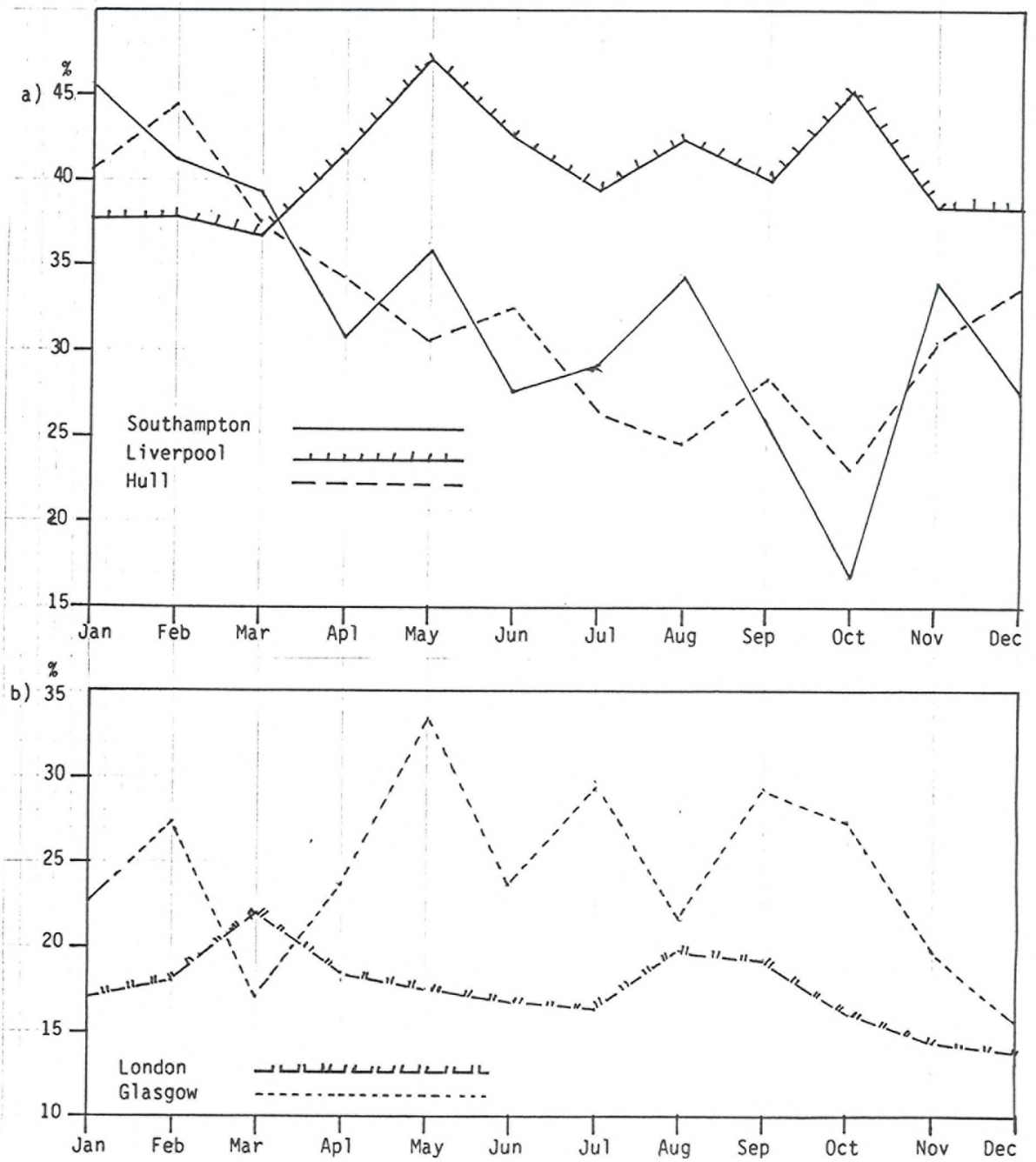


Source: PRO: LAB 2 2177 297/1935

In Figures 25a and 25b showing 1933, Liverpool, Southampton and Glasgow recorded a marked seasonal difference in unemployment between summer and winter, and the lower percentages of unemployment in Liverpool in the second half of the year appear to indicate a recovery from the depression. Hull with high unemployment and London with low unemployment had very little variation between the maximum and minimum percentages. The enormous quantity of goods moved by the preference men of the PLA masks the much more severe unemployment of the thousands of unregistered dockers in London. Still in the depression, Hull was, no doubt, short of work, but poor organisation and weak registration in the port were largely to blame for the consistently high unemployment in 1933.

Figures 26a and 26b. Monthly percentages of unemployed dockworkers in selected ports for 1935.

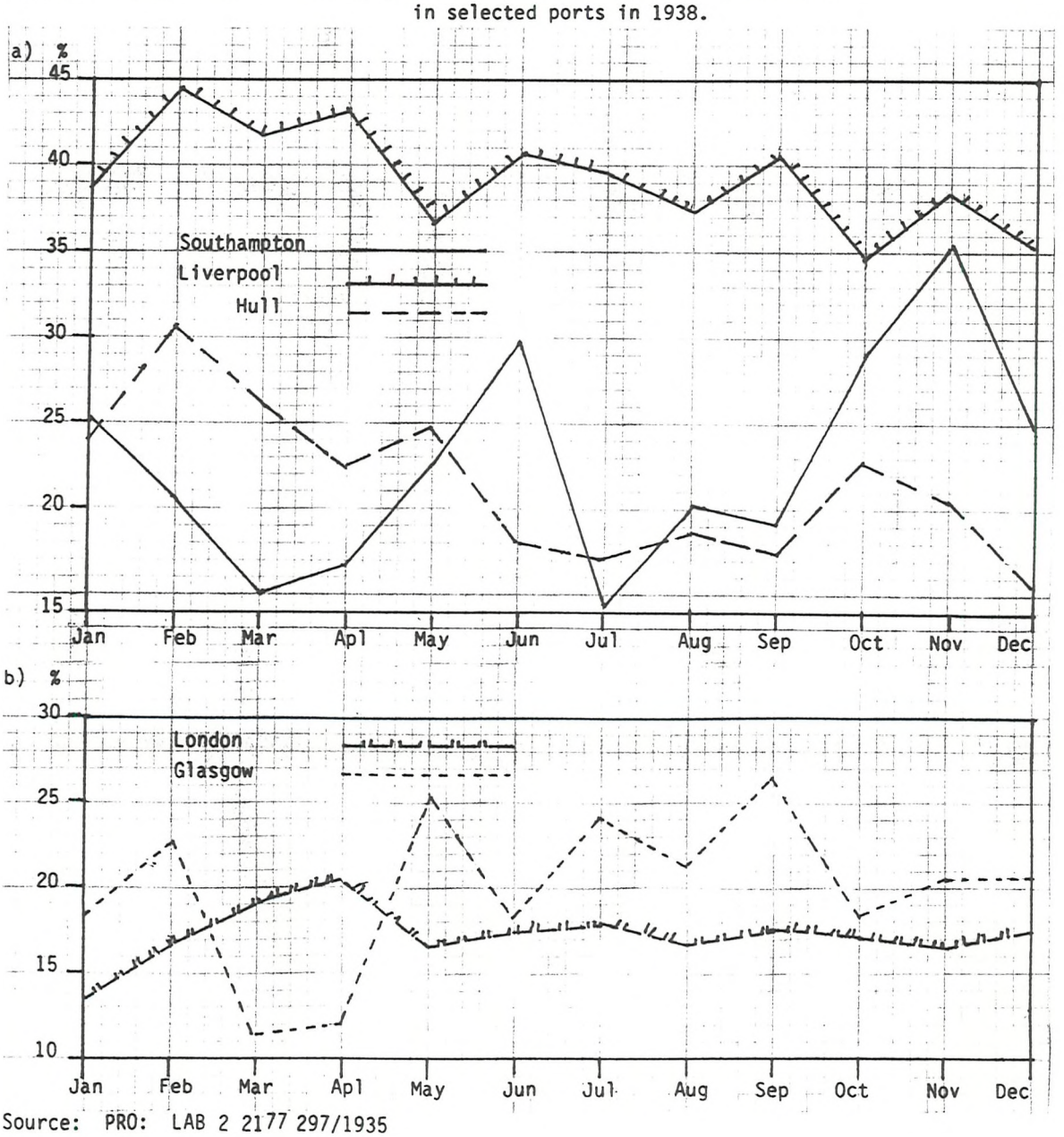
Source: LAB2 2177 297/1935.



In 1935 the ports of Southampton and Hull reversed the situation with Liverpool, which experienced steadily increasing unemployment as the tonnage of its imports and exports declined. London's dockwork remained keen and its unemployment was again low, showing a very stable level throughout the year. Glasgow experienced an increase in unemployment in the summer months of 1935, but presumably the men counted were all those with more than 20 stamps on their employment books, since the standard RT2a category (which included registered men as well as unregistered with 20 stamps) did not apply in Glasgow. Southampton, at an overall lower level of unemployment, followed roughly the same seasonal trend as Glasgow, with three periods of low unemployment which were also matched by three peaks in the trend of passenger shipping and seamen's employment.

By 1938 Southampton and Glasgow had reduced unemployment among dock-workers even further. Southampton's improvement in port trade during 1937

Figures 27a and 27b. Monthly percentages of unemployed dockworkers in selected ports in 1938.



Source: PRO: LAB 2 2177 297/1935

was sufficiently sustained to give a healthy picture of the level of unemployment the following year, with a figure as low as 15 per cent being recorded in March and July. Signs of the economic downturn can be seen in the increase of unemployment during May and June, normally busy months when temporary registration cards were distributed to extra hands. Towards the end of the year the continuing decline in the volume of trade resulted in another rise in unemployment.

London followed much the same trend as in previous years with low unemployment and very little variation in the numbers signing on at the Employment Exchanges throughout the year. In fact, London's unemployment remained at a remarkably steady level during the 1930s suggesting a degree of regularity among RT2a category workers. Dockworkers being counted in this instance were those from all the dock areas on both sides of the river and were not confined to the more regularly employed PLA men. There may well have been a higher percentage of long-term unemployed among the London men than were found in ports with greater fluctuations, whether they were caused by seasonal variations or by some other uneven distribution in work load.

The Glasgow figures indicate improved employment with a marked drop in the number of dockworkers unemployed. A corresponding improvement in ship-building in the Clydeside yards reduced unemployment generally in the region, and perhaps ship-building was able to take a few labourers who had previously looked for work in the port transport industry. Nevertheless, unemployment was still high in Glasgow and the refusal to introduce registration made it the subject of an investigation by the MOL.

Hull also recorded lower unemployment as work became more plentiful than in the the earlier years of the decade. The registration and trade union troubles, which had been responsible for much local unrest, had largely been ironed out and improved trade was able to be more effectively distributed.

The method of counting the unemployed was changed in September 1937 which makes direct comparison with 1938 difficult, but the last three months of 1937, using the new method, recorded lower percentages in all ports than the earlier part of the year, which puts the low unemployment of 1938 into better perspective.

Liverpool's percentages of unemployed might have been even more disappointing by the old method of counting. Its cargo tonnage decreased every year during the 1930s, and its passenger transport continued to be lost to Southampton, so that despite the volume of cargo still handled in the port the excess of registered men over available employment brought the unemployment rate to a higher level than experienced by Southampton in

1933.

Bristol recorded an extraordinary variation between maximum and minimum unemployment in 1938. For example, in June it was 52 per cent and in August only 5.4 per cent. The number of men working in Bristol was less by this time than in the other ports examined, but the range of unemployment had always shown the widest variations, from a mere 54 men in May 1933 to as many as 1,963 in January 1935. 1938 recorded the widest extremes in a single year. The regulation of Bristol's labour, with its strict registration scheme and individual employment record books, was held up as a model example by the MOL but, without conforming to a seasonal pattern, the dockworkers seem to have been subject to fluctuations which are not entirely in keeping with Herbert Tout's view of unemployment, namely, that it was less hazardous than in other towns. The unemployment statstics for Bristol dockworkers seem to reinforce the opinion that Tout might have found different results had he included more than 4.5 per cent casual workers among his survey sample.

Average annual unemployment of the ports' RT2a category men, as seen in Table 25, shows that unemployment in Liverpool was substantially above the level in other ports, while in London it was substantially below. As an average the recorded level in Bristol is low, but this disguises the erratic course of unemployment which was either severely influenced by peaks and troughs in shipping and cargo handling or by transference of labourers to the docks during slack months in Bristol's other industries and vice versa.

In Southampton there was very little evidence of such movement between industries, and as already pointed out, fewer industries to move between than in Bristol. Southampton's average unemployment remained higher than was recorded in Hull and Glasgow, despite the increased shipping tonnage using the port, and the resumption of growth in passenger transport. The reason for this, as already expressed, was because

Table 25. Average annual unemployment as recorded on certain days each month at selected ports, shown as a percentage of dockworkers in Category RT 2a.

Port	1933	1935	1938
LONDON	21.8	17.4	17.2
LIVERPOOL	43.3	40.6	39.2
SOUTHAMPTON	41.0	32.4	22.6
HULL	33.6	31.3	21.5
GLASGOW	26.9	24.1	19.9
BRISTOL	21.3	27.4	19.0

Source: Calculated from PRO: LAB 2 2177 297/1935

Southampton's shipping did not provide dock work in proportion to its tonnage. However, the speed of discharge and loading which passenger schedules demanded called for an ever-ready pool of workers, which contributed to a larger percentage of unemployment than might have occurred if the port's dock work had been more evenly spaced throughout the week and the seasons.

Although employment is difficult to estimate accurately from statistics because of the uncertainty of casualism, the MOL unemployment statistics provide a reasonable guide to trends. The fluctuations in unemployment in Southampton to some extent reflected the quantity of work available, and although the bulk of it was likely to have been obtained by the regular men (those in the RT2a category), the casual habit and the engagement system allowed additional men to pick up work on a random basis. It was hoped that a reduction in the number of men on the register would provide greater opportunities for those still holding tallies, but when the quantity of work decreased in line with the register, then competition for jobs remained as fierce as before. Table 26 shows the gradual reduction in the number of registered men at five ports, covering various times during certain years.

Table 26. Registered dockworkers in selected ports during certain years together with estimates of pre-registration labour.

Year	Southampton	London	Liverpool	Hull	Bristol
Pre-war	3,800	70,000	48,400	10,000	6,000
1918	3,300	59,848	29,920	5,360	4,500
1919	3,000	40,000-55,000	29,000	5,000-6,000	5,000
1927	2,917	40,000	20,700	8,379-8,541	3,006 2,989
1930	2,906	36,381	19,814	7,737	2,734
1933	2,347	33,904	16,570	6,385	2,729
1938	2,539	33,774	16,464	6,553	2,683

Sources: Pre-war - Number of men employed } LAB 2 1050 ET 3995/1931
1918 Number employed week ending 8.3.1918 }
1919 LAB 2 1052 DPL 296
1927 November 1927, Southampton LAB 8 204 10 ED.121.1959
London and Liverpool LAB 2 1054 ED 8634/1925
Hull 31.3.27 and 30.9.27 LAB 2 1049 ET 4825/6/1930
Bristol 30.3.27 and 30.9.27 LAB 2 2020 EMA 431/1937
1930 Number in Registration Scheme LAB 2 1046 ET 6734/1930
1933 Number registered in December 1933 LAB 8 204 10 ED 121/1959
1938 Number registered in December 1938 LAB 8 204 10 ED 121/1959

The relentless reduction of Bristol's register in conjunction with a rising trade of imports, without doubt improved Bristol dockers' chances of employment. However, at the same time, there were a large number of ex-dockers seeking alternative employment in the town. According to Tout's survey many of these men managed to obtain work. Amongst Bristol's diverse industries there were evidently suitable opportunities for labourers with a degree of skill in their own field.

The figures quoted for Hull in 1918 and 1919 had increased by 1938, but a reasonable reduction was achieved against the pre-war figure. From 1925 to 1927 when the register was not in proper use, the number of registered men rose almost to the pre-war level, but the Employment Exchange officer may not have been receiving accurate information. There is no evidence that Hull dock work was confined to registered dockers, but if men were not attending calls regularly even with a large register there may have been scope for outsiders.

Liverpool's reduction in the register was a valiant effort, but in a port with dwindling cargoes it was not sufficient reduction to stem the increasing unemployment. MOL officials several times commented on the excess of tally-holders over tallies currently issued, but from their point of view there was little to be gained by excluding the excess from the chance of some dock work, unless they could also be excluded from entitlement to unemployment benefit. However, it was to assist the long-term unemployed who were 'out of benefit' that the amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act were necessary.

Like Liverpool, London continually reduced its register. Dockers were spread over a considerable distance, and with little loss of trade the situation was better than in the other ports examined, but even so, London was not without unemployment problems.

Southampton's seasonal winter slack time was eased somewhat by the movement of military personnel during the months September to April. Although the trooping season provided little employment for sea-going civilians, or merchant seamen, Southampton dockworkers provided the labour for stores handling, and with in the region of fifty ship movements in a season it was a useful addition to local employment. If the port's register had been revised at six monthly intervals or more often, the number of dockworkers could have been adjusted to accommodate the affects of seasonality, but in Southampton seasonal adjustments were not made by reducing tally-holders in the slack season. The custom was to deal with seasonality by increasing labour with temporary card holders in the busy season. It is clear from the level of unemployment among men in the RT2a category that there were too many men for the work available throughout

most of the 1930s. Since the register size fluctuated in accordance with the amount of trade (being greater in the more prosperous years), it seems likely that the surplus was maintained at much the same level regardless of the year or season, in order to meet the mid-week requirements of the passenger liners.

Dovetailing

One of the measures which had been suggested as a remedy for unemployment was dovetailing, but it had not proved successful as a general measure because there were few areas where trades were complementary, and the need for different technical skills was a set-back even where such areas existed.[33] However, in the port of Southampton the industries and the technical skills presented a degree of inter-changeability. The busy summer in the docks co-incided with the slack period in the shipyards, but the registration scheme prevented a rush of ship-repairers to the docks, because all tally-holders were entitled to obtain employment first. After this, if the Southern Railway Company had any of their seamen on stand-by, instead of crewing, they were likely to be given work on the quayside. Ford estimated that only about twenty men from the shipyards found work in the docks.[34] He also found a reluctance to divulge the extent of dovetailing in the port. J. Hart, TGWU officer, denied that it took place at all, despite the seasonally opposite periods. His view was that "if a registered docker gets into the shipyards it causes trouble amongst the men,"[35] which would seem fair enough if shipyard workers could not get work in the docks where tally-holders held privileged positions. However, in the late 1930s a Supplementary Register was introduced in the port which was filled mostly by ship-repairers who were unemployed during the period of seasonal pressure in the docks. "The men returned to the shipyards on termination of the seasonal dockwork and did not remain to seek employment as unregistered dockers, as was the case of men engaged from surrounding districts."[36]

The fact that men should be engaged from surrounding districts at all is interesting in view of the level of unemployment seen in Table 25, and in the later 1930s, if not earlier, it gives reason to speculate that Southampton dockers, like those in Hull, and doubtless elsewhere, enjoyed the advantage of working three days a week and taking three days off, or working "three days on the hook and three days on the book" as it was known.[37]

According to Southampton PRC one of the ways in which men obtained tallies was by having previous experience, and not only were some 50 per-

cent of the stevedores in 1930 former seamen, approximately a third of the applications for tallies were from shipyard workers.

Thus, by one means or another, dovetailing did take place, but not as a convenient remedy for the seasonal problems which afflicted port workers. Ford had discussed the feasibility of this in 1930, but the introduction of the Supplementary Register was a step taken to ease the very heavy unemployment in the shipyards rather than provide suitable labour for the docks. Ford proposed the creation of a pool of general labour which could be inter-changeable between the docks and shipyards because he thought men's capacity to acquire new skills was underestimated. The object of his pool was to reduce the casual element of both industries, but he foresaw the problem of attempting to implement any kind of decasualisation, namely that it called for an expanding market to limit the number of those who would be excluded from working in the initial re-organisation.

There is no doubt that ship-repairers and seafarers were capable of adapting their own skills to dockwork, but given the demarcation which existed in the shipyards, it was being somewhat over-optimistic to think that trade unions might be willing to permit dockworkers to do even the most elementary jobs of the skilled craftsmen, even if they were capable of learning. Ford's idea was an excellent method of utilising port labour to the fullest extent, but it did not take root in Southampton.

Unemployment Insurance Benefit

At the end of the war the rapid setting up of the out-of-work donation scheme was a palliative to quiet the unrest among disillusioned and unemployed ex-servicemen, until more elaborate welfare schemes could be considered.[38] It was not intended as a measure to prevent casual labourers from joining the crowds at the dock call stands. However, a special committee of the MOL arranged for out-of-work donation to be made available to port workers in 1919, and where registration schemes were operating these were approved by the same committee.

Southampton's registration scheme was verbally approved on February 26, 1919,[39] but it was not until the following month that the application for out-of-work donation was sanctioned. The delay was caused by uncertainties arising in connection with the Transport Workers' Battalion men and the number of calls which an applicant was required to attend in order to qualify for the donation.[40]

The MOL realised in 1919 that the docks industry needed special attention and the out-of-work donation committee agreed to five special

arrangements for casual port workers.[41] These included, not only satisfying the general conditions of unemployment, but also providing proof of unemployment, and proof of willingness to work without having been able to obtain any.

Southampton dockers were satisfied with these arrangements, but the government's next step was less well received. The 1920 Unemployment Act stated that certain qualifications were necessary in order to claim benefit. Before claims could be made a waiting period was required, during which continuity of unemployment had to be maintained. However, to be eligible to claim, workers also had to be willing to accept employment when it was offered. To a casual dockworker this meant that an odd half day's employment could cancel out the waiting period accumulated, obliging him to begin counting again, and he might never be in a position to claim benefit. Dockworkers were, therefore, penalised by the system because it did not make allowance for irregular engagements and scattered working days which were common in the industry. The Act did not assist casuals, but it is unlikely that it was intended to, indeed, if anything, the government preferred to deter casuals, rather than encourage them.

An Amendment to the Act in 1923 (clause 5) altered this continuity rule after complaints had been raised in parliament, and any three days in a period of six consecutive days, and any two such continuous periods separated by not more than three weeks, could count as one continuous period, and not require a second waiting time.[42] This led to the practice of deliberately failing to obtain work on the third day when two days of unemployment had already been signed for. Thus the well-known dockland expression referred to above.[43]

As unemployment increased it became obvious to the MOL and employers that rules of benefit payment allowed casuals to supplement their earnings out of the Unemployment Fund,[44] in some cases over and above a good week's wages. In other cases, of course, the supplement was essential. Despite the long-term unemployment of the 1930s, in Southampton the percentage of unemployment was higher in 1921, before the amendment to the continuity rule, so in the circumstances of 1921 Southampton dockworkers were not taking advantage of benefit qualification rules.

Ernest Bevin was particularly anxious that Port Registration Committees should be permitted to deal with cases of extended benefit, in order to improve the payments.[45] Extended benefit was allowed for a period of weeks after all the ordinary benefit had been used as a result of long-term unemployment which did not enable employment stamps to be collected. The extended benefit rate of payment was based on an estimate of the previous four weeks, and claims were only reviewed every four weeks. Bevin believed

this caused hardship to dockworkers because of their irregular earnings, and he wanted claims to be reviewed weekly and payment to be based on the previous weeks earnings only.

In cases where a large amount of benefit was claimed and little work was obtained, benefit was sometimes disallowed on the grounds that the claimant was not making reasonable efforts to obtain work. Again, Bevin wanted PRCs to be consulted before payment was stopped, but the MOL was well aware that signing the unemployment book was not necessarily proof that men had attended the calls. In Southampton, where only one daily signing was required instead of two, the situation was even more favourable to workers. An official of the MOL complained that "signing between one and three doesn't prove the man was even out of bed at the morning call."[46]

Dock labour was a bad risk to the unemployment fund and the Maclean Committee investigation drew much attention to it. Total contributions to the fund from workers, employers and the state between 1921-29 amounted to only £6,013,400, (£1,601,300 or 7.3 percent was paid by the state), but during the same period expenditure on Dock and Harbour Services amounted to £21,819,000.[47] The industry was taking by far the largest amount of the national fund, and there was always concern that not all of it was taken legitimately. One of the reasons for a Board of Inquiry by the MOL into Glasgow and Aberdeen port transport in 1937 was to investigate the fraudulent claiming of unemployment benefit. At this time men were being employed without employment books and neither men nor employers were paying contributions. Of 2,044 emergency books which were issued to men who had allegedly lost their originals, 1,971 were discovered to have fictitious names and addresses in one exchange area alone. Over varying periods in five exchange areas 3,199 of 3,612 were fictitious. Evidence showed that the great majority of these offenders were non-union men.[48] The Scottish TGWU had for many years organised the distribution of work so that their members obtained most of it. Since men did not require employment books in order to be employed, the situation in Glasgow suggests that those who were employed obtained work on a fairly regular basis and were, no doubt, those who would have been on the register had there been one. Of the remainder the MOL was only able to count those with books, whether they were issued legitimately or otherwise. Even where a register existed it was difficult to determine the extent of the normal casual fringe, but at least some of the Glasgow men who equipped themselves with employment books hoped to obtain work by attending calls regularly. That there should have been so many willing to defraud the Exchanges indicates the seriousness of unemployment in Glasgow and the very limited opportunities available to non-union men.

However, it was not only in Glasgow that the outer casual fringe found its work opportunities decreasing. The introduction of registers and the Transport Workers' Battalion had raised dock labourers' efficiency during the war, and the improved standard of living in the post war years also helped to raise the quality of output which tended to reduce the number of men required to handle goods. Furthermore, Phillips and Whiteside suggest that the reduction in engagements generally between the wars showed that fewer jobs were given to the chronically under-employed.[49]

Mass unemployment in the staple industries and the depressed state of shipping in the 1930s did not make it any easier to deal with the inherent problems of casual dockwork which caused so much strain to be placed on the unemployment benefit fund by the port transport industry. However, government investigations into unemployment achieved little apart from high-lighting problem areas.

* * * *

From the observation of dock employment trends in the port of Southampton it is clear that the cyclical movement in availability of dock work followed the general pattern of trade in the port, shown in Chapter One. The growth of the passenger trade during the 1920s brought increased shipping to the port as additional lines decided to use Southampton as a port of call. The South African, Australian and South American trade routes were particularly beneficial to dockers as these lines carried a greater ratio of freight to passengers than the transatlantic lines.

1921 proved to be a very hard year for dock labourers in Southampton at a time when unemployment relief was difficult for casual workers to obtain, but the Southampton men were fortunate in not having to sign at the Exchange twice a day in order to claim benefit. Attending calls was still obligatory in the port, despite there being no apparent method of checking who attended, except in the case of the Railway shed men.

Neither the dockers' union nor the men were entirely satisfied with the working of the Unemployment Insurance scheme. Even when the ruling for claims was eased and became a requirement for 30 stamps on an employment card covering the previous two years they resented the contributory aspect of it. However, like the employers, they were opposed to government interference in their affairs and saw that as a worse alternative. The Treasury, of course, was well aware of the huge amount being sucked out of the Unemployment Fund and channelled into the Port Transport industry, and this expenditure did much to stimulate the official investigations into the problem.

After only a slight improvement during the late 1920s port trades sank again to a very low ebb in the first four years of the next decade, and where dockworkers were deprived of a large portion of their cargoes unemployment levels rose again, particularly in ports with large followings of labourers.

It was thought (by the Chamber of Commerce) that the 1930s' depression was not experienced so severely in Southampton as in other ports, but nevertheless, the MOL unemployment statistics for RT2a workers were little better than elsewhere. Fortunately, the opening of the new docks, the extension of the Union Castle fleet and the arrival of the Queen Mary gave considerable momentum to Southampton's trade in the second half of the decade, and created an increased need for shipping and harbour services.

The seasonal influence of Southampton's passenger shipping on employment, which did not show in the pre-war years, aggravated unemployment between the wars, causing wide fluctuations in the demand for labour. The extremes of employment and unemployment in Bristol did not move in a purely seasonal pattern and were not, as in Southampton, due to the influence of passenger shipping. Bristol's labour problem was caused by the irregularity of its freight shipping. The small quanity of freight moved and the small number of dockworkers employed had much bearing on the situation. This was a common factor with Southampton, but whereas the fluctuations in Bristol did not result in high unemployment when viewed as an annual average, Southampton's unemployment record was disappointing. Dock labour had not only the problem of low freight tonnage, but also the influence of passenger shipping. It appears, however, that passenger trade exerted a more regular influence on shipping, albeit seasonal, than occurred in Bristol, where trade was certainly less predictable, if not erratic. For the convenience of port users too many men were kept on Southampton's register, for the work on offer, but employers generally rejected the idea that they were responsible for the high level of unemployment because, as they pointed out, they could not prevent unregistered men attaching themselves to the industry. There was also the belief among employers that unemployment relief was not helpful to the industry, and in that case it should not have been considered to be in their own best interests to allow excess men to remain on registers. However Southampton's employers seem to have been rather more concerned that relief was morally detrimental to dockers and that it robbed them of their desire for self-help. There was a tendency in the port to retain old men with long service records if they were still able to do useful work, and there was probably reasonable scope for these because baggage

and mail handling may have been less arduous than moving some of the general cargoes. It is likely that the inclusion of old men on the register, who were not likely to obtain full time employment, increased the incidence of unemployment. Without them there might have been lower unemployment figures for registered men, but such would have been merely a statistical change since the old men would have remained unemployed.

In ports like London and Liverpool revenue came from freight shipping and associated port services. The loss of Liverpool's passengers to Southampton was not a great blow to the Mersey shipowners. Profits were counted according to the volume of business, and like Southampton's Chamber of Commerce, Liverpool's shipowners did not judge prosperity by the amount of dock work available, or by the number of seamen engaged.

The shipping lines sailed their smaller freighters from the cargo ports where they were more likely to fill their holds. Southampton was the port for the liners, both the giant and the smaller vessels, and there they assiduously encouraged passenger transport. The Southern Railway Company, the International Cold Storage Company and Simons, the fruit importers, were probably the only port users with a major interest in developing the port for cargo.

A number of factors held back the expansion of freight, which, in turn, prevented the expansion of labour. In the first place, passenger liners were not designed to carry freight, and secondly, it was essential for them to keep to a sailing schedule - even if they did not arrive on time. Neither repairs nor cargo could be waited for if not completed by sailing time, hence the need for special arrangements in the trade union agreements on working conditions to cover extended working periods in order to complete ships for sailing. The transatlantic lines, in particular, needed fast turn round times to keep costs down. Even so, the continually increasing operating costs in ships with huge crews of catering department staff meant that, to save unnecessary expenditure of time spent in port, it was better to keep freight and passenger shipping separate. Where the two were combined it was more economical to leave freight on the quayside than pay harbour dues and wage bills for idle ships.

Thirdly, a considerable amount of space was taken up at the docks by passenger facilities, such as customs sheds, baggage sheds, refreshment rooms, ships' laundry services, and so on, and further space was occupied by the shiprepairing and engineering firms. In a dock area as small as Southampton it left insufficient space for warehouse facilities, which was one of the biggest deterrents to the development of freight. There were warehouses, bonded warehouses and storage facilities, but they were not

adequate to encourage an increase in trade. Much of Southampton's imported freight was for transhipment.

Finally, there was a daily variation in the demand for docking facilities and berthing space, and the liners took priority, despite being "notoriously prone to interference by weather conditions."[50] Cargo vessels called as it suited their routes and the cargoes in their holds, but by reserving berthing and manoeuvring space for liners the dock owners inhibited the growth of freight and employment. Ford was of the opinion that if shipping could have been spread over the whole week a considerably larger tonnage of freight could have been handled.

The examination of employment indicates that, regardless of the failure to expand freight, the seasonal element, combined with the already unstable affects of casualism caused Southampton dockers to be less well situated than in some other ports. The register appears to have been fairly strictly controlled, albeit at rather too high a level, but it was not revised sufficiently frequently for maximum efficiency. There was a certain amount of natural wastage, which accounted for some of the reduction in tallies from year to year, but since the number of tally-holder changed annually, additional tallies were issued in years which showed an increase even without holding an official revision. Unfortunately, despite registration, the seasonal factor in Southampton's dock work meant that not all tally-holders could ever be fully employed throughout the year.

Seasonality did not present quite such a problem in dock work as in seafaring and ship-repairing, but it was partly seasonality which encouraged the maintenance of too large a register and brought about a higher than necessary level of unemployment.

Section 2. SHIPYARD WORKERS

The written evaluations published by the MOL which proved to be a useful source of information for the employment of dockworkers, is less suited to conversion to numerical values in the case of shipyard workers. The reason for this is because employment was not necessarily evenly distributed between the many trades employed in shiphuilding and ship-repairing. For example, foundrymen and boilermakers may have been busier than shipwrights, or painters may have been busier than plumbers, but as they were all collectively shipyard workers, different trades were not individualised, and descriptions of employment among the trades was not always separated.

Nearly threequarters of Southampton's shipyard workers were employed in the ship-repairing side of the business, and the majority worked for Harland and Wolff and J.I. Thornycroft & Co. The volume of work in ship-repairing was governed, not only by the amount of shipping afloat and the damage sustained from the wear and tear of service at sea, but also by the willingness of shipowners to lay out expenditure for more than essential maintenance. Southampton's class of shipping presented the local work force with many specialist jobs applicable to luxury liners, as well as routine repair work which might be undertaken on any class of vessel. The predominance of passenger shipping brought with it two distinct characteristics of ship-repair work which were less likely to occur in freight vessel repairing districts. These were the shortage of time for the completion of routine repair work on turn round, and extreme seasonal fluctuations. The first introduced a casual element into the work and created the need for a pool of surplus labour to be kept in readiness, regardless of the unlikelihood of such a surplus being employed throughout the year; and the second, which arose from the annual overhaul of the

liners, provided a short period of intensive labour which attracted men to the port during the slack sailing season.

It is particularly the problems associated with Southampton's class of ship-repair which are examined in this section, because they created anomalies with other districts in the industry and caused friction in local labour relations.

Cyclical Fluctuations

The high employment levels which had existed during the war[51] continued into 1920, maintained by increased work in the ship-repair departments, where men were engaged on reconversions, and also by the demand for new mercantile tonnage.[52] However, by the closing months of 1920 the boom in shipbuilding had come to an end.

The disposal by the government of enemy ships at around one third of the price per ton required to build new ones was not designed to benefit British shipyards, which were unable to reduce construction costs in anything like that order. Co-inciding with a time of increased operating costs and falling demand for shipping due to contracting world markets, it resulted in many cancelled orders and the long-term failure to place new ones.[53]

Shipbuilding yards tended to suffer from the malady of other industries which had developed out of the iron and steel revolution when foreign competition had not been a serious problem.[54] A number of them were out of date and inefficient, and being already well established, found it difficult to adapt to new methods and technology. After the war foreign competition became a major threat, and some governments took advantage of trade tariffs and regulations to enhance their positions. The suggestion in Britain for a government subsidy for shipyard work (put forward by the trade unions) to prevent work going abroad to cheaper yards, was not taken up, nor was the idea of a subsidy on coal, which it was believed might make shipyard work cheaper. Immediately after the war industrial relations were exceedingly poor generally, and shipbuilding was no exception. The need to introduce modern techniques into shipbuilding, which were likely to reduce the demand for labour were not looked upon kindly by trade unions, and did not help to ease the tensions in the industry.

Southampton's tonnage of new vessels built in 1921 indicated a thriving industry, but the situation in the labour market that year does not bear out the supposition. In Chapter One, whilst briefly examining the state of the industry, we saw that Southampton's output of new tonnage in 1921, according to the BOT, was exceptional compared with all the other inter-war

years, but the tonnage given by the BOT was by no means the whole of Southampton's output. There were also a number of vessels built for foreign buyers which considerably increased the tonnage in other years as well. Nevertheless, the level of employment reported locally and in the MOL Gazette, gave the impression that the national slump in shipbuilding, which bit savagely in 1921, had occurred with equal force in the ship-repairing district of Southampton. The employment situation had been aggravated by returning ex-servicemen seeking work in the port and the number of unemployed persons increased during 1920 and 1921.

In January 1921 fifty AEU members were discharged from Thornycrofts, the port's principal shipbuilders, and more had to be laid off later due to cancelled orders. The boilermakers, the trade with the highest number of members employed in the shipyards, had one hundred and fifty members out of work, which meant that a small army of labourers, normally employed on kindred work, were also redundant.[55] The iron and steel working trades were those whose work was completed first on new construction and were the first to be discharged, if there were no orders awaiting commencement. When Portsmouth Dockyard men went on short time at the end of January, employment in Southampton increased slightly. But from February to June each month's work was reported as worse than the previous month, and it remained 'Bad' until August. Unfortunately, the slight improvement that month was not maintained. Like some of the big Clydeside yards, Thornycroft had benefited in the past by Admiralty orders, but the League of Nations Disarmament Agreement, settled at the Washington Conference in 1921, prevented any naval orders being placed in Britain between 1921 and 1924.

Most of the tonnage built in 1921 had been started the previous year, or even as early as 1919, and the high employment levels associated with an increase in output, which appear to relate to 1921, were in reality a reflection of the employment situation in 1920. A more significant figure for work in 1921 was the output for 1922. This figure indicates that much less work was started in 1921. Another factor which accounted for the discrepancy between tonnage output and employment levels, was the fact that employment reports also referred to those men who normally worked in the ship-repair departments, who gained nothing from new construction in the port, and whose unemployment was responsible for a large percentage of the total. Much work in 1921 was interrupted by the serious shortage of coal owing to a dispute in the mining industry, which held up delivery of goods by rail and the use of machinery. Further interruptions were caused by a long strike by shipyard joiners over a pay claim.[56]

The BOT statistics which include all vessels of ten tons and over, except those built for foreigners, were used in Chapter One for comparison

with other districts. There is, however, another compilation of tonnage built, prepared as a single document by the Shipping Conference,[57] which drew on a number of sources for information.[58] These statistics list the output of each shipyard in Southampton and include vessels built for foreigners, but not those under 100 gross tons. The two sets of statistics do not, therefore, relate precisely to the same vessels in all cases and the Shipbuilding Conference figures are greatly in excess of the Board of Trade's, indicating that many export orders were obtained by local shipyards. Both sources agreed that there was an increase in tonnage launched in 1921, but with the foreign order ships included in the statistics it is not the uncharacteristic surge in output which it appears to be in the BOT figures. (See Table 27).

Table 27. Mercantile vessels built in Southampton between 1910 and 1923 excluding the war years, compared with the U.K. total.

YEAR	SOUTHAMPTON				U.K. TOTAL	
	Shipbuilding Conf.		BOT		BOT	
	Vessels	G.T.	Vessels	G.T.	Vessels	G.T.
Average of 1910-13	-	-	17	955	999	846,766
1919	-	-	10	2,684	757	936,532
1920	25	17,111	19	2,259	813	806,510
1921	22	20,167	18	8,388	632	678,249
1922	11	10,021	8	922	439	502,236
1923	7	5,381	5	54	578	401,776

Source: Merchant Shipbuilding in G.B. and Ireland 1920-38 Vol. I, compiled by the Shipbuilding Conference; Annual Statements of Navigation and Shipping of the U.K.

The BOT gross tonnage in 1922 is closely similar to the pre-war tonnage and the increase between 1919-21 appears to be the result of the boom in mercantile shipbuilding which followed the war. By 1921 the U.K. total had already begun to decrease, and it continued to do so until 1924.

The BOT could find no more than 54 gross tons of shipping to record as built in Southampton in 1923, and the Shipping Conference total was only half that of 1922, which was itself half the 1921 total. Although the discrepancy between the two sets of statistics is very wide, as much as sixty percent of Thornycroft's output after the war was overseas business.[59]

Despite the reports of worsening conditions in the shipyards as far as employment opportunities were concerned, there were still liner conversions taking place, and some of this work was being carried out in Southampton.[60] However, the normal repair season was described as "not as brisk as it

should be."[61]

In view of the decline in new work started in 1921 and the tone of reports which appeared in the Gazette, it is not surprising that in September 1921 a body of unemployed men, mostly shipyard workers from Woolston, marched on the South Stoneham Guardians' office seeking an increase in the scale of outdoor relief. The Guardians themselves believed there might be a need to open another office in Woolston to meet the heavy demand for out relief.[62] The number of poor law recipients increased after the war, not only because of the ex-servicemen who found themselves unable to secure employment, but also because many other unemployed people used up their entitlement to benefit and were obliged to go to the Guardians for assistance.

The serious shortage of employment continued during 1922 and the shipyard workers were not helped by a fire at White Bros. Yachtbuilding in Southampton, which destroyed the woodworking shops and stores and put some 400-500 men out of work.[63] April and May 1922 were also afflicted by a dispute in the engineering industry which resulted in a lockout of shipyard workers (who supported the AEU) during part of these two months. The first nine months of the year were described as "slack" in Southampton, and the last three months were "bad".

Labour disputes were at the forefront of another poor year in 1923. This time the boilermakers were locked out by the employers for refusing to abide by the national agreement on overtime and nightshift working, which had been settled between the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation (SEF) and the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades (FEST), to which the Boilermakers' Society was affiliated. It was a national strike affecting those districts whose employers were members of the SEF, which included Southampton. The absence of boilermakers prevented much work by other craftsmen and labourers, and the Boilermakers were expelled from the FEST. At least Southampton ship-repairers had a better winter to look forward to in 1923 because it was the first year since the war that passenger services sailed at full strength, and a greater number of overhauls were anticipated.

1924 started with great promise. Such was the volume of overhaul work following the full season of passenger shipping that men were brought from Falmouth and Cowes to help complete the work in time. However, it was not to be. Southampton shipyard workers initiated their own wages dispute, primarily due to the anomalies which existed between themselves and other districts affiliated to the SEF. Before the dispute was settled much of the repair work had been sent elsewhere.

Fortunately, 1924 was not all bad. Thornycroft launched nine small

vessels totalling 2,700 tons, and one Admiralty destroyer. Other local shipbuilding concerns were beginning to struggle, and Camper and Nicholson's output was one yacht of 260 tons; J. Samuel White on the IOW built a grain elevator for the Great Western Railway, and one tug. White Brothers, Day Summers, Dibles, and Summers and Payne built no vessels over 100 G.T. until 1927. Summers and Payne was the first to go out of business.

The 1924-25 overhaul season was the busiest employment period since the war. Each of the big liners employed hundreds of men during their annual overhauls, and additional work was provided by the troop transports which required attention while they were in port. An added bonus came in the summer of 1925 when some of the liners came in for mid-season overhaul during June and July, the customary shipyard slack period. Nationally, 1925 was "one of the worst years the shipbuilding industry has ever known,"[64] but locally, ship-repairing was good. As far as new work was concerned it was a different story, and in 1925 Thornycroft was doing no more than finish off the previous year's orders, with a total output of half their 1924 tonnage.

The main effect of the labour troubles of 1926 was the shortage of coal, but after a slack summer the repair work came again. There were so many ships to repair that the Cunard employers felt it wiser to send the Mauretania to Liverpool for some internal alterations in case there was a shortage of labour in Southampton.[65]

Shipbuilding appeared to take on a new lease of life in 1927, but the SEF warned the trade unions that it was not the start of long-term improvement, merely a catching up on orders which had been postponed the year before. Thornycroft obtained a contract for six destroyers for the Chilean navy, and J. Samuel White, Dibles of Northam and White Brothers obtained new orders as well, but even together they did not provide enough work to occupy all local shipyard workers. The SEF proved to be right in their prediction that the improvement would not be sustained, and very few orders were placed in the following years.

When Dibles shipyard had completed their order for four barges for New Zealand in 1928 they had no further orders and closed down in October of that year. Of more significance was the closure of Day Summers & Co., after nearly a hundred years of shipbuilding, much of it at Southampton. Established in 1834, the company had once built passenger liners for Royal Mail Steam Packet, Peninsula and Oriental and the Hamburg-Amerika Line, until the late nineteenth century. Its employees had totalled around 700 in normal times, which increased to 1,000 during the war, but the company had not prospered since the war, and after surviving a financial crisis in 1924, it closed down at the end of 1928.

Table 28. Mercantile vessels built in Southampton between 1923 and 1938, compared with the U.K. total.

YEAR	SOUTHAMPTON				U.K. TOTAL	
	Shipbuilding Conf.		BOT		BOT	
	Vessels	G.T.	Vessels	G.T.	Vessels	G.T.
1923	7	5,381	5	54	578	401,776
1924	12	3,320	16	1,561	814	789,833
1925	8	3,632	13	1,092	762	600,127
1926	6	3,183	6	274	463	356,003
1927	9	2,864	7	472	688	664,511
1928	6	2,095	14	563	720	781,254
1929	7	1,156	13	873	782	798,935
1930	15	6,890	18	744	776	545,011
1931	5	1,787	8	421	387	217,430
1932	1	203	9	79	288	102,233
1933	3	1,082	12	577	395	83,583
1934	2	323	16	259	617	26,880
1935	1	152	24	198	764	304,985
1936	4	914	23	585	906	497,344
1937	3	2,314	30	978	767	518,134
1938	5	2,220	30	1,517	501	510,273

Sources: Merchant Shipbuilding in G.B. and Ireland 1920-38 Vol. I, compiled by the Shipbuilding Conference; Annual Statements of Navigation and Shipping of the U.K.

Additional Admiralty contracts were obtained by J.I. Thornycroft and J. Samuel White, and between them they also received foreign orders for Canada, Denmark, Brazil, Argentina, Uraguay, India, Sweden, Poland and Greece, as well as a 750 ton yacht for a New Yorker.

The tonnage built in Southampton between 1923 and 1938 did not follow the course of national shipbuilding in those years, but the two sets of Southampton statistics were not quite in agreement with each other. (See Table 28). With the inclusion of the foreign work the years 1923 to 1927 saw the best of the inter-war tonnage built after the completion of orders taken in the post-war boom. Southampton was not affected by the severe slump of 1926, and the exceptionally large tonnage in 1930 resulted from the launching of foreign orders.

In full agreement with the national figures was the very poor showing in 1932 and again in 1934. Southampton retained the 1937 recovery into 1938 with an increase in tonnage built, when the national figure showed the trend to be going downwards again. By the end of the 1930s there was

little interest in mercantile shipbuilding, hence the apparent decline in shipbuilding. In fact, much work was already being undertaken in the construction and conversion of vessels for wartime use. Although Admiralty vessels are not included in the figures shown in Table 28, vessels built for foreign governments are included in the Shipbuilding Conference statistics.

The decline in shipbuilding reduced employment opportunities in Southampton, but it was not really the major industry in the port because a much larger proportion of shipyard workers were engaged in ship-repairing. The collapse of the U.S. economy in 1929 had a serious affect on passenger traffic through U.K. ports, which was particularly noticeable in 1931-32. The decrease in passenger movement occurred in Liverpool earlier and with more severity than in Southampton (see Table 29), but those shipping lines which operated in both ports felt the pinch in both. The biggest reduction was in outward bound passengers, 34,000 less than the previous year in Southampton in 1931, which resulted in many cancelled sailings. One way in which shipowners attempted to make savings was by reducing expenditure on overhauls. Repairs and refits were cut to the minimum, and wherever possible running repairs were carried out by sea-going engineers and craftsmen.

Table 29. Foreign-going passenger movements in Southampton, Liverpool and the U.K. 1926 - 1932.

YEAR	SOUTHAMPTON			LIVERPOOL			U.K. TOTAL		
	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL
1926	76,390	141,635	218,025	60,228	116,672	176,900	237,379	402,438	639,817
1927	77,819	144,999	222,818	65,071	123,801	188,872	259,761	414,119	673,870
1928	86,332	142,542	228,874	70,217	116,083	186,300	278,937	397,247	676,184
1929	90,385	150,866	241,251	66,600	113,116	179,716	277,936	399,403	677,339
1930	92,240	126,827	219,067	65,496	91,493	156,989	290,369	327,992	618,361
1931	86,209	92,796	179,005	54,823	53,858	108,681	255,768	213,057	468,825
1932	91,827	90,853	182,680	63,913	58,819	122,732	276,856	222,184	499,040

Source: Board of Trade Journal

The number of vessels using the port of Southampton doubled between 1921 and 1929, which brought a measure of prosperity to the shipping fraternity, including better employment for seamen, and some enhancement of employment opportunities for dockworkers. It was not accompanied by a similar increase in work for ship-repairers for the simple reason that the port was unable to accommodate all the ships which were in need of overhaul during the winter months. Consequently, ships were sent to

other ports for overhaul and repair.

Southampton Trades Council complained in November 1929 that it was absurd to send work away when the ratepayers had to fund unemployment schemes and outdoor relief. G.R. Newcombe, the Docks and Marine Manager, explained that he was as anxious as anyone not to lose work, since it deprived his company of revenue.[66] However, ships were still being sent away in 1930 and a deputation of ship-repair representatives (all except one of whom were Borough Councillors) called on Newcombe. They were told that it was hoped extra berths would be available in the docks extension for the following overhaul season.[67] Despite which, ships were still sent away in the 1931-32 season,[68] when unemployment was very high and there was little work for shipyard workers outside the overhaul season.

The written evaluations of employment in the industry state that very few months from 1921 onwards were regarded as other than bad or very bad employment prospects and levels. By 1930 the reports had not left much scope for what was to follow. The continuous downward slide in most regions was indicated by comments such as "Further decline" and "Worse than the previous month". Only in London, the South East and the South Coast regions was there an occasional improvement. For example, although the national shipbuilding statistics showed even less tonnage built in 1931 than in 1926, in Southampton, as well as the 2,000 tons launched, work was proceeding on destroyers and launches for the Admiralty. Even the cut-back in summer repairs had a brighter side, because it meant more extensive overhauls were necessary in the winter. Unfortunately, the effect of this was to increase the seasonal aspect of the work, and even then only provided work for perhaps sixty percent of the labour force, but there were usually a few summer opportunities in the building trade for those with appropriate skills and the right contacts.

The increase in shipping in Southampton at the end of the 1930s was of benefit to ship-repairers as well as seamen and dockers, and the longer voyages of the cruise ships often meant a greater proportion of repair work when they were in port. The decade ended with an increase in tonnage built,some finishing-off work, and maintenance carried out on the Queen Mary.

Even before the improvement came, while unemployment was still high, the decline in young entrants into the industry began to cause concern among employers. In some districts trade unions were placing restrictions on starting apprentices in order to obtain maximum employment for their members. Employers felt that a sudden demand for labour could find the industry wanting in some classes of skilled labour where youths were no

longer being trained. By the mid-1930s new entrants into the industry had decreased by forty four per cent. A Ministry of Labour enquiry into fifty six skilled occupations in shipbuilding and ship-repairing was carried out at seventy seven Employment Exchanges during the first three months of 1935 to discover the supply and demand of labour. The MOL conclusion was that there were already shortages in particular cases, despite general unemployment in the industry still running at sixty percent. A large proportion of the unemployed were journeymen over the age of forty five. Employers were aware that the industry was failing to attract young men for training, and they regretted that the best men so often left to seek more regular employment in other industries, leaving those who were often "past effective work" as they described them.[69]

In 1935 labour shortages occurred in some districts, as predicted, among certain trades, while others continued in heavy unemployment. John Hill, General Secretary of the Boilermakers' Society, said there was a need to revive their apprentices section "if we are to save our craftsmen from becoming machine minders and robots made out of three months trainees from all kinds of dumping grounds."[70] Shortages of rivetting squads and shipwrights occurred in Southampton and East Cowes in 1936,[71] and a scarcity of youths and boys was also reported.[72]

It was not customary for ship-repairers to inter-change with those who worked on new vessel construction, but there were occasions when men normally engaged on new work would be put on repairs. These occasions were during the overhaul season, and sometimes to help completion of repairs on turn round, in order to get a ship away to schedule. The element of uncertainty which attached to repair work, its volume and its duration, made the ship-repairer's life more hazardous than the shipbuilder's.

The cyclical trend of shipbuilders in Southampton was generally downward; the late 1920s offered a ray of hope, but it was short-lived. The well-established firms and the small yacht builders had just sufficient orders to survive the depression. The failure of the notable firm of Day Summers and Company to continue trading successfully after the war was due to the nature of its business. The company was largely concerned with building sheer legs and lifting gear for use in docks, and the demand for this type of equipment dropped as the shipbuilding market contracted.

Despite a reduction in the number of men insured in the industry there were too many men looking for shipyard work because other local industries could not absorb the port's overflow. Iron and steel trades' workers could sometimes obtain work at Eastleigh Railway Works, and the small number of highly skilled patternmakers in the district were not among those who suffered long-term unemployment. The building trade could always absorb

a few men, particularly skilled plumbers and joiners, but each trade had separate sections for shipyard workers, who were not assured of work. Fortunately the building trade did not go into a recession with such ferocity as shipbuilding and in Southampton it remained fairly buoyant. The hundreds of painters required by ship-repairing departments were always vulnerable when shipyard work was slack, and their work distribution arguments with labourers did not help their employment situation. Probably the trade least affected by cyclical fluctuations were the electricians who were engaged in three different sectors: the Corporation's electricity department; private contractors; and the shipyards. A few electricans also went to sea.

Each trade had its own system for recruiting young men, but unions were extremely wary of the employment of apprentices when they had so many full members unemployed. Thus when employment was scarce youngsters did not find opportunities for essential training in shipbuilding. This was not a serious problem in Southampton where the numbers employed were relatively small, but shortages of skilled labour certainly occurred in the principal shipbuilding districts.

On the whole there was more employment available in London and the south than in the north and Scotland. The southern regions were all more busily engaged in ship-repair work than shipbuilding, and this appears to be the main reason for the more healthy state of the industry in the south. Unfortunately ship-repair work was subject to the evils of under-employment and seasonality, which will be examined in the following section.

Seasonal Fluctuations, Under- and Unemployment

Numbers and percentages of persons unemployed in the shipbuilding and repairing industry were published monthly on a regional basis, similar to the docks industry unemployment statistics. Making a count on one day in each month has its limitations in the ship-repairing areas, but the daily variation of men working was probably less than the variation in dockworkers' employment, because dockers were subject to an extreme form of casualism.

The southwest region which included Southampton, also included Bristol and Falmouth. Although ship-repairing districts, neither of these ports were engaged in the kind of repairs undertaken at Southampton, and a predominance of cargo vessel repairs was less likely to show the seasonal bias found in passenger services. The districts were smaller than Southampton, but their possible influence on the statistics can not be ruled out.

Ship-repair work in Southampton followed a regular pattern:

Jan Feb	Overhaul season		
Jul Aug	Mid-season overhaul and Trooper conversions	Apl Oct	Passenger liner repairs during shipping season
Nov Dec	Overhaul season		

Mar/Apl and Oct/Nov were the slackest months.

One would expect, therefore, that the spring and autumn should be lower in employment opportunities than either the winter months or July and August, but the men who worked on new construction were not seasonally employed in the same way. Their work lasted until the ship was completed, or at least, their part in its construction, and then each trade was either transferred to other work or became redundant. Where new work employed hundreds of men, repair work could employ thousands if more than one ship was involved, and these were the men who were liable to be unemployed during the summer months.

Contrary to expectations the MOL's unemployment statistics do not indicate a seasonal work pattern of this nature. Sometimes when the overhaul season was at its height in February, the percentage of unemployed shipyard workers in the district was greater than in subsequent months. In other words, men came to the docks in search of work at the busy time in greater numbers than could be taken on, but at the end of the overhaul season when it was known there was less work, they went away again, or at least they did not sign the unemployment book as ship-repairers.

There are some years in which the southwest region's unemployment statistics moved in the direction of the known employment pattern. That is, unemployment increased in March and April, decreased in July, rose again from September to November, and decreased in December. But the only regular feature of these statistics is a sharp decline in unemployment in December/January. This feature can also be seen in Appendix 14, Ford's graph constructed from the number of unemployed port workers on Southampton's live register from January 1927 to June 1930. The live register figures follow more closely the employment diagram above. Not only was there a marked decrease in unemployment in each of the years covered from December to February, there was also higher unemployment in March, April and October than during July and August. Even making allowance for Southampton's own shipbuilding workers and the possible influx of outsiders at the overhaul season, it appears that the MOL regional statistics are not entirely suitable for an examination of local seasonality. This does not mean that seasonality was not a local problem.

The only districts which undertook similar work on passenger liners were London and Liverpool, but both of these ports had the advantage of much freight shipping and consequent freighter repairs. However, the regional statistics for Liverpool were those of the northwest region, which included the extensive shipbuilding districts of Birkenhead and Barrow-in-Furness, and whilst unemployment percentages were never so high in the northwest as the northeast, they are unlikely to reflect an accurate picture of unemployment in the Mersey Ship-repairers' yards.

The seasonal problem was one which occupied local trade union leaders to a considerable extent, and raised a particular union bête noire. This was overtime. Because of the rush of work and the speed with which all repairs and overhauls had to be carried out, overtime was called for in ship-repair. Employers claimed that it saved time, and that it was necessary to put on overtime those men who were known to be reliable and who had the right skills and application for the job. Whilst overtime problems were not confined either to ship-repair or seasonality, it was frequently during the overhaul season that labour troubles were caused by overtime.

During the 1921/22 overhaul season, with unemployment in the southwest running at 37 percent in December 1921, the amount of overtime worked by some men accentuated the plight of others with no work at all, and was seen as unfair by union members. Boilermakers and shipwrights requested that work be spread among a greater number of men,[73] the former by placing an embargo on overtime. Employers responded by endeavouring to spread work where overtime was involved. The following overhaul season, when the boilermakers' protest embargo was repeated, employers were less tolerant and the SCESEA committee told member firms to take the names of any men who "threw up" work, so that they could be reported to the Labour Exchange and be disqualified from benefit on the grounds of not genuinely seeking work.[74]

From 1924-29, when unemployment was well below the level of 1921-23, there was more repair work available and problems of overtime diminished. However, in the early 1930s, when large numbers of union members were claiming benefit, the demands for a greater spread of work were repeated. If overtime was essential trade union leaders thought it should be given to the less regularly employed. It was a fact, they said, that some men always obtained work, and then got most of the overtime as well.[75] Southampton's employers again responded by making an effort to increase the spread of work. They engaged men at the Albert Road Employment Exchange instead of at the shipyard gates, and they introduced shift work, which the joiners had requested.[76] By October 1935 employers were able to report that, although "various trades had proved somewhat difficult to deal with

at first, they were now more reasonable and the necessary overtime was being worked on urgent jobs."[77]

The problems of casualism and seasonality among Southampton's shipyard workers arose from the same cause, namely, the predominance of passenger liner repairs. The speed required to complete repairs and maintain strict sailing schedules entailed work continuing day and night, but for part weeks only, which the unions claimed prevented men from earning regularly the average amount earned by workmen of their class in other districts.[78] The claim was also made that the number of men employed in this way varied within a short space of time from 6,000 down to 2,000, and the nature of the work compelled men to work for one ship-repair firm only, in case they might not be re-engaged if they were not available when required because of working elsewhere between jobs. This was said to limit men to three and a half or four days of work per week. It was a wages issue which sparked the argument, but these claims were made at the end of 1927, a year when employment in the port was relatively good, (unemployment was 15 per cent in the southwest). The standard argument against mobility had been true of dockworkers in the past, but even amongst dock labour there was more mobility than formerly. The method of engagement for the shipyards, as described in oral recollections of retired workers, do not indicate that men felt restricted in their choice of employer for any reason, but less familiar faces were less likely to be engaged unless there was enough work for all the members of a particular trade at a calling on point. A more likely reason for remaining with one employer was the familiarity and rapport which developed between workers and foremen, rather than the fear of not being re-engaged. However, for those in the process of building up the rapport, the union claim may have been true.

Employers believed the idea that shipyard work was casual came from the large number of extra men required during the overhaul season. They also said these extra men came from three difference sources:

1. by transferring men from new work to overhaul;
2. by obtaining such classes as joiners, painters, plumbers, upholsterers, and French polishers from the building and furnishing trades, who were slack in their own industries during the overhaul season;
3. by employing semi-skilled and unskilled labour from the building trade, and from among seafarers whose ships were laid up, or whose regular work was in yachting - again seasonally slack.[79]

In researching his social survey of Southampton it seems likely that Percy Ford obtained his information on dovetailing from the port's employers because his memorandum to the MOL[80] contains exactly the above information.

Ford added the fact that some seamen had what he called "a nose for shore jobs" and never seemed "to go on the Exchange."[81] Personal contacts such as old seamen amongst the shipyard gangs, or foremen having been seamen themselves were suggested as the reasons for seamen's good fortune. Personal contacts were very important in the dock labour structure, regardless of the port's stated guidelines on recruitment, and there is no reason why it should not have been equally true of shipyard workers. Ford also explained that it was not easy to obtain "any completely acceptable data" regarding the numbers involved, either of those employed during the winter in excess of those employed in the slack time, or of those who seasonally transferred themselves. "The nearest one can get is that the peak numbers are between two and three times greater than the average for the other months." He estimated that about one sixth to one fifth worked, on average, three days a week or less, and that even with the transference there was still a large volume of seasonal unemployment.

In Work and Wealth in a Modern Port Ford gives the excess of peak numbers over the average numbers in other parts of the year as 2,100 to 2,000, counting only plumbers, painters, joiners, electricians and labourers, with a few others, but excluding engineers, boilermakers, patternmakers and foundrymen.[82] He does not state where he obtained his information but 2,100 was the figure given by the SCESEA to the SEF conference when arguing their case against a wage increase to Southampton shipyard workers in 1928. The employers thought far fewer men were employed than the number claimed by the trade unions, and their opinion was based on figures obtained during the period April 6, 1927 to March 28, 1928. They calculated the average weekly numbers employed during each quarter to be 2,509, 2,418, 2,446 and 3,690. The highest number employed during the year was 4,562 which occurred during the January overhaul period. They did not quote the lowest number employed. The employers stated that unskilled labourers increased from 1,400 to 2,400, painters from 260 to 780, joiners from 250 to 440, plumbers from 75 to 200, and electricans from 55 to 100. An extra 48 French polishers and 70 riggers were also employed. By this means the employers accounted for 2,000 of the 2,100 extra men taken on for the overhaul period. Their purpose in offering these statistics to the conference was to disprove the union statement that the work was casual, and they felt that it provided proof that there was no justification for a wage increase on grounds of casualism or seasonality.

Ford was not arguing the case for a wage increase, nor looking at wages at all; he was discussing the "vivid evidence of the great range of seasonal fluctuations between the summer and winter employment of seamen and ship-repairers."[83] The breakdown of figures he used were those

presented by the employers to the SEF, but he used them to show the opposite point of view. To Ford they indicated "a range of variation somewhat higher than the unemployment figures," from which he concluded that some of the excess for the overhaul period may have been drawn from outside the shipbuilding industry.[84]

Having expressed the opinion that acceptable data was difficult to obtain, Ford was content to use the employers' figures which were conveniently available and related to the current period. However, because certain trades were involved in various forms of piecework and bonus schemes (which complicated computations with time workers), they were omitted from the employers' calculations, and thus, also from Ford's. Neither source gives us even an approximation of the number of pieceworkers who should have been considered. The men counted by the employers were all time workers who worked either full or part weeks "omitting five holiday weeks"[85] between the dates given above. However, if they were not the same men being employed each week (which they were surely not in all cases because of the engagement procedure), then there were even more men who were actually employed part of the time, but less days per week than would be suggested by the employers' statistics. In other words, there were probably many more employed than the number of engagements counted. The calculations did not take into account men who were sometimes unemployed for whole weeks, but who were, nevertheless, seeking and obtaining employment in other weeks.

In 1924 the MOL had reported 8-10,000 shipyard workers on strike in Southampton, and another 1,000 marine engineers, and although the number of insured workers in the industry had been reduced, the employers were suggesting a very substantial reduction at a time when ship-repair work in the port was reported as improved. The employers' figures are not in agreement with the distribution of the insured workforce given for 1929, which records approximately 7,000 in shipbuilding and ship-repairing.[86]

Minimum and maximum numbers of unemployed workers taken at quarterly intervals from the live register, between the dates March 1927 to September 1932 for ship-repairers and other casuals,[87] show clearly the increasing influence of these "other casuals", who were shipyard labourers. By 1931 the "vivid evidence" of seasonality had been over-shadowed by the general increase in unemployment.

The wage claim being made during 1928 was largely based on the need to compensate for the irregularity of work, and although there now seems little to support the union's claim of a 2,000 to 6,000 variation in men employed, it is more than likely that the disagreement over numbers was a case of an under-estimate on the one hand, and an over-estimate on the

other. The SEF conference held to consider the question was attended by local employers and trade union leaders, as well as SEF executives. It was the first conference held under the new procedures for the avoidance of disputes, and for that reason had an independent chairman. This chairman raised a glimmer of suspicion that the employers might have been at fault in their method of calculation. He concluded that despite the arguments of the employers, Southampton ship-repairers did not have the same daily regularity as factory workers, and that "the men had established that a certain number of Southampton workers were not in receipt of regular wages throughout the year ... The men had many effective arguments, although it was easy for the employers to answer them."[88]

Even if the extent of the peak excess over the employment figures for the rest of the year cannot be definitely established, there is no doubt that seasonality was an occupational hazard for Southampton ship-repairers. Furthermore, there was also a degree of casualism brought about by the regular sailing schedules of the transatlantic shipping lines, which placed their vessels on regular mid-week turnround. When it came to a question of wages, employers were loath to admit to this casualism.

In fact, casualism affected ship-repairers in much the same way as dockworkers. The largest proportion of Southampton's shipping was trans-atlantic, shared by the two main shipping lines, White Star and Cunard, with fewer sailings from the other transatlantic company based in the port, Canadian Pacific Ocean Services. The smaller vessels of Union Castle and Royal Mail spent a longer time in port and provided a larger proportion of cargo-handling work. White Star and Cunard each operated a system which allowed a maximum of four days for turnround. White Star vessels came into port on Saturdays and departed on Wednesdays; Cunard vessels arrived on Tuesdays or Wednesdays and departed on Saturdays. In the same way that cargoes, mails, baggage and stores had to be unloaded and stowed within the ships' time in port, so voyage repairs had to be carried out and, hopefully, completed within these few days. The class and number of men required for each vessel varied from voyage to voyage, depending on the type of work to be carried out.

Ford pointed out that if one firm of ship-repairers had been responsible for the repairs of both shipping lines "the alternation of sailings would make for stability of employment in the shipyards."[89] In the event, labour supply was increased by both Harland & Wolff and Thornycroft keeping reserves of men for their own use, but whom they might only employ for three and a half or four days per week - just as the unions claimed was the case.

Contemporary sources (and a number of later writers as well) had a

tendency to refer to Southampton docks and shipyards as if there were no other vessels than the transatlantic passenger liners to be seen. The reason for this rather narrow vision of the port can be explained by the fact that of the eight largest vessels in the world, afloat between the wars, seven were British owned and based in Southampton. (The eighth was the U.S. Line's Leviathan, which also sailed the New York-Southampton route). These ships were so much larger than the next largest class based in Southampton, for example, the Canadian Pacific and Union Castle vessels, that their presence did, indeed, dominate the port's thinking. From the ship-repairers' point of view one 'floating palace' provided work for far more men than one 'Cape Castle'.

* * * *

The written evaluations of employment for the southwest region gave a fairly regular indication that there was more work available at the end of the year than in March and April. Quite often a decline was reported in the summer months. However, the general picture over the whole period, 1921-38,[90] was reported in such gloomy terms that the level of improvements and depressions is difficult to gauge, even in the southwest.

The monthly percentages of unemployed persons in the industry were not helpful in establishing the extent of seasonality, which might have been due to the influence of the other ports in the region, or because the gradually increasing unemployment of labourers and skilled men and the increase in men seeking work in busier periods masked the real difference between the overhaul season and the shipping season. Most shipping was busier in summer than winter, but it was the practice of freighters to call at ports to discharge and load as their voyages and cargoes dictated. Repairs were undertaken as required while the vessels were in port, and in all probability seasonal fluctuations were neither so large nor so distressing as in the passenger shipping terminal port of Southampton. A point which should not be overlooked is that Southampton's volume of repair work was very considerable, and the passenger ships which came in for repairs and annual overhaul probably provided more work than in the other ship-repairing ports, but it was not evenly distributed throughout the year.

The employers, through the SCESEA, were unwilling to admit that casualism existed, and in the sense in which it was discussed in 1928 this included seasonality. The long distance routes of Union Castle and Royal Mail sailed a slightly extended season, but it would not be correct to say that their slack period did not also fall during the winter months. The

effect of cruising on ship-repair was that it reduced the volume of work during the overhaul season when vessels normally berthed in Southampton sailed from other ports for the benefit of milder climates. In the early 1930s when shipping went into a steep decline and most suitable waterways provided moorings for idle vessels, work in shipyards decreased in parallel, whether the normal work was the maintenance of freight or passenger vessels. In this respect Southampton may have been more fortunate than some other ports, because not only did the passenger and mail ships continue to sail, if on reduced schedules, but it was also essential that repairs were carried out for the safety of the ship and the comfort and convenience of passengers. Not all such repairs could be handled by the sea-going personnel, and at some point during the season the liners had to come in for overhaul. When this happened there was work in plenty, and more than enough for those who made do with less than full time during the summer. However, a fair proportion of the extra labour taken on for overhaul came from outside the industry and returned to jobs in construction and engineering when the ships were finished.

Unemployment Insurance Benefit

If Southampton's shipyard workers were to some extent casually employed, and if they regularly obtained less than a full week's work, then they were subject to the operation of the Unemployment Insurance Act in much the same way as dockworkers. The manager of J. Samuel White & Co, claimed that men could earn a substantial sum during part of a week, and could then draw unemployment benefit for the remainder.[91] It was equally true, however, that this fact might work against them. If, for example, a man received only half a day's work he was paid only half a day's wages, but he automatically lost the whole day's benefit. His engagement might continue for another two days, and then on the fourth day he might be paid off with only half a day's work again, and lose another day's benefit. This was a regular occurrence with turnround repairs when only half days were worked at the beginning and end because of arrival and departure times. Thus, each time the man concerned was out of pocket, having made three day's pay and lost one day's benefit. The president of the SEF acknowledged that ship-repairers suffered prejudice in relation to unemployment benefit, because of the frequency of obtaining half days of work. The trade unions wanted an agreement for a minimum of one day's pay, even when only working half a day, but the principle of the industry was to pay only for the hours worked, and the SEF refused to agree to the union suggestion.[92]

The under-employment of dockworkers was made common knowledge by the

men's trade union leaders, and much attention was also drawn to their problems because of the Ministry investigations into the excessive use of the Unemployment Insurance Fund by the industry. In the shipyards it was the mass unemployment in the shipbuilding industry on which attention was focussed, not under-employment among ship-repairers, and their problems were not given due attention. Even in Southampton where ship-repairers formed the majority of the labour force, unemployment in the 1930s was so high that the distribution of work to the unemployed was given priority.

Trade union expenditure on the strikes of the 1920s and falling membership since 1926 weakened the financial position of many of the shipyard trade unions, and their own benefit payments were suspended. At the end of 1938 after a period of improved employment in Southampton, there were still more than 1,600 unemployed shipyard workers for whom the committee of the Confederated Shipbuilding and Engineering Trades (formerly FEST) were seeking employment. By this time many men had used up their insurance benefit and more and more were becoming a burden on the Guardians as they became obliged to claim out relief.[93]

As unemployment increased after 1928 so the percentage of casuals amongst those out of work increased at a greater rate. Probably the majority of the casuals were unskilled labourers, but they were certainly not all dockworkers, either registered or unregistered. Seafaring, distribution and shipbuilding and repairing were the three largest employment categories in Southampton, and many of those laid off when the work diminished were shipyard labourers. In January 1930 41.4 percent of the unemployed were casual workers; by February 1931 the figure had risen to 48.9 percent of unemployed males; and in August the casuals had reached 63.4 percent of unemployed males.

The rate of benefit payment was fixed locally and applied to all classes of employment, regardless of skill. In 1929 agreement was reached that all shipyard workers affiliated to the SEF through their employers should receive a minimum basic wage of 60s. per week. At that time an unemployed man could have found himself keeping his wife and two children on around 28s. per week. In full time employment and living by the most frugal of standards it might have been possible to save something towards possible unemployment. However, the ship-repairer who worked only in the middle of the week, unless he was assured of plentiful and regular overtime, was already living on short measure, and saving must have been quite beyond the limit for such families. There were always some men who did well for themselves, either by hard work or good fortune, and doubtless, there were ship-repairers in Southampton who earned a handsome wage out of less than a full week's work, it was so with dockworkers. But for each

of those, there were many, many more who did not earn enough to manage a household with adequacy, and these were amongst the families living in poverty referred to above in the discussion of Ford's Southampton survey, (p.198). Contemporary comments about workers' improper use of the unemployment benefit fund should be judged in relation to average earnings rather than the good pay weeks which were usually referred to when complaints were made, and also in relation to the rate of benefit being paid. It is not likely that many Southampton ship-repairers were making large sums of money throughout the year, either by working, claiming benefit for not working, or indeed, by doing both. Even so, some could make a tolerable living during overhaul.

* * * *

The number of dockworkers issued with tallies enabling them to apply for work was regulated by the amount of work available, and rose and fell according to the state of trade. Whilst this did not prevent unregistered men presenting themselves for work, it did indicate the approximate number of men to whom employers expected to offer work. There was no register of named men in the ship-repairing industry, and none had a greater right than others to the employment available for a particular trade, but neither was there any way to prevent too many applying for work. Nevertheless, owing to the scarcity of work in Southampton shipyards in 1921 and 1922 men began to drift away and the number of workers insured in the industry locally gradually decreased, which also occurred elsewhere. Ford reported all shipbuilding companies as having a substantially greater number of employees during the war than in what he called 'normal' times, and when the war came to an end it left greater local unemployment in the industry than would have been the case had the reduction of labour been made from the pre-war level. This largely accounts for the unemployment situation in the port being apparently worse in 1921 than in 1931/32.

By 1923 the number of workers insured was probably 8-10,000 and this figure fell to around 6,500 by 1933. The number actuallly employed depended upon the season, but it was invariably less than the number insured, with the possible exception of the peak overhaul season. In 1937 the number insured was reported to be about 7,500.[94] However, an increase in men working was indicated by the local press in 1936/37, at which time some 9,000 men were said to be occupied in shipbuilding and repair and a further 2,000 in aircraft building.[95]

Thus, the number of workers insured in the industry locally matched the movement in the volume of work available, but the high percentage of

unemployment suggests that, as with dockworkers, too many men were seeking a share of too little work.

The alternation of employment and unemployment varied from trade to trade, some trades were busy when others were slack, but the number of general labourers required fluctuated with the state of local work on hand.

The percentage of unemployment in the shipyards was lower than in the shipbuilding districts, and the worst years of the depression were not so bleak in Southampton because ship-repair work continued, albeit at a reduced level. It was unfortunate for ship-repair workers that labour relations were sometimes poor, particularly when work was lost because of industrial action. Demarcation disputes, which were plentiful, could only serve to exacerbate the employment situation. However, the most serious problem was that of under-employment due to the seasonal demand for labour brought about by the concentration of ship-repair work.

Section 3. SEAFARERS

The method of calculating seamen's engagements, as previously explained, did not eliminate the duplication of seamen who returned to port and were re-engaged within the month. Where this happened frequently, particularly on ships with large crews, port activity was inflated in the statistics beyond the actual number of men working. For this reason Southampton, London and Liverpool were in a class of their own regarding the engagement of seamen.

Southampton's registered dockworkers were about one tenth of the registered labour force in London docks, and the volume of goods handled in Southampton was an even smaller proportion. However, despite the enormous difference between Southampton and the other two large ports in terms of berthing capacity, wharfage, warehousing and the volume of shipping and trade, Southampton was the only port which engaged anywhere approaching a similar number of seamen, and the tonnage of shipping which sailed from these three ports, both foreign-going and coastwise, was unequalled by any other. The next most prominent ports, Hull and Glasgow, engaged annually less than half the seamen engaged in Southampton, and their annual tonnage of shipping was also less.

Where ships with very large crews regularly re-engaged crews at the same port, that port inevitably showed a large return in the statistics. For example, in 1921 Hull handled one and half times as many foreign-going vessels as Southampton, but they totalled almost 1 million tons less and engaged some 64,000 fewer seamen. Similarly, looking at shipping in 1928, the year of maximum engagements in Southampton, the port cleared around

42,000 less vessels than London, but London only engaged 344 more seamen. The size of Southampton's vessels and crews was the cause of the disproportionate number of engagements to vessels.

Obviously, the larger the vessel the greater the crew needed to handle it, but the real reason for Southampton's large crews was the number of catering department personnel[96] who sailed on passenger liners and were counted as seamen. Cunard and White Star engaged the majority of their big liner crews in Southampton (they were not all Southampton men), and the other Southampton-based shipping lines also engaged part local crews and sailed their largest vessels from the port, most of which required crews of over 100. The luxury liners on the North Atlantic route carried crews well in excess of 500 men and women (the Majestic's total complement was 1,100, 800 of whom were catering department staff), and it was a requirement of the Merchant Shipping Act that each crew member should 'sign on' for every voyage, even if few changes were made between overhauls.

A separate calculation of seamen was made by the Port Sanitary Authority (PSA), which counted the number of seamen landed. These figures for Southampton between 1910 and 1938 bear no relation to the statistics collected by the MOL regarding annual totals, but they closely follow the pattern of seamen's employment which might be expected, taking into account the increase in tonnage and passengers. However, seamen landed were also subject to duplication. The PSA statistics refer to total crew landed, which should, therefore, include home trade and coastal shipping, as well as foreign-going, and the reports do not state that vessels were British registered only. In any case, there is no guarantee that all the men landed in Southampton were engaged in that port. Appendix 15 compares the totals of seamen landed according to the PSA with seamen engaged according to the MOL Gazette.

The cyclical and seasonal trends of this large body of seamen are examined below, together with unemployment, and comparisons are made as far as possible with other ports. Additional factors, which did not concern either dockworkers or ship-repairers, such as the employment of foreign seamen and lascars and the movement of troops, are also discussed in relation to their effect on the employment of seamen in Southampton, together with the changing pattern of employment brought about by the increase in pleasure cruising.

Cyclical Fluctuations

It became clear at an early stage in researching this topic that the port was not operating normally in 1919 and 1920. The reasons for this

have been mentioned previously, being due to the closure of the port to commercial traffic during the war and the slow lifting of restrictions and release of vessels afterwards. Some of the vessels which came to Southampton later were still operating from Liverpool in 1919 and 1920, and others were partly concerned with the repatriation of British and colonial servicemen. It seemed reasonable to expect, therefore, that shipping, which affected the employment of port labour generally, would be slack during both these years. In fact, full passenger services were not started until 1923.

Immediately after the war work was still plentiful in Southampton's shipyards because of finishing off war time repairs, reconverting liners, and new orders; employment was not, therefore, a serious feature of threat in either shipbuilding or repairing. On the docks unemployment was always a threat because of the industry's casualism and failure to prevent unwanted men attending calls. For the two years in question the MOL written evaluations did not describe Southampton specifically, but it is likely that from 1919 to 1921 there was insufficient cargo moved in the port to warrant a special mention of its dock employment in the Gazette. Dock employment certainly fell in 1921, but local reports did not suggest a flourishing activity prior to that, and did not lead one to believe that shipping was enjoying a boom in the port. The general tone of comments in the local press was that the port was just reawakening to its commercial potential and was hoping to regain its pre-war trade.

From 1910-1913 Southampton carried approximately 15 percent of the total U.K. foreign-going passenger trade and Liverpool took 40-50 percent. In 1920 Southampton's total of 180,088 foreign-going passengers represented 25 percent, which was a healthy increase over 1913. Liverpool still carried nearly 47 percent of the total.[97] A corresponding increase occurred in Southampton's seamen's engagements. Table 30 shows the gain in engagements made in Southampton during 1920 compared with the decrease experienced in most other ports. The two ports not concerned with foreign-going passengers show the least variation between the pre-war years and 1919, but Hull's increase of 8 percent is based on only two pre-war years.

The general trend in 1920 was less engagements than before the war, and Southampton's gain in this respect denotes not simply the increased tonnage of vessels using the port, but also the increase in employment necessary to man the vessels. In 1921, one of the worst trading years for port industries between the wars, Southampton again increased its total of foreign-going engagements.

The alternative source of information for Southampton's seamen, total crew landed, shows a decline in 1920 from 1912. Some crews engaged towards

the end of one year would not have returned to port until the early months of the following year, so that annual engagements and landed returns were not calculated in parallel for foreign-going seamen. However, the two sets of statistics become increasingly divergent and the overlapping of year endings between engagement and discharge is insufficient to account for the annual decrease in engagements and increase in men landed. The inclusion of seamen in short sea and coastal shipping is largely responsible for the greater number of men recorded by the Sanitary Authority.

Table 30. Annual total seamen engaged in selected ports during 1910-13 (average) and 1919-21.

YEAR	LIVERPOOL	LONDON	SOUTHAMPTON	HULL*	GLASGOW*	BRISTOL
1910-13	169,371	92,615	51,293	14,890	44,485	13,549
1919	142,601	79,297	31,397	12,469	26,622	9,486
1920	144,308	95,427	62,261	16,113	27,365	13,012
1921	129,395	81,589	76,204	11,937	24,628	10,520
	Precentage increase/decrease of 1920 over pre-war years.					
	-14.8	+3.0	+21.4	+8.2	-38.5	-3.9

* 1910 and 1911 only.

Source: MOL Gazette.

By using the BOT and MOL statistics comparison can be made with other ports, which show the extent to which Southampton seamen's employment opportunities increased after the war. Southampton's pre-war share of engagements in the U.K. was insignificant at 9.6 per cent, being the average for 1910-13, against 17.4 per cent in London and 36.5 per cent in Liverpool. By 1921 Southampton had doubled its share of the national total to 18.7 per cent. In the same period London had only gained 2.6 per cent, and Liverpool's share had decreased 7.2 per cent. In the previous sections of this chapter 1921 was seen to be a very poor year in employment terms for both dockworkers and ship-repairers because of the slump conditions which affected port industries. The dock owners claimed that owing to the loss of business during the war, Southampton was at a disadvantage compared with other ports which had continued trading. Import and export business was, indeed, slow to return to Southampton and the port did not equal its 1913 freight during the interwar years, but the increase in foreign-going passengers and seamen's engagements after the war does not point to there being any disadvantage in that particular activity.

Of the smaller ports Glasgow had offered the most opportunities to seamen in the foreign-going service before the war, but by the slump of 1921

it had experienced a sharp drop in the number of engagements, in line with the drop in its foreign-going shipping. Hull followed a pattern of foreign trade unlike other ports, reaching its peak year in 1923, and might have fared better if home trade engagements had been included in the statistics, because home trade vessels, many of which called at Hull, were counted with foreign-going vessels, but seamen on continental cargo and passenger services were counted separately.

The scope of home trade engagements in Southampton is suggested by the excess of seamen landed over the MOL figures for engagements, but the type of shipping concerned, in all probability, called for larger crews than those sailing on Hull's home trade shipping, because Hull carried only a small proportion of continental passengers. In Southampton the Southern Railway Company operated five home trade steamers of over 2,000 G.T., which required crews of between 50 and 60 men. On the smaller passenger steamers (1,000 to 1,500 G.T.) only about 30 crew were employed. The cargo boats which operated on the same routes were much smaller, about 500-600 G.T., and requiring no stewards or attendants for passengers, employed only around 12 crew members.

After 1920 most of the large liners were converted to oil fuel and as a result engineroom crews were cut by approximately fifty per cent. Over the course of a season's voyages this reduction made a considerable difference to the total engagements of a port, but even so, reductions in engagements were just as severe in the ports where ocean-going liners were not a significant feature of shipping business, namely Hull and Bristol.

The fall in engagements in 1921 was characterised by a large increase in unemployment. In Southampton engagements were not reduced, but the rush for jobs when a ship came in was so great that the man engaging the crew on the White Star Line's Arabic was knocked down and trodden on.[98] Reports and comments in the local press and trade union journals in 1921 do not suggest that the situation in Southampton's shipping was in any way improved on the situation which existed for shipyard workers and dockers. Unemployment was much more talked about than employment for ratings and officers alike.

Considerable concern was expressed over mercantile marine officers' employment in 1919. Many were unemployed because their ships had been lost due to enemy action. A fund set up to prevent masters and officers "suffering actual want through causes arising from the war" had been used by December.[99] According to the officers' organisations unemployment continued to increase into 1921. White Star Line donated £300 to the Mercantile Marine Service Association for the 1919 Relief Fund, with a further £100 from the managers,[100] and Cunard subscribed £500.[101] Not until

the middle of 1922 did the Southampton Times begin to report the gradual decrease of unemployed officers.

Engagements rose again in 1922, but not to the same extent in London and Liverpool as in Southampton, and it is fairly certain that employment was easier to find in Southampton than in Liverpool. In fact, many members of the newly created Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union (AMWU) came south in search of work, and we are told that to the unemployed seamen of Liverpool Southampton looked like "a kind of promised land."[102]

Perhaps it was because of this that there was a shortage of first class stewards in Liverpool in the autumn of 1922.[103] A few months earlier Cunard had complained about the standard of stewards on their liner Berengaria on a trip made out of Southampton. Eighty per cent of the saloon waiters were said to be below standard. They were "third rate men who could not serve delicately or prepare dishes in the correct way." What they wanted were "experienced men with plenty of vim."[104] Perhaps the high class waiters had found employment in hotels in 1921.

Improvement in employment was recorded in 1923, but not until mid-year in Southampton and Liverpool. In February the Southampton branch of the NSFU reported the slackest period in shipping since the end of the war,[105] and the migration from Liverpool may well have increased local unemployment. Engagements in February and March were below those of 1922, but after this there were signs of improvement.

By 1924, although the number of foreign-going passengers passing through Southampton dropped slightly, the port overtook Liverpool's share of the U.K. total by three per cent. Engagements decreased slightly, except in London. However, London engagements decreased the following year, very noticeably from August onwards, as a result of the international strike by seamen, which particularly affected South African, South American, Australian and New Zealand routes. Southampton and London were the two Britsh ports chiefly involved in this dispute, but in Southampton's case the bulk of its passengers were transatlantic travellers, and these routes were unaffected.

1926 and 1928 were the years when Southampton enjoyed its greatest number of engagements, and 1929 was the year in which most foreign-going passengers arrived and departed. 1927-29 also saw the greatest number of vessels through the port. In 1927 engagements decreased slightly while passengers gained on 1926.[106] In this year the number of cruise passengers increased, and as cruise voyages were generally longer than the transatlantic crossing not so many re-engagements of the same seamen were necessary. An increase in cruising did not, therefore, necessarily represent a decrease in employment, even if it resulted in

fewer engagements. The BOT statistics did not include pleasure cruise passengers, so they were not part of the annual increase in total passengers through the port. The Southampton Times suggested that a gradual autumn and winter increase in passengers had been taking place, but this is not borne out by the figures published monthly in the local press by the dock owners. However, the Southern Railway statistics included all passengers, both foreign-going and continental, and presumably Channel Island and cruise passengers as well, and sometimes they seemed to include the wives and families of servicemen returning on troop carriers. During the 1920s seamen's engagements regularly increased during the autumn, but the increase was never sustained during the winter.

Table 31 shows the relative increases and decreases of the six ports considered, and between 1921 and 1929 it can be seen that overall the most substantial gains were made by Southampton, particularly in net tonnage of vessels, total passengers and seamen's engagements. Whilst 1924 was a good year in most ports, Glasgow and Bristol continued the upward trend into 1929 on a modest scale. Appendix 3a shows the dependence of Glasgow on its outward bound passenger traffic.

There is a correlation between seamen's engagements and passengers because of the large crews on liners. In Glasgow and Bristol the increase in engagements did not keep pace with the increase in passengers and suggests that the ratio of catering staff to passengers was much lower. This is more noticeable in Bristol where many of the passengers travelled on cargo boats. In Hull, which was not concerned with foreign-going passengers at all, the upward trend seen in 1924 had been reversed by 1929, but the number of engagements still exceeded the pre-war average.

A contraction of passenger travel occurred in both eastward and westward directions across the Atlantic during the 1930s economic recession, but it was the westbound traffic which showed the largest decline. Such was the loss of shipping using the port of Southampton that by 1932 the number of vessels calling had fallen below the pre-war level, and the net tonnage was only slightly up on 1924. The number of seamen engaged in 1932 was less than in the slump year of 1921. This indicates that due to cancelled voyages between 1930 and 1932 more of the port's regular seamen were spending a greater proportion of their time unemployed; it does not necessarily mean that more seamen were failing to find employment.

There are three main factors to account for the decrease in Southampton's shipping and employment of seafarers. The most significant of these was the drop in the number of passengers travelling on the trans-atlantic routes during the early 1930s. Another reason was the tendency towards rationalisation to avoid competitive and uneconomic sailings.

Table 31.

Foreign-going shipping and passengers, and seamen's engagements for certain years between 1910 and 1929, showing increases and decreases in percentages.

PORT	YEAR	NO. OF VESSELS		NET TONS		NO. OF PASSENGERS		NO. OF ENGAGEMENTS	
LONDON	1910-13 (average)	34,425		43,542,462				92.615	
	1921	33,052	(-3.9%)	42,375,597	(-2.7%)	98,344		81,389	(-12.1%)
	1924	41,146	(+24.5%)	56,178,944	(+32.5%)	119,156	(+21.2%)	98,246	(+20.7%)
	1929	53,792	(+30.7%)	71,511,476	(+27.3%)	103,989	(-12.7%)	117,820	(+19.9%)
LIVERPOOL	1910-13 (average)	14,981		40,690,291				194,372	
	1921	11,695	(-21.9%)	33,017,454	(-18.8%)	259,144		129,135	(-33.5%)
	1924	26,061	(+122.8%)	45,016,579	(+36.3%)	194,130	(-25.1%)	141,480	(+9.5%)
	1929	26,260	(+0.8%)	48,132,706	(+6.9%)	179,716	(-7.4%)	149,663	(+5.7%)
SOUTHAMPTON	1910-13 (average)	10,034		18,739,583				51,369	
	1921	7,681	(-23.5%)	11,964,-98	(-36.1%)	168,944		76,204	(+48.3%)
	1924	10,955	(+42.6%)	29,017,056	(+142.5%)	206,647	(+22.3%)	106,854	(+40.2%)
	1929	11,924	(+8.8%)	35,854,798	(+23.5%)	241,251	(+16.7%)	118,428	(+10.8%)
HULL	1910-11 (average)	17,266		14,679,613,				14,890	
	1921	12,778	(-25.9%)	10,964,722	(-25.3%)	*		11,937	(-19.8%)
	1924	14,645	(+14.6%)	17,464,144	(+59.2%)	*		19,553	(+63.8%)
	1929	12,844	(-12.3%)	16,639,405	(-4.7%)	*		15,542	(-20.5%)
GLASGOW	1910-11 (average)	7,329		13,897,071				44,485	
	1921	4,010	(-45.3%)	10,371,998	(-35.4%)	42,175		24,628	(-44.6%)
	1924	9,334	(+132.7%)	16,513,765	(+59.2%)	56,981	(+35.1%)	38,572	(+56.6%)
	1929	8,499	(-9.8%)	17,009,723	(+3.0%)	77,277	(+55.6%)	41,944	(+8.7%)
BRISTOL	1910-13 (average)	3,073		4,851,122				13,549	
	1921	2,330	(-24.2%)	5,266,096	(+8.5%)	3,915	(+23.2%)	10,520	(-22.3%)
	1924	4,340	(+86.2%)	7,665,911	(+45.5%)	4,823	(+23.2%)	11,305	(+7.4%)
	1929	5,031	(+15.9%)	7,841,340	(+2.3%)	5,840	(+21.1%)	11,538	(+2.0%)

* Hull did not transport foreign-going passengers

Sources: Annual Statements of Navigation and Shipping of the U.K.; BOT Journal; MOL Gazette.

The eventual amalgamation of White Star and Cunard in 1934, and the entry of the Queen Mary into service in 1936, meant that a number of smaller vessels were withdrawn, along with the crews who served in them. As ships were either laid up or broken up some redundant men were lucky enough to find places on the 2,000 strong crew of the Queen Mary, but even this 83,000 ton colossus could not absorb all the redundancies.[107]

The other factor, which must have made a considerable difference to the pattern of shipping and employment in Southampton, is the increase in pleasure cruising which occurred. It is not possible to quantify precisely the employment alteration which this brought about, but cruising became extremely popular in the second half of the 1920s. It was seen by ship owners as an alternative method of keeping ships in service when there was insufficient trade to warrant scheduled sailings. This type of business was, therefore, exploited during the 1930s.

Twenty less sailings left Southampton and five less from Liverpool between June 27 and November 4, 1931,[108] and altogether forty sailings were cancelled in 1931.[109] Staff redundancies were also made in all Cunard and White Star offices in an effort to reduce financial losses, but uneconomic sailings were a serious threat to ship owners. With the shrinking annual migration from the U.S.A. to Europe, and far fewer prospective emigrants to the U.S.A. from Britain, shipping lines persevered with cruises, but even these plans were curtailed when passenger lists dwindled.

In March 1931 fares for cruising were reduced with the object of attracting more business, particularly middle class professional people. P & O moved back to Southampton to embark passengers for cruising,[110] and in company with the Orient Line, Canadian Pacific and White Star Lines organised pleasure cruises, mostly of 7 to 15 days duration, during both summer and winter. Most winter cruises started from New York and included trips to the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and the Bahamas. However, weekend cruises were also very popular from Southampton, and were even scheduled in Cunard's and White Star's smaller vessels.

A new season for 1932 was announced by White Star incorporating 15 cruise routes from the U.K. at a special tourist-class-only rate; Royal Mail sailed winter cruises to Spain; the Southern Railway Company joined in with weekend cruises up the Seine; and Coast Lines, Southampton's busiest coasting company, who had already sailed 7 day cruises around Ireland and Scotland, included shore excursions in the trips as added attractions. In announcing the seasons cruising plans for 1933 the Hampshire Advertiser advised readers, for the first time, where to go, where to leave their cars, what to wear and so on. One class cruising, thus, became a regular and important feature of Southampton's shipping

and did much to keep ships afloat during the depression. It was also a help to the employment situation.

Two thirds of the foreign-going cruise passengers from the U.K. started and finished their trips in either Southampton or Liverpool, but the BOT did not provide any detailed information. The few years for which the number of passengers on pleasure cruises outside Europe were given in the Journal are shown below, but the information contributes little towards quantifying the employment of seamen which cruising represented.

1931		25,000
1932	OUT	38,262
	IN	36,025
1933		50,000
1934	OUT	26,800
	IN	28,800
1935	OUT	35,700
	IN	36,400

Cruise passengers usually departed and returned on the same vessel, but this is not indicated by the BOT figures.

Cruising was not introduced as a means of securing business in adverse times because cruise trips had been sailed from Southampton throughout the 1920s, but then less emphasis was placed on them in shipping line schedules and press coverage of shipping activities. Their sudden inclusion in the BOT Journal between 1931 and 1935 was not solely indicative of the increased interest in cruising. It was almost as if it was to make up for the declining totals being printed, as if the BOT was embarrassed by the reduction in the numbers recorded. When total foreign-going passengers increased again in 1936 details of cruise passengers were omitted. The chief purpose of the BOT statistics was to record the movement of British subjects and aliens in and out of the country and state which parts of the world they travelled to and from. There was, therefore, little significance in recording the number of pleasure trippers who embarked and disembarked at the same port. It is rather interesting, however, that in the three years for which details are provided the outward and inward totals are different.

It is clear from the reduction in foreign-going passengers and seamen's engagements that cruising was of the utmost importance to Southampton at a time when the American economy made transatlantic travel less attractive. It was of no benefit to dockworkers, and of somewhat limited benefit to ship-repairers, but Southampton's seafarers, both foreign-going and continental, owed much to the interest in cruising as a pastime.

A problem faced by shipping lines with mail contracts was that those

contracts had to be fulfilled, even if it meant uneconomic sailings. In an effort to encourage passengers fares on the North Atlantic routes were cut in April 1932, and Cunard introduced a programme of deferred payment for travel. Eastbound passengers into Southampton did, in fact, increase that year, but from 1933-35 the annual totals of passengers arriving and departing in Southampton were lower than 1931, which the Hampshire Advertiser had then described as the worst year in the history of shipping.[111]

Southampton experienced a greater reduction between 1929 and 1932 than either Liverpool or London, but it was Liverpool which lost the most foreign-going passengers because in the Mersey port this was a continuing loss, not confined to the depression years. It certainly had a detrimental effect on seamen's employment, even if it was not a serious matter to the port's administrators and shipping lines. Liverpool's freight trade was more important to its prosperity than its passenger services, but its dwindling passengers left many stewards and other seamen without sea-going employment.

Foreign-going passengers through Tilbury Docks were much less reduced in annual totals. London recorded the smallest reduction in seamen's engagements and its freight and passenger shipping together maintained better employment prospects. Table 32 shows the percentage increases and decreases in port activities for the 1930s.

The great rise in seamen's engagements which occurred during the 1920s in Southampton had already slowed down by 1929, and without the benefit of freight shipping to balance the reduction in North Atlantic passengers, Southampton's seamen had little alternative employment when its vessels and tonnage decreased. The smaller ports were dependent on freight and short sea routes, but the reduction in engagements was closely similar in all ports, except London, between 1929 and 1932.

Glasgow's sea-going employment was related to its reduction in shipping in 1921 and to the remarkable recovery made by 1924. Its passengers also increased between 1921 and 1929 due almost entirely to outward bound passengers. The national trend during the 1930s was for incoming passengers to exceed outward passengers, and Glasgow suffered what was, perhaps, an inevitable shrinkage in annual totals. Nevertheless, due to other opportunities in shipping both Hull and Glasgow were able to improve employment prospects for seafarers in the late 1930s.

Bristol had so few foreign-going passengers that their influence on seamen's employment was probably nil. Wherever twelve or more passengers were carried ships were classed by the BOT as passenger vessels, in which case more crew were required. Like Hull, Bristol gained in imports

Table 32.

Foreign-going shipping and passengers, and seamen's engagements for certain years between 1929 and 1938, showing increases and decreases in percentages.

PORT	YEAR	NO. OF VESSELS		NET TONS		NO. OF PASSENGERS		NO. OF ENGAGEMENTS	
LONDON	1929	53,792		71,511,476		103,989		117,820	
	1932	42,500	(-20.9%)	64,889,845	(-9.2%)	95,703	(-7.9%)	91,152	(-22.6%)
	1934	48,678	(+14.5%)	68,948,946	(+6.2%)	87,809	(-8.2%)	94,630	(+3.8%)
	1938	47,475	(-2.5%)	72,063,701	(+4.5%)	92,974	(+5.9%)	102,156	(+8.5%)
LIVERPOOL	1929	26,260		48,132,706		179,716		149,663	
	1932	23,297	(-11.3%)	41,565,199	(-13.6%)	122,732	(-3.7%)	101,718	(-32.0%)
	1934	19,153	(-17.7%)	44,277,502	(+6.5%)	83,883	(-31.6%)	101,358	(-0.3%)
	1938	23,773	(+24.1%)	47,171,898	(+6.5%)	75,442	(-10.0%)	100,533	(-0.8%)
SOUTHAMPTON	1929	11,924		35,854,798		241,251		118,428	
	1932	9,191	(-22.9%)	29,666,064	(-17.3%)	182,680	(-24.3%)	73,658	(-37.8%)
	1934	9,135	(-0.6%)	34,759,341	(+17.1%)	147,108	(-19.5%)	70,523	(-4.3%)
	1938	9,587	(+4.9%)	39,116,790	(+12.5%)	203,552	(+38.4%)	54,305	(-23.0%)
HULL	1929	12,844		16,639,405				15,542	
	1932	12,049	(-6.5%)	14,424,764	(-15.3%)	*		9,743	(-37.3%)
	1934	11,892	(-1.3%)	15,073,025	(+4.4%)	*		9,043	(-7.2%)
	1938	12,603	(+5.9%)	17,151,285	(+13.7%)	*		11,413	(+26.2%)
GLASGOW	1929	8,499		17,009,723		77,277		41,944	
	1932	7,418	(-12.7%)	13,934,644	(-18.0%)	45,528	(-41.1%)	26,838	(-36.0%)
	1934	6,865	(-7.4%)	15,423,473	(+10.7%)	31,922	(-29.9%)	27,380	(+2.0%)
	1938	7,155	(+4.2%)	17,651,694	(+14.4%)	39,443	(+23.5%)	34,388	(+25.6%)
BRISTOL	1929	5,031		7,841,340		5,846		11,538	
	1932	3,818	(-24.1%)	6,625,387	(-15.5%)	3,401	(-41.8%)	8,013	(-30.5%)
	1934	3,745	(-1.9%)	7,185,239	(+8.4%)	2,144	(-36.9%)	9,083	(+13.3%)
	1938	4,106	(+9.6%)	8,628,135	(+20.0%)	2,037	(-5.0%)	8,418	(-7.3%)

* Hull did not transport foreign-going passengers.

Sources: Annual Statements of Navigation and Shipping of the U.K.; BOT Journal; MOL Gazette.

between the wars and most of its passengers travelled on the freighters. By 1938 Bristol had increased its net tonnage but had lost some of its annual engagements.

Southampton's passenger traffic was unusual in that the total entering the port on the eastbound route exceeded those departing westwards. This movement was against the national trend, but was repeated in Liverpool with a smaller difference between the two annual totals. In 1937 some 1,400 fewer vessels entered the port with an increase in tonnage of nearly two million tons, and the increase in passengers was exceptional. From 1936 it is not possible to compare the BOT statistics on seamen's engagements with the earlier years in Southampton because of the change from signing on for each voyage to six monthly articles on foreign-going ships, as was already done in home trade shipping. The small number of engagements in 1936 and further decline in 1938 are not, therefore, indicative of a diminished labour force, and may well represent the opposite. The number of seamen landed, still being counted as before, show a continuing upward trend.

Employment opportunities for catering department personnel decreased with the passengers in Liverpool, and stewards migrated southwards in search of ships. When a mid-season shortage of seamen occurred in Southampton in 1935 it was qualified deckhands the employers were "at their wit's end" to find. There were plenty of stewards.[112] The cause of the shortage was said to be "the dearth of young boys taking up training," because nothing was done by schools or other organisations to create "sea appeal", and there was no where in the local area for boys to obtain preliminary training. Opportunities for semi-skilled machine operators in motor car and aircraft assembly kept many away from apprenticeships in the insecure traditional port industries. Nevertheless, the Hampshire Advertiser overstated the case when it wrote "Southampton liners carry large numbers of young boys and seamen, hardly any come from Southampton."113 Ford estimated that half Southampton's seamen were residents of the town.[114] Furthermore, in 1927 Union Castle Line adopted a policy aimed at employing 100 per cent local lads to work up from deck boys to higher ratings. Their lads trained at the Gravesend Sea School or the Russell-Cotes Nautical School in Parkestone, Poole, and the company asked the Southampton and District Advisory Committee for Juvenile Employment to assist them with the scheme because at that time only 50 per cent of the boys were local.

At the Master Mariners Club (for ex-mercantile marine officers) in Southampton the problems associated with training were discussed several times in the late 1920s. The general opinion was that not enough time was given to training lads at sea, and because of insufficient tuition and study time boys did not pass their examinations or continue with maritime careers. It was pointed out that Cunard by-passed the problem by recruiting most of their able seamen from the navy, and the most

forward-looking solution to be suggested was that employment should be permanent and continuous, instead of "the hazardous signing on for seventeen day trips."[115]

Consideration of training youngsters did not fade away completely during the period of high unemployment, and the employment situation was still poor in 1933 when Southampton University College agreed to proposals to develop a College Nautical School and appoint an assistant instructor. One of the difficulties for boys wishing to train in established sea schools was the expense, and it was suggested that the University College cadet scheme should be offered to those who could not afford to go to Training Ships or Nautical Colleges.

The ideas were basically sound, but at the end of the 1930s little progress had been made in increasing the number of boys taking up sea training, and schemes seemed to have failed to arouse interest. The long hours of work and low wages were probably as much to blame as the insecurity. Boys on liners tended to be used as messengers rather than be given opportunities to learn, and there was a danger of exploiting boys as available cheap labour on board. If shipping lines wished to recruit crews from among well-trained and experienced seamen they could have been more positive in their approach to the training of youths. Whatever the current employment situation there was a need to provide the trained men of the calibre they required for the future.

Seamen for the home trade in Southampton were largely the concern of the Southern Railway Company. Their engagements were not counted in the same manner as foreign-going seamen, and the signing on regulations were a little different, but employment was not necessarily any more secure than on the liners. Six monthly articles did not guarantee employment or the payment of wages if ships did not sail, but the company's seamen did have a better chance of obtaining shore jobs when they were not required at sea.

The Southern Railway's Annual Reports, available from 1927 to 1937 provide details of the number of boats operating and the number of trips made each year in the different categories of company business. The ships varied in size and tonnage, and therefore, in the number of crew on board as well, but the average crew of passenger vessels was 50, and of cargo boats 15.

Although it is possible to calculate the number of trips each boat might have made each week, we know from previous examination of Southern Railway business that it was an intensely seasonal operation, and an average estimate of weekly sailings would not be accurate. The Annual Reports clearly show, however, that passenger services offered a greater

degree of employment to more seamen than cargo services. Obviously the more ships there were in the category in any year, the fewer trips each would make unless the total trips were also considerably increased. This was not always the case. Even so, an average of 2.5 to 3.5 trips per week could have been made by ships on the passenger service. The total number of ships put into service in any year were unlikely to have remained in service for 52 weeks, so the average immediately breaks down. Whether sailing to the Channel Islands or the French ports three trips per week did not provide full time employment, but with shore jobs on stand-by to make up the other days, even at a lower rate of pay, these seamen could have been very regularly employed on a full time basis.

With the time taken to load and unload cargoes the trips of the cargo boats were of longer duration than passenger trips to the same ports. The average for this category only exceeded 1.6 trips per boat per week twice during the period - in 1927 and 1937. (Figures for 1928 and 1933 are not available). During the weeks of the summer produce season full time work was assured. The average for the whole year is so low that it can only mean that many of the ships were not used during the winter months, leaving their crews unemployed. The busiest year for the cargo ships was 1927 because only 9 were used to make 1,444 trips. In 1929 16 ships were used and the average fell to 1.6. The lowest point was in 1934 when only 628 trips were made by 9 ships. Recovery from the poor trading years of the early 1930s was very slow, and in 1937 only 743 trips were made by 7 ships, the smallest number used. In the passenger services the total number of trips made decreased almost every year from 1927 to 1937, and the number made in 1937 was less than those made in 1931 and 1932. (The figures for 1933 are not available).

Regardless of the effects of seasonality, or the quantity of employment which might have been expected at any time, quite clearly the Railway Company business did not achieve the same success after the depression as enjoyed by foreign-going shipping.

Seasonal Fluctuations

Seasonality in seamen's employment is a problem which immediately stands out in an examination of the shipping industry in Southampton. More than half the passengers travelled in the third quarter of the year, and as many as 70-80 per cent travelled between April and September.[116] The transatlantic crossings were made to a regular annual pattern. The eastbound traffic, described as the "U.S. invasion"[117] took place between June and August each year, and the westward return of passengers occurred

from August to November.

In Liverpool the variation between mimimum and maximum seamen's engagements was smaller than in Southampton, and could be put down to the greater volume of freight traffic with a less seasonal bias. The same was true of London, but it is interesting to observe that in both ports, particularly Liverpool, the months of minimum and maximum engagements were close to those of Southampton and Glasgow, suggesting that despite the steady reduction of passengers in Liverpool, it was still the influence exerted by the passengerswhich accounted for the variation in seasonal engagements. London followed a similar trend, in that winter months were slackest.

In contrast, Hull and Bristol were not confined to maximum engagements occurring during the summer and minimum in winter. In these ports, where passengers did not influence engagements, seamen's employment seems to have been more evenly distributed throughout the year. Since these two ports shipped different cargoes and operated in entirely different quarters of the globe, their maximum and minimum months did not co-incide.

To make inter-port comparisons of seasonality more clearly visible the monthly engagement figures for each port have been divided into the annual total for that port in each year, which gives the value for engagements in each month. The figures for the same months in groups of years have been averaged for simplified handling of the material; they represent the averages of actual engagements.

Figure 28 shows the seasonal engagement patterns for Southampton, London and Liverpool obtained in this way for the pre-war years 1910-13. All three show a marked degree of seasonal fluctuation with slack employment at the beginning and end of the year. Even the few passengers carried by Southampton before the war produced the largest autumn peak of the three ports, indicating the volume of passengers returning to the States in August and September. However, there was a remarkable similarity between the three, with only January and February not in agreement. London's different shipping routes do not appear to have created different trends of employment between 1910 and 1913.

The pre-war state of employment in the smaller ports has not been examined in this way because only two years' engagements are available for Glasgow and Hull.

Figure 29, the 1920s, shows the same seasonal influence as in the pre-war years. It was seen in the previous section that February was the busiest month in the ship-repairers' calendar, and this is reflected in the low engagement figures for that month. During the years 1921-1929 Southampton gained a substantial lead in the volume of the nation's

Figure 28. Seasonality in seamen's employment in selected ports during 1910-13. Average monthly engagements shown as percentages of annual engagements.

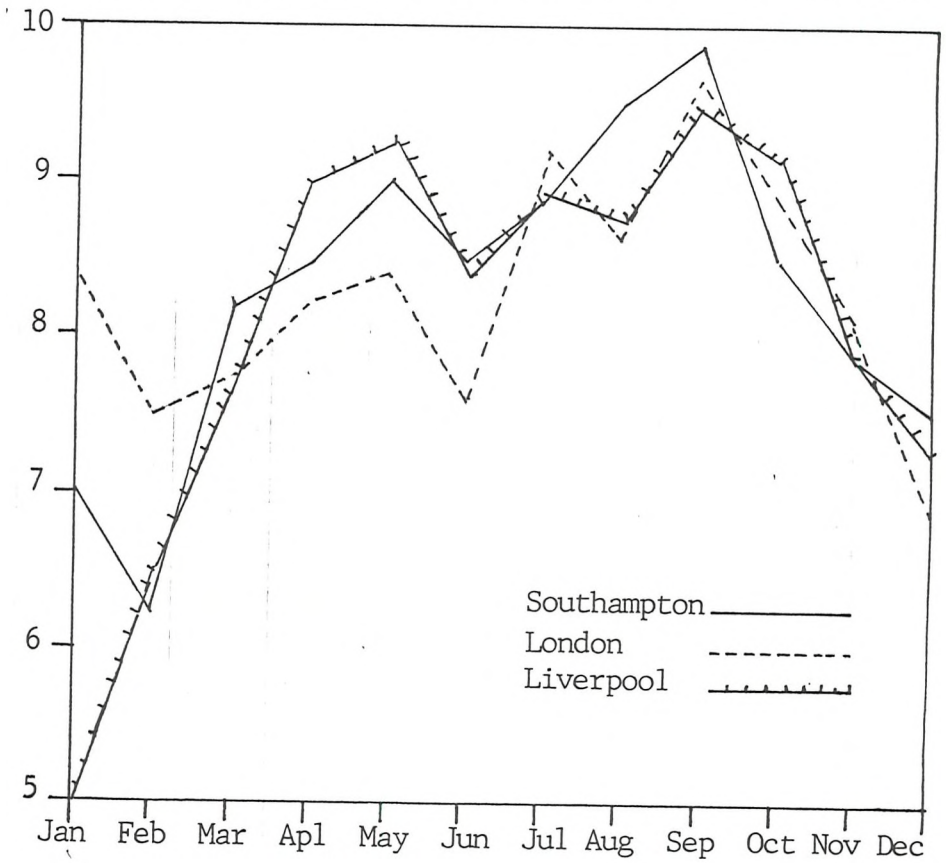
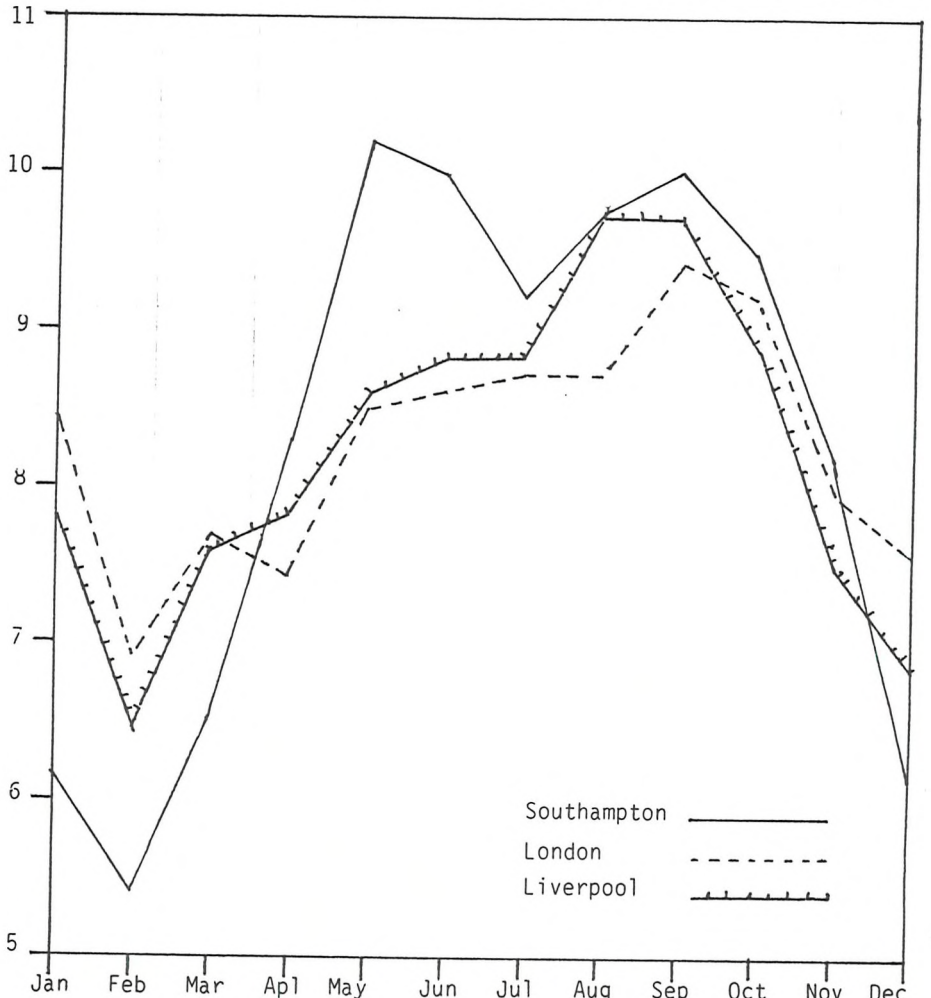


Figure 29. Seasonality in seamen's employment in selected ports during 1921-29. Average monthly engagements shown as percentages of annual engagements.

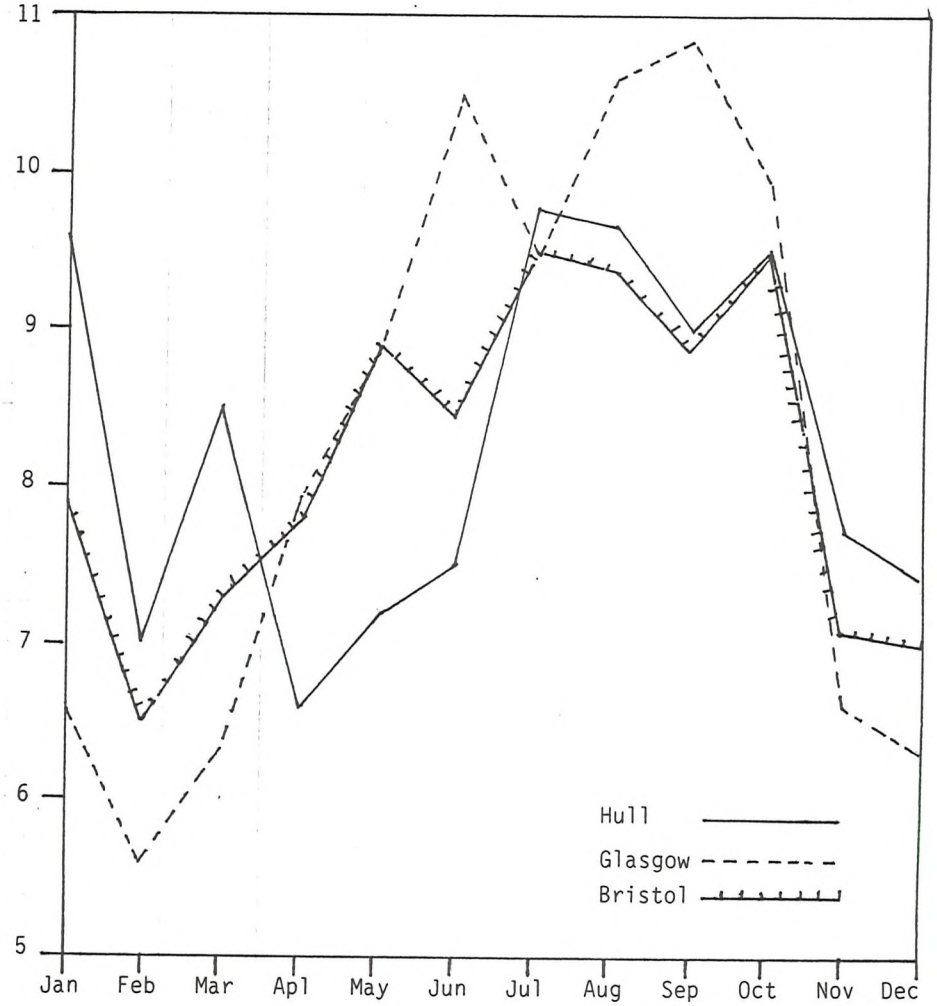


passenger trade, particularly in the inward passengers arriving between April and June. This appears to be the area of greatest loss in Liverpool because the engagements for those months are well down on the autumn engagements. There is no doubt that in all three ports throughout the 1920s employment was distinctly seasonal, with a very slack winter, and it appears very likely that it was seamen from passenger liners who were without work afloat.

In Southampton the extremes of peak engagements and slack winter months are shown to be greater than in London and Liverpool, and the small trough in July between the inward and outward transatlantic passengers (used for mid-summer overhaul) is not present in the other ports.

If we turn to the smaller ports in the 1920s (Figure 30), a very different pattern emerges.

Figure 30. Seasonality in seamen's employment in selected ports during 1921-29. Average monthly engagements shown as percentages of annual engagements.

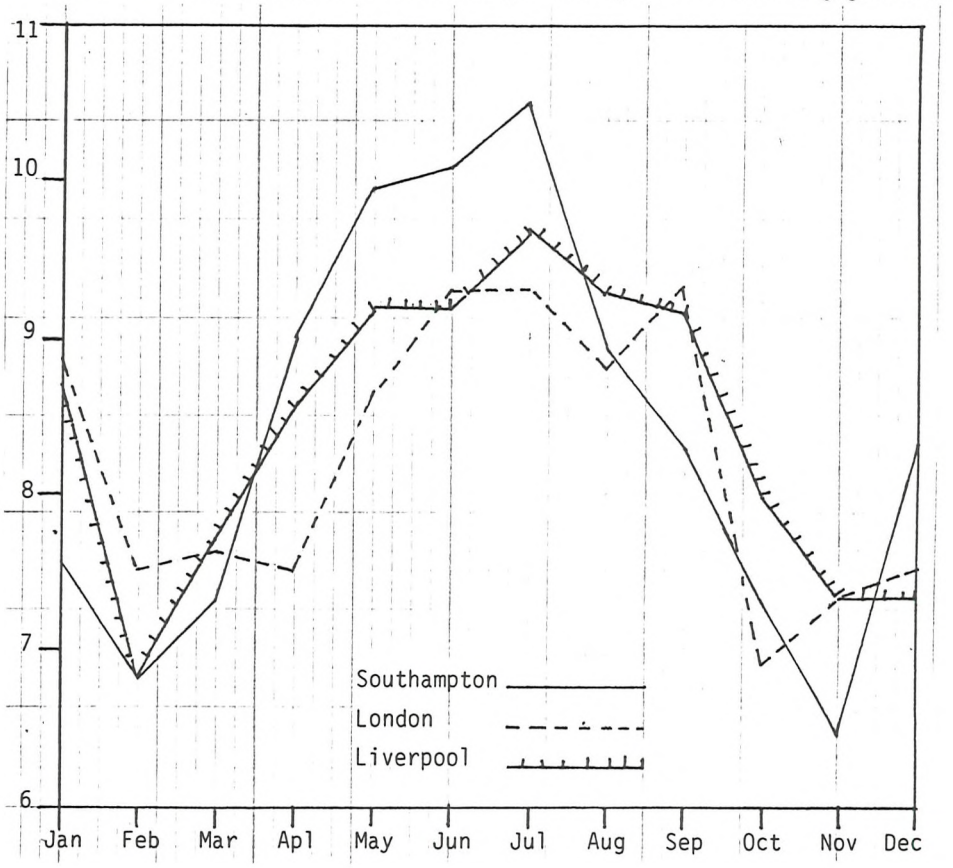


Bristol had a busy January and three peak periods in May, July and October which are in keeping with the three peaks in dock work which were observed in section 1. The influence of transatlantic passengers is

clearly discernable in Glasgow's engagement pattern, with the accent on outward traffic. Shipping in Bristol and Glasgow can be described as busier during the second half of the year. In Hull the seasonal bias is less well defined. Shipping trade in January appears to have been as busy as July and October, while April went against the trend of all other ports, except London. A more sustained period of high engagements occurred in Hull between July and October, but in general employment in this cargo port was more widely distributed than elsewhere.

During the 1930s (Figure 31) London's engagements again decreased in April, and February continued to be a low point for all three major ports.

Figure 31. Seasonality in seamen's employment in selected ports during 1930-38. Average monthly engagements shown as percentages of annual engagements.



London and Liverpool remained closely similar with a summer season between March/April and October/November, but as in the 1920s employment,(signified by the number of engagements), did not have such a wide fluctuation between high and low as in Southampton. The peak season in the latter port was now condensed between April and July. The departures later in the season appear to have been at a much slower pace as engagements decreased sharply from August to November. Southampton moved against the national trend in transporting a greater number of outward passengers, which is not clearly shown in the engagements. Unusual in Southampton is the upturn in engagements shown during December in these years. This may have been due

to the increase in Union Castle's fleet because the South African route sailed longer into the winter months. The two South African fruit seasons were May to November, citrus, and December to June, deciduous. With the opening of the new docks extension Union Castle increased its sailings which obviously increased engagements. The influence of winter cruising may also have been a contributory factor.

The 1930s in Bristol and Hull (Figure 32), where the influence of passengers was either minimal or nil, showed no seasonal fluctuation in engagements. The variation between minimum and maximum engagements was small and employment appears to have been well regulated throughout the year.

Figure 32. Seasonality in seamen's employment in selected ports during 1930-38. Average monthly engagements shown as percentages of annual engagements.



In Glasgow the majority of engagements were crowded into the month of June, supported by May and July, with a small flurry of activity in September/October. The rest of the year offered very little employment to seamen. When other ports managed to encourage freight trade in the later 1930s Glasgow made little recovery from the depths of the depression, and evidence of this shows in the pattern of engagements. There was a

short response to the national trend in inward passengers, but without the corresponding outward trade to sustain the season's sailing schedules. The dismal picture of Glasgow's seafarer's engagements in the 1930s exemplifies the state of trade generally in the port.

The seasonal aspect of shipping is very clear, because even in London and Liverpool which enjoyed an enormous (and in London's case, flourishing) freight trade, it was the passenger side of the business which influenced the employment of seamen. This meant that ports engaging large crews for passenger liners would inevitably have to cope with large numbers of unemployed seamen during the winter. No where was this pattern more apparent than in Glasgow and Southampton, neither of which had sufficient cargo trade to maintain much shipping outside the passenger season. Furthermore, despite Southampton's non-Atlantic shipping lines, it was the transatlantic passengers who decided the season.

When the seasonal factor of the Southern Railway Company's business is added to the port's summer work programme and winter slackness, it is surprising that winter unemployment of seamen in Southampton was not even more distressing. In fact, seamen's seasonal problems were not given much special attention in the press, and there is a good case for thinking that their occupation took them out of the public eye and out of the public conscience. On the other hand, there is an equally good possibility that as the majority of unemployed seamen from passenger liners were catering department personnel, some at least, were able to find alternative winter employment in Hotels and restaurants. This was also an industry which contracted during the winter, but there were opportunities in the big cities.

The value of winter cruising to the employment situation in Southampton is indisputable. However, an additional opening for winter employment was the trooping season which provided limited opportunities to seamen.

Sea Transportation of Troops

The manning of troop ships was of particular local interest because Southampton was the chief trooping port and it created a useful adjunct to the port's winter shipping and summer ship-repair work. Unfortunately, the War Office records of inter-war troop movements and transportation by sea have been destroyed as the period was of no interest to the Ministry of Defence. However, much of the routine work can be gleaned from local sources.

The season began in September and usually reached its conclusion by

the end of April, with somewhere between thirty and fifty ship movements taking place through Southampton during the season. Following the Cabinet decision of March 1921 to dissolve the Ministry of Shipping which was to hand over its mercantile responsibilities to the BOT, it took until January 1925 to actually conclude the arrangements between the Admiralty and the BOT. It was eventually agreed that in peace the Director of Sea Transport was to act under the authority of the BOT and be responsible to the BOT for all sea transport in mercantile craft on behalf of the Navy.[118] The Principal Sea Transport Officer was stationed at Southampton. The BOT was responsible for the provision of commercial shipping to meet the needs of the three fighting services.[119] Steamship owners were invited to tender for Government charter contracts and the shipping lines which most frequently provided ships were P & O, Bibby Line, British India Steam Navigation Co., Orient Line, Union Castle, Royal Mail Steam Packet and Canadian Pacific Ocean Services. Some of the vessels used underwent seasonal conversion from passenger liners to troopers, some doubled as school cruise ships during the summer season (in the 1930s), and some were laid up in Southampton or other suitable river estuaries during the summer. There were at least six permanent troop ships owned by British India and Bibby Lines which, of course, were added to the idle tonnage statistics of the port which provided their summer anchorage, but they made little difference to the total of idle shipping in British ports between the wars.

Officers and crew members in responsible positions were always British, and some British crews were employed on vessels departing from Southampton, but it was usual for deck and engineroom hands on troopers to be lascars, while the stewards were Goanese. Whatever their nationality they were employees of the shipping company and were under the authority of the ship's captain, as on any other mercantile vessel. An additional officer on these ships was the Troop Officer, whose job it was to liaise with the military commanding officer, and assist in organising recreational activities for the troops.[120]

Unfortunately, the majority of the crews being Asian, trooping provided a greater benefit to ship owners, dock owners, ship-repairers and provision merchants than seafarers. One of the difficulties regarding British seamen was that lascars and other Asians could be employed so much more cheaply. It was customary for shipping lines to engage foreign crews when British registered ships were used for the conveyance of either goods or passengers on routes east of Suez, which was frequently the case with the trooping movements. Regiments were transferred from one colonial post to another, they were not automatically relieved and brought home. However, since many of the movements involved sailing in western

waters there was good reason to have made a greater effort to obtain more troop ship work for British seamen. As far as Southampton employment was concerned, undoubtedly the greatest benefit of trooping was gained by the ship-repairers.

Foreign Seamen and Lascars

Troopships were not the only ships to carry foreign seamen or British non-residents. Particularly in the ports of Liverpool, London, Hull, Glasgow and Cardiff discontent was aroused from time to time because of the employment of Arabs, Somalis, Chinese and Indians. They were not only sailing between destinations in the Far East, they were also employed in the home and coastal trade. It was more a problem in the cargo ports than in Southampton, but an occasional incident arose even there. One such incident occurred towards the end of 1919, when Southampton seamen suddenly decided not to sail with "coloureds" and a large number of them were stranded in the town.[121] The suggestion that the reason for the trouble was the lower wages paid to Asians was refuted by the Southampton Marine Society. The Southampton Times denied the suggestion by the Hampshire Independent that there was discrimination against "black" seamen in Southampton. The Southampton Times did not want "the slight outbreak of 'colour' feeling" to be confused with "racial riots in Liverpool and elsewhere." The paper also pointed out that both black and white seamen had been unemployed in Southampton and for every black seaman there were fifty white, but "the Marine Society did not call a conference to discuss their plight."[122] The issue was resolved amicably by the men.

Questions were often asked in the House of Commons by seamen's representatives who wanted aliens replaced with British seamen, but the BOT always provided the same answers. They said they could not compel ship owners to employ white seamen, and since foreign seamen were permitted by statute they could not make representations to ship owners either; they could not ask friendly governments (such as the government of China) to repatriate their seamen without strong reason; and protesters were regularly reminded by the BOT that the majority of lascars were, in fact, British subjects.[123]

A complaint made by the Docks Branch of the TGWU in November 1933 that lascar seamen had molested small girls in Southampton public parks, seems to have been treated by the Trades Council as an opportunity to protest about the Borough Council. They blamed the incident on the lack of adequate surveillance by Park Attendants, rather than any failing in the social behaviour of lascars.[124] The degree of molestation was not

remarked upon, nor were any official charges made, and the Trades Council were mostly interested in ascertaining what action the Borough Council's Watch Committee proposed to take.[125] It does not appear to have been a very serious matter, and the complaint may have been made to draw attention to the fact that lascars were not entirely welcomed by all sections of the community, or it may have been a malicious complaint by an individual racist.

The lack of local evidence of troubles or complaints about lascars suggests that they were not a source of irritation to the Southampton shipping fraternity, even in the trooping season, and service on board troop ships may have been such that liner crews were only too willing to hand over troopers to their Asian colleagues.

In 1924 because of the increasing trade with Germany the Shipping Federation and the Board of Trade agreed to a proposal to employ German seamen. The Southampton Times saw this as much more of a threat to British seamen, and although the general feeling was alarm at the prospect of worsening the employment situation rather than anti-German attitudes, the Southampton Times was more outspoken. The President of the BOT had given the reason for employing Germans as the need for German-speaking people to assist emigrant passengers, to which the Southampton Times retorted that no mention was made of assisting other foreign passengers, and it reminded readers that 15,168 British merchant seamen had been killed during the war.[126]

Although British unemployment problems raised fears about foreign seamen, the percentage of foreigners engaged in the home and coastal trades was extremely small:

1919	7 per cent
1924	less than 5 per cent
1930	3 per cent
1936	3.5 per cent

Sources: 1919 and 1924 published in Hansard in answer to questions put to the President of the BOT.
1930 and 1936 BOT Journal, Census of Seamen.

The BOT did not state how many foreign seamen sailed from individual ports, but in no category of shipping was the percentage large enough to have been troublesome, unless all foreigners had been concentrated in one or two ports.

Seamen employed in all passenger, foreign trade, home trade and coastwise shipping on Census Day 1930 were as follows:

	British seamen	% of total seamen employed	Foreign seamen	% of total seamen employed	Lascar seamen	% of total seamen employed
Passenger	54,248	61.0	4,280	4.8	30,308	34.1
Foreign trade	108,295	61.8	13,843	7.9	52,682	30.1
Home and coastal	18,268	96.9	569	3.0	-	-

Source: Board of Trade Journal.

No lascars were employed in home and coastwise shipping, but Chinese were employed in Hull, and other nationalities were employed in Cardiff. The percentage of the total was very small, but that was poor consolation to a British seamen who stood idle on the docks and watched a crew of "coolies" sail away. Lascars, on the other hand, formed approximately a third of crews on passenger and foreign trade shipping. The Census figures included lascars whose engagements were agreed and terminated overseas, and the BOT did not specifically state how many were sailing in western seas. Whilst 1930 was perhaps not a typical year for British shipping, in that it began to show strong effects of the depression, this does not seem to have altered the figures of foreigners' engagements, and as a mid-period year provides a useful yardstick by which to measure the involvement of aliens in British ships.

Unemployment and Unemployment Benefit

In the docks and shipbuilding industries in Southampton the problem for workers was not so much unemployment as under-employment. Both occupations operated an irregular system rather than a routine, and the system repeatedly offered employment during only part of the week. In both instances the short-duration peak periods attracted additional non-regular workers, some of whom remained making normal conditions less than adequate for the number of people who depended on employment in these industries.

Seafaring occupations were affected by a somewhat different malaise. Under-employment in this industry meant that for some six months of the year seamen were alternately employed and unemployed, but providing ships sailed regularly and men were able to sign on for the next trip, employment was assured. The length of unemployment was governed by the length of the voyage and its turnround time. Arrivals and departures of cargo vessels were far more flexible, and crews were rather more changeable. Very few freighters changed crews in Southampton, and many of the liners re-engaged crews at the time of signing off. However, not all did so,

and there were regular vacancies for part crews when ships were sailing. Summer unemployment could, therefore, be a regular occurrence, but only for a short time, and possibly came as a welcome break from the long hours of work at sea.

The reduction in vessels sailing from Southampton during the winter months was as much as fifty per cent, and unemployment of a more inconvenient nature came to a large number of seamen every winter from November to March. Passengers stopped travelling, liners came in for overhaul and employment was cut drastically. Those whose ships were laid up, either for the winter or for an annual overhaul, were very likely to be without work for much of the time. It was a fairly common feature of employment on Southampton liners that men remained unemployed during overhaul, so as to be ready and available when sailings re-started. Unemployment was, in fact, related to the seasonal circumstances which prevailed in shipping - even in freight shipping - but to a much greater extent in passenger transport.

Appendix 13, showing unemployment in Southampton, reveals the struggle that winter could represent in employment terms for seamen. The number of unemployed on the live register fluctuated from less than 400 seamen in summer to 1,500 in winter, and the graph shows some of the best years of Southampton's shipping, 1927-29.

Table 33. Weekly unemployment statistics for selected ports in certain weeks during 1921-25.

MONTH/YEAR	MERSEY	CLYDE	SOUTHAMPTON	THAMES	HULL	BRISTOL
Dec. 1921	4,896	1,201	1,488	1,845	700	355
Jun. 1922	2,633	845	331	620	210	287
Dec. 1922	3,832	1,250	1,204	1,000	275	376
Jul. 1923	-	900	577	865	352	381
Jan. 1924	3,693	1,483	1,514	310	291	375
Jul. 1924	3,007	724	540	-	250	244
Dec. 1924	4,735	1,431	1,767	-	277	575
Apl. 1925	4,457	1,299	886	631	388	438

Source: National Maritime Board Minute Books. Returns by District Officers re unemployed seamen on certain dates in 1921, 1923-25. (MRC. MSS175/6/NMB/3/i). Seaman, July 13, 1923 for June and December 1922.

Table 33 shows a sample of the weekly unemployment returns available for the early 1920s. Unemployment at the beginning of 1921 was equally bad in Southampton compared with the other winter months shown, even though we do not have a precise figure. We do know that it was reported

that sailings from Southampton in January 1921 were exceedingly few.[127] (See p.42). When the NSFU's journal, The Seaman, wrote about the "rush and stampede for jobs" in March that year, it was probably an accurate description.[128]

The unemployment figures shown in Table 33 for succeeding summer and winter months demonstrate fully the problem faced by Southampton seamen. It is also noticeable that, although passengers and engagements increased during the 1920s, indicating an increase in employment, so also did unemployment increase. No doubt, migrant seamen from the north added to Southampton's unemployed, and made it more difficult for local men to find jobs.

As seen in the engagement statistics, Hull and Bristol do not show a seasonal bias; Glasgow's trend was very similar to Southampton's, with a distinct rise and fall in unemployment according to the season of the year. Liverpool's variation between high and low unemployment after June 1922 was very narrow, and the figures suggest that more prolonged unemployment was experienced there.

At the end of the war it was not only sailors, firemen and stewards who were unemployed. The Mercantile Marine Service Association reported many unemployed masters and officers, and they were obliged to appeal for funds by public donation.[129] Not until July 1922 was the Association able to announce that the number of unemployed officers had begun to decrease.[130]

In the spring of 1922 the Principal Admiralty Transport Officer in Southampton brought to the notice of the South Coast Engineering and Shipbuilders' Association the Grand Fleet Fund organisation for supplying ex-naval men of good character and ability to fill vacancies.[131] Most of the managers of the local shipping lines were members of the SCESEA, but whether or not they were aware of the Grand Fleet Fund, they certainly knew that there were unemployed ex-naval men in Southampton. It was brought to their attention through complaints on more than one occasion in 1922. Most of the complaints were against the general manager of Canadian Pacific for sending repairs to Portsmouth and engaging Portsmouth crews. Sir Thomas Fisher was contesting Portsmouth's seat in the forthcoming election and it was implied that he was trying to win favour in the town.

The strike by ships' stewards in May 1921 did not contribute substantially to unemployment; rather, it was the already high level of unemployment which prevented a successful outcome for the stewards. The strike failed to stop any Southampton sailings, and any BSU men who supported the stewards found themselves replaced by NSFU members.

By the 1930s it is quite likely that unemployment all round increased

because cruise trips were cancelled as well as ordinary scheduled sailings, and passenger numbers were so reduced that rarely would a full complement of stewards have been necessary. The amalgamation of Cunard and White Star, the reduction in vessels calling and the lack of stimulus in shipping generally added to the low spirits of unemployed seamen in Southampton. Fortunately better times were ahead and 1936 saw a profound change in the number of passengers carried, which improved even more the following year. The number of men insured in the industry had fallen considerably by 1937 and the men who had consistently failed to find work had drifted away again, while some of those who had come to Southampton years before returned home again when prospects looked better. Many of the seamen who had added their names to the live register both regularly and infrequently had simply given up seafaring. The smaller number of men circulating in the port in the later 1930s found it easier to obtain employment, and work was correspondingly better in the docks and shipyards for those who no longer wished to go to sea.

Even from 1935 the local press reported that stewards were often in short supply to meet the sudden increases which occurred in passenger lists. However, with the return of the busy shipping there came only half a year's busy employment, and in winter the threat of unemployment was always present.

Unemployed seamen required unemployment benefit as did other workers, but it was not so easy in long spells of unemployment to remain eligible. Dockworkers and ship-repairers had the advantage of being able to do a part week, or even a part day, which entitled them to a stamp on their employment cards. Unemployed persons with no stamps or insufficient stamps were not entitled to standard benefit.

Until May, 1921 the NSFU administered the state benefit scheme for seamen, as well as a supplementary scheme of their own. In company with other trade unions, however, the Seamen's Union found the exercise too costly, and it was too difficult to find the money for the government benefit in advance of the refund. So many seamen were unemployed at the beginning of 1921 that the union's own benefit at 5s. per member per week was costing nearly £3,000 a week.[132]

In addition to union benefit and state benefit there was another fund for seamen, this was known as the Lascar Fund. This Fund was accumulated by the MOL because shipowners paid their unemployment insurance contributions for their entire crews, including seamen not domiciled in the U.K. The money was used as a pension fund for retired seamen between 65 and 70 years, providing their income was less than £2 per week. The amount payable was only 5s. per week, and it was paid first to seamen of the

foreign-going service.[133] In 1921 the NSFU raised the possibility of a grant from the fund for its own members, arguing that it was the employment of non- U.K. domiciled seamen which contributed to the heavy unemployment of British seamen.

In 1925 Joseph Havelock Wilson claimed that a percentage of seamen were drawing unemployment benefit when they were not entitled to it. In Wilson's view men had not made every effort to obtain work and were claiming benefit, the problem here being that while they were registered as seamen they did not have to seek alternative employment to be eligible for benefit. Furthermore, Wilson believed that many men were entered as unemployed after they had been engaged, but while waiting to sail, and such men had no right to benefit.

Wilson sent his suggestions for a revised registration system for seamen to the Ministry of Labour and the Board of Trade recommending that better efforts should be made to bring employment opportunities to the notice of seamen who were registered as unemployed, and also to prevent men remaining on the Seamen's Register if they refused to accept work when it was offered.[134]

Seamen's employment was commonly obtained through the District Maritime Board Joint Supply System, where this was operated, but the MOL replied to Wilson that they would endeavour through the existing machinery to have unemployed seamen placed at the Employment Exchanges. Changes may have been made to arrangements for dealing with unemployed seamen claiming benefit in some ports, but in Southampton where the joint supply system did not operate no alterations were recorded. Seamen signed the "Vacant Book" at the Employment Exchange, and the new location for the Exchange which was made in January 1930 was to improve facilities for handling the large number of unemployed, not to restrict the payment of benefit.

* * * *

Dockworkers' employment received the most attention, and the most efforts were made to improve their situation. Trade union leaders and Ministry officials applied pressure to employers to regularise employment because the casualism still existing in the industry, despite registration, made the level of unemployment unacceptable. Southampton was not different from other ports in this, except that its dockwork was unevenly distributed during individual weeks because the passenger trade created an irregular weekly demand for labour, as well as a seasonal bias in favour of summer. Dockwork was, therefore, more plentiful in the middle

of the week and frequently provided less than a full week's work. The result was that, in an industry which already exhibited an extreme form of casualism, Southampton was one of the worst examples. The fact that the total work force was very small, less than 3,000 men, was little consolation to any registered men who wished to obtain fulltime employment, or to the unregistered who still believed the docks offered their best chance of occasional employment.

Employment for shipbuilders and ship-repairers in Southampton was as insecure as dockwork. A higher level of unemployment was reached during the depression, and as there were many more shipyard workers than dock workers the situation was more critical. Nationally, the industry suffered very severe unemployment, and not only in the 1930s, but throughout the period, at least from 1921 to 1937.

Southampton's specific difficulties were not purely of high unemployment, although the cause, the world recession in shipping which did not generate enough work, was identical with the national problem. Large scale unemployment did occur amongst Southampton's shipyard workers, but the annual average of unemployed workers was below the national average for the industry. Southampton's real problem was a casualism not unlike dockers' casualism, which resulted in part-week working. This, together with a shortage of work through seasonality, were both brought about by the port's passenger shipping and the emphasis on ship-repairing.

Seafarer's employment was different yet again. Passenger liners required enormous crews and consequently many thousands of seamen were employed in the port and depended on it for their livelihood. For a great many of these work was only available during the summer, and winter alternatives were very limited, whether afloat or ashore. Nevertheless, during the summer seafaring employment opportunities were more numerous in Southampton than in other ports examined.

Overall, London's port industries were the most prosperous and offered the most secure employment. Liverpool's trade moved in a downward trend which inevitably reduced employment in its port industries. Except for seamen's employment,Southampton made a slow beginning after the first war, but its trend was one of gradual growth, even in freight. This growth was reflected in its employment opportunities and levels for port workers, within the restrictions imposed by its class of shipping.

1. It would be more accurate to say the second recession was really a deepening of the first, rather than suggest that a full recovery took place between the two periods of depression, which was not the case in the port industries.
2. As an alternative the MOL unemployment-by-occupation statistics could have been used, but the extremely wide range of occupations included in the category renders them less useful.
3. For example, plumbers, patternmakers and woodworkers.
4. Southampton Port Labour Committee. PRO: LAB2 1038 DPL 100/4/1920. This information was also used by E.P.C. Lascelles and S.G. Bullock in Dock Labour and Decasualisation. 1924. pp.188-9
5. ibid.
6. ibid.
7. TGWU records. Docks Trade Group Committee Minutes, July 13, 1925, Transport House. These reports are more informative than the MOL Gazette, but they are only available covering a few years.
8. Southampton Chamber of Commerce Annual Report 1925-26. Southampton Reference Library. According to G.S. Szlumper, Docks and Marine Manager, S.R. Co., passengers increased 41 percent over 1924's record figure.
9. TGWU. DTG Committee Minutes, July 13, 1925. Transport House.
10. PRO: LAB2 1055 6869/11/1927. July 5, 1927.
11. Hampshire Advertiser, April 1928.
12. Hampshire Advertiser, July 27, 1929
13. 1913 total freight tonnage was 1,319,523, while the best post-war years recorded were 1928 (1,246,752) and 1937 (1,270,000 approximately). Statistics provided by the S.R. Co., and published in Southampton Times, Hampshire Advertiser and Southern Daily Echo.
14. Hampshire Advertiser, March 13, 1926
15. S.R. Co., Marine Department Annual Reports. PRO: RAIL 655 59-64
16. Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. took over the liabilities of the White Star Line, but was unable to cope, causing the resignation of its chairman, Lord Kylsant, in September 1930, and the company's ultimate demise. Records of RMSP Co. Annual Reports. Ref. RMSP 30. University College Library, University of London.
17. Hampshire Advertiser, January 11, 1930
18. Southampton Chamber of Commerce, Annual Reports 1931-32. Southampton Reference Library.
19. Adrian J. Vinson, op. cit. p.64.

20. A certain number of employment stamps were required in order to be eligible for benefit, and a worker's card was stamped for each engagement.
21. Three mail and four intermediate liners were ordered, plus six refrigerated cargo vessels and a new feeder vessel for the Southampton-North Continental service. Three intermediate liners were converted from coal to oil and five of the large Castle liners were re-engined and partially reconstructed. Marischal Murray, Union-Castle Chronicle 1853-1953. London, 1953.
22. Totals of foreign-going passengers before the war are not available, but the small number of seamen's engagements between 1910-13 indicates that passengers were fewer than in 1924.
23. The seasonal variation of passengers, that is, the monthly totals are taken from the S.R. Co. records, published monthly in the local press; the figures include continental as well as foreign-going passengers. The BOT did not publish monthly totals in the Journal.
24. Bristol has not been included in Figures 19-24 because of the large variation between estimated maximum and minimum work available.
25. Herbert Tout, The Standard of Living in Bristol, Preliminary Report of the University of Bristol Social Survey. 1938
26. P. Ford, op. cit. p.147. The MOL cost of living index had fallen from 66 in 1928 to 47.5.
27. P. Ford, op. cit. p.118
28. P. Ford, op. cit. p.200
29. The Means Test was introduced as a way to restrict payment of transitional benefit and unemployment assistance. A claimant's financial position was taken into account in assessing his benefit rate, and this included his capital and income from other members of the household.
30. N. Whiteside , op. cit. p.521. Playing the system was a reference to the common practice of attending calls without actually seeking work to enable dockers to remain eligible for benefit.
31. For a full description of London dockworkers' employment in the pre-war period see John Lovell, Stevedores and Dockers, Macmillan, London 1969.
32. PRO: LAB2 2177 STATS 297/1935; also Bevin Papers, Memorandum from MOL: "It is extremely difficult to obtain an accurate indication of unemployment throughout the industry, because data compiled by the Department includes people not strictly within the scope of the Enquiry." MRC: MSS 126/EB/PL/141
33. Memorandum on port labour in Southampton by P. Ford. PRO: LAB2 1048 ET 4283/9/1930.

34. ibid.
35. Southampton Minutes of Evidence to the Maclean Committee, October 13, 1930. PRO: LAB2 1050 ET 4825/9/1931.
36. 18th meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee for Port Labour - Southampton sub committee representative. July 11, 1936. PRO: LAB 8 184.
37. The rules for unemployment benefit eligibility encouraged dockers who had been unemployed for two days in one week to take a third day in order not to lose benefit payable, thus working only three days in six.
38. N. Whiteside, op. cit. p.514.
39. Minutes of 5th meeting of sub committee of the MOL Standing Committee on Employment Exchanges, February 26, 1919. PRO: LAB2 1044 DPL 135/21/1919.
40. 6th meeting of sub committee of the MOL Standing Committee on Employment Exchanges, March 19, 1919. PRO: LAB2 1044 DPL 135/21/1919. During the war it had been established that dockworkers were only required to sign at the Labour Exchange once daily in Southampton. In all other ports two signings were needed to prove attendance at two daily 'calls'. The Southampton custom had come about as a result of the Admiralty 'occupation' of the docks, and was retained because so few men were involved. PRO: Southampton PRC LAB2 1050 4825/9/1930.
41. Sub committee of the MOL Standing Committee on Employment Exchanges, March 19, 1919. PRO: LAB2 1044 DPL 135/21/1919.
42. It was amended again in 1924 to read "separated by a period of not more than six weeks."
43. "Three days on the hook and three days on the book" quoted in much of the secondary source literature on dock labour; oral evidence of several retired dockers.
44. NCPLE reply to TGWU Maintenance Scheme which made use of the Unemployment Fund as part payment of a guaranteed sum. PRO: LAB2 1048 ET/4283/20/1930. March 1931.
45. PRO: Southampton PRC. LAB2 1054 ED 37606/1925.
46. PRO: LAB2 1055 6869/11/1927. April 9, 1927.
47. PRO: LAB2 1046 ET 6734/1930.
48. Times, December 29, 1937; TGWU Docks Trade Group Committee; and PRO: LAB 8 9. Report of Board of Enquiry appointed by MOL 1937.
49. G.A. Phillips and N. Whiteside, op. cit. p. 182
50. P. Ford and C.J. Thomas, A Survey of the Industrial Prospects of the Southampton Region, Blackwell, Oxford 1950. p.19

51. During the war J.I. Thornycroft & Co. Ltd. built 29 destroyers and flotilla leaders, 11 other small vessels and a number of submarines.
52. Hansard, August 5, 1920. 132-2579
53. Lloyds Register of Shipping.
54. In 1914 "British shipbuilding enjoyed an unassailable position" with sixty per cent of the world's output. A Slaven, Growth and Stagnation of British/Scottish Shipbuilding 1913-1977. Part of Scottish and Scandinavian Shipbuilding Seminar held in Glasgow, 1980. National Maritime Museum, Woolwich Arsenal.
55. Southampton Times, January 15, 1921
56. There was considerable controversy in the Borough Council over the effect of the dispute on local employment. The Independent and Conservative members claimed that the woodworkers were hampering efforts to reduce unemployment, and were actually adding to the number unemployed. Labour members felt the undeniable evidence of the trade slump was responsible for the lack of employment. Both arguments were valid. The joiners, by preventing a number of other trades from working, did contribute to unemployment, and because of the length of the strike much overhaul work was sent away. However, as the plumbers' union delegate remarked at the time, even if all the ships and Admiralty conversions had remained in the port, it would still not have absorbed all the unemployed.
57. The Shipbuilding Conference came into being in 1928 as a non-profit making trade association to remove unfair contract conditions, arrange confidential meetings, discuss common approaches and develop information services for the industry. It became part of the Shipbuilders' and Repairers' National Association (SRNA) in 1967. A. Slaven, Shipbuilding Industry Organisations and Policies 1920-1977 NMM, Woolwich.
58. Lloyds Register of Shipping; The British Corporation of Shipping and Aircraft (Register of Ships); Bureau Veritas (Register); The Directory of Shipowners, Shipbuilders and Marine Engineers; The Glasgow Herald Trade Review; and Merchant Ships, Samson, Low Marston and Co. Ltd., 1944.
59. Hampshire Advertiser, December 13, 1930
60. For example, four months work was anticipated for furnishers and upholsterers employed by Thornycroft on the Mauretania. Southampton Times, March 26, 1921.
61. Southampton Times, January 15, 1921.
62. Southampton Times, September 17, 1921.
63 Southampton Times, June 19, 1922. Steel construction was able to continue, but the fire-damaged premises did not re-open until July 1924.

64. Hampshire Advertiser, January 2, 1926.
65. Hampshire Advertiser, November 27, 1926.
66. Hampshire Advertiser, November 9, 1929
67. Southampton Trades Council Minutes, November 12, 1930. SRO: D/Tu 1/1
68. Southampton Trades Council Minutes, September 23, 1931. SRO: D/Tu 1/1
69. SEF Minutes, June 27, 1935. NMM, Woolwich
70. SEF Minutes, September 18, 1935. NMM, Woolwich
71. SEF Minutes, September 24, 1936. NMM, Woolwich
72. SCESEA Minutes, October 6, 1936. SRO: D/SES 1/1-38
73. SCESEA Minutes, January 13,1922. SRO: D/SES 1/1-38
74. SCESEA Minutes, November 3,1922. SRO: D/SES 1/1-38
75. SCESEA Minutes, November 22, 1934 SRO: D/SES 1/1-38
76. SCESEA Minutes, February 2, 1933. SRO: D/SES 1/1-38
77. SCESEA Minutes, October 8, 1935. SRO: D/SES 1/1-38
78. SEF Minutes, December 15/16, 1927 NMM, Woolwich
79. SEF Minutes, March 16, 1928. NMM, Woolwich
80. P. Ford, Memorandum to MOL on Dock Labour. PRO: LAB2 1048 ET 4283/9/1930.
81. ibid.
82. P. Ford, Work and Wealth in a Modern Port, p.66
83. ibid.
84. ibid.
85. The SEF's reference to five holiday weeks is assumed to mean the weeks which contained Bank Holidays, and were not, therefore, full weeks.
86. A.J. Vinson, op. cit. p.90
87. P. Ford, op. cit. p.63
88. SEF Minutes, June 15, 1928. NMM, Woolwich
89. P. Ford, op. cit. p.67
90. In 1919 and 1920 the port was still enjoying the post war ship-building boom, war damage repairs and salvage work.
91. SCESEA Minutes, October 2, 1930. SRO: D/SES 1/1-38
92. SEF Minutes, June 27, 1935. NMM, Woolwich
93. SCESEA Minutes, November 7, 1938 SRO: D/SES 1/1-38
94. A.J. Vinson, op. cit. p.90
95. Hampshire Advertiser, January 9, 1937
96. See Appendix 14.
97. D. Caradog Jones, op. cit. p.79
98. Southampton Times, September 10, 1921
99. Hansard, November 28, 1919, 121-2006 and December 11, 1919, 122-166
100. Southampton Times, December 10, 1921

101. Cunard Executive Committee Minutes, September 19, 1922. LUA: B/4/57
102. Marine Worker, July 1922.
103. Cunard Executive Committee Minutes, September 19, 1922. LUA: B/4/57 Cunard wanted to increase stewards on one of their vessels from 15 to 50 and complained of difficulty in obtaining "first class men."
104. Cunard Records. LUA: GM 16/6
105. Seaman, February 23, 1923
106. Hampshire Advertiser, November 12, 1927
107. It was anticipated that some 250,000 tons of shipping would be scrapped, but eventually the Majestic became a R.N. training ship and the Homeric was sold. The Mauretania and the Olympi were scrapped.
108. Hampshire Advertiser, June 27, 1931
109. Hampshire Advertiser, April 9, 1932
110. They had transferred their shipping to Tilbury in 1880.
111. Hampshire Advertiser, December 19, 1931
112. Hampshire Advertiser, June 22, 1935
113. ibid.
114. P. Ford, Work and Wealth in a Modern Port, p.64
115. Hampshire Advertiser, June 8, 1929
116. Board of Trade Journal.
117. Miss K.C. Boswell. Material collected while she was on the staff of the Geography Department of University College, Southampton, 1932-35 SRO: D/Mat 15/1
118. Admiralty Fleet Order No. 214. Memorandum sent to Southampton under the heading "Admiralty and Director of Sea Transport - Relations." PRO: MT40/2
119. King's Regulations, Order 814, 1926. PRO: MT40/2
120. "Life on Modern Troopships." Hampshire Advertiser, October 7, 1933
121. Hampshire Independent, September 13, 1919
122. Southampton Times, September 20, 1919
123. A clause in the Post Office contracts regarding carriage of mail by shipping companies stated that masters, officers and 4/5 of the crew should be British subjects. (Hansard, March 29, 1922 154-1657). This did not preclude the signing on of part non-British crews, nor did it prevent lascars who were British subjects from sailing.
124. Southampton Trades Council Minutes, November 8, 1933.
125. Southampton Trades Council Minutes, December 10, 1933
126. Southampton Times, December 13, 1924
127. Southampton Times, January 15, 1921
128. Seaman, March 4, 1921
129. Southampton Times, September 29, 1921

130. Southampton Times, July 15, 1922

131. SCESEA Minutes, SRO: D/SES 1/1-38

132. Seaman, May 13, 1921

133. In 1922 it was arranged for the Lascar Fund money to be paid into a Special Fund, the governing body for which was appointed from:

3 shipowners

3 representatives of the Seamen's Insurance Society

2 from the NSFU

1 chosen from the three minor approved societies, namely BSU, NUSSCBB, and Hull's Seamen's Union.

A draft scheme provided benefits for:

a) TB sufferers

b) pensions to be paid between 65-70 years where the income was less than 2 p.w. excluding government pension, or any payment following regular contributions, and payment to be 10s. p.w.

c) distributions to approved societies for increases in sickness benefit.

134. National Maritime Board Minutes, Vol. X 1925, February 12, 1925. Meeting of Sailors, Firemen and Catering Department panels. MRC: MSS 175/6/AMW/4/22.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WAGES AND EARNINGS

A major advantage in analysing dockworkers' wages is that from the beginning of the period a national minimum wage rate was in operation which applied to all casual dockworkers. The same rate, in fact, applied to permanent workers as well, but they were usually paid weekly. Many differentials still existed over and above the minimum rate, but they were mostly small, some as small as 1/2d. an hour, and they were applied to specific jobs, not to the men. Usually the same men worked the jobs which carried the enhanced rates, but probably most workers earned more than the minimum rate at some time. Wages were referred to as daily rather than hourly or weekly, but they were actually computed and paid on a half daily basis. The consistent use of the term 'daily' was a simplification, but the variations in daily earnings were extremely complex and exceedingly difficult to ascertain.

Nor was there anything simple about shipyard workers' wages because of the multitude of trade variables, and in fact, similar problems arise with seamen's wages because of the different classes of sea-going occupations.

The Ministry of Labour involvement in the docks industry called for some specific investigations into earnings and days worked which have provided some local data not available for the other industries. The information found in ex-dockworkers' personal wage books, and the few case histories published by Ford are offered as examples. It is not intended that they should be thought to illustrate the wage levels of the hundreds of dockworkers employed in Southampton, although they may do so.

The scattered pieces of information put together enable us to grasp some idea of the earnings of port workers in Southampton, but as can be readily understood, there is now no way of assessing precisely the actual earnings of large groups of casually or intermittently employed workers.

1. DOCKWORKERS - Wage Rates

Before the first world war dockworkers' wage rates varied considerably from port to port and worker to worker. In 1914 the daily rate ranged from 4s. 6d. in Liverpool (quaymen) to 8s. 4d. in London (stevedores), but the average rate for all grades of workers in 13 major ports in 1914 was 6s. 6d. (See Table 34).

The rates paid in Liverpool were important to Southampton because to

Table 34. Comparative daily wage rates at thirteen major ports, 1911-14, 1919 and 1920.

Port	Class of worker to whom rate applies.	Rates per Day 1911-14(1)		Apl.1919		Feb.1920		1919 rates (2)		Increase of 1919 over 1914 % (5).
		s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	
Middlesborough	Stevedores	8	0	14	3	14	3			78 1/8
	Quaymen	5	0	11	10	11	10			136.6
Newcastle on Tyne	All	7	4	14	3	14	3			94
Plymouth	All	7	8	14	0	14	0			82 1/2
Bristol	All	7	0	14	0	14	0			100
Avonmouth (summer)	All	5	10	14	0	14	0			140
(winter)	All	5	3	14	0	14	0			166 2/3
Cardiff	Shipmen	6	6	13	0	13	0			136
	Warehousemen	5	6	13	9	13	0			111.5
Glasgow	All - except	6	8	14	0	14	0	14	0	110
	Coasting trade	5	0	12	4	14	0	12	4	146 2/3
Grimsby	Shipmen	5	1½	12	10	12	10			163
	Quaymen	4	10	12	10	12	10			150
London	Ocean shipowners	7	4	12	8			12 13	8 4	72.7
	Stevedores	8	4(3)	14 13	0 9			13 14	9 0	68 65
	PLA and Wharfingers (3)	5	3	11	8	11	8	See (3)		122
	Others	-		-		12	8			-
Southampton	Shipmen	6	6	12	6	12	6			92.3
	Quaymen	6	6	11	8	11	8			79.5
Manchester	All	5	0	12	0	12	0			140
Liverpool(4)	Shipmen	5	0	12	2	11	8	12	2	143 1/2
	Quaymen	4	6	11	8	11	8	11	8	159
Hull (summer)	All	6	3	11	8	11	8	12	10	86 2/3
(winter)	All	5	0	11	8	11	8	11	8	133 1/3

Source: Report of Enquiry into Wages, Rates and Conditions of Men Employed in Docks and Waterside Labour, 1920. Appendix 3, Table A/4 and Appendix 8, Table B/3; and Papers of Sir Alfred Booth, Cunard Records, Liverpool University Archives.

(1) According to Table A/4 of the Shaw Enquiry all ports listed received a wage increase prior to 1914. All in 1911 except Cardiff - 1912 and Liverpool - 1889.

(2) This column shows the figures on Cunard's printed list which were different from Bevin's.

(3) The rates for London's stevedores on Cunard's list were;-

Inside 16s. Outside 17s. increased after May 1920 to:-
19s.6d. 20s.6d.

The London rates as shown above were: Some 12s.8d. Shipmen 13s.4d. Dockers 13s.9d. Stevedores 14s.
All of whom were increased to 17s.6d. after May 1920 - above the national minimum rate.

(4) Southampton evidence at the Shaw Enquiry supports the view that Liverpool rates were increased in 1911.

(5) The mixture of decimals and fractions in this col. suggests information was copied as received from the ports.

some extent the two ports were in competition with each other. Southampton's rate at this time was 6s. 6d. for all classes of worker, but it had jumped from 4s. 10d. in the 1911 wage increases enjoyed by all ports, except apparently Cardiff (whose increase was in 1912) and Liverpool. According to Ernest Bevin, whose information was collected from the district delegates of a number of unions within the NTWF, Liverpool dockworkers had not been granted an advance since 1889.[1] However, this raises the questions why was Liverpool the only port not to have benefited from a wage increase in 1911, and if it was the case, how could Southampton afford to pay 1s. 6d. per day to shipmen (stevedores) and 2s. per day to quaymen above the rates of its chief competitor? The Liverpool rates given by Bevin to the Shaw Enquiry in 1920 were incorrect according to a printed list of wage rates amongst the papers of Sir Alfred Booth (Cunard chairman at that time).[2] Union officials were frequently slack about sending in returns, and it is very likely that Bevin did not receive Liverpool's details in time for inclusion in the Table submitted to the Enquiry. One can assume, therefore, that Liverpool also received an increase in 1911, and by 1914 was probably paying a rate closely similar to that of Southampton, although stevedores and quaymen may still have been graded in Liverpool.

In 1919 there were still differences in the rates paid to stevedores and quaymen, but by April the gap between the highest and lowest paid workers in a single port had narrowed slightly; even in Middlesborough, where the gap had been reduced to 2s. 5d. from 3s. and in London, where 3s. 1d. was reduced to 2s. 4d. In Glasgow the difference between ocean-going and coasting trade workers had remained at 1s. 8d. per day, and in Liverpool the difference between shipmen and quaymen was still 6d. per day. The average of the 13 ports had risen to 13s. per day, and the seasonal rates in Avonmouth and Hull had also been dropped following the local levelling out of hours, although the official 44 hour standard week was yet to be recognised.[3]

Thus, when looking at wage rates before May 1920, the date of the first National Agreement, some of the differences may have been due to differences in hours worked. For example, Middlesborough and Newcastle, ports where stevedores could earn high rates, may have worked longer than the 47 hours worked at ordinary rate in Liverpool and Southampton. However, in March 1919 most ports reduced working hours to 44 by local agreements following a joint recommendation by employers' representatives and trade unions. A further variation on the day's working involved the meal hour which was paid in Southampton, Bristol and Hull, but not paid in Liverpool.

Despite remaining differences the overall picture in 1919 showed a more even distribution of wage rate over the 13 ports, with a variation of 2s. 7d. between maximum and minimum, against 3s. 10d. in 1914. Southampton, which had paid the average rate to all its workers in 1914, was paying below the average in 1919, with 10d. per day separating the two broad categories of shipmen and quaymen. The change to separate rates was made during the war when a number of increases, ranging from four to seven per port, were awarded as bonuses to meet the rising cost of living.

The first crisis after the war which involved dockworkers' wages was the demand for a national minimum rate put forward by the NTWF in October 1919 to replace the customary local bargaining. Details of the Shaw Enquiry (which this claim prompted) and Southampton port employers' reactions to it have been described in Chapter Five (pp.154-57). The Enquiry resulted in the establishment of a national minimum rate and, although a multiplicity of individual port rates were still payable on a variety of cargoes and working methods, the basic rate provided a firm foundation for port bargaining.

The Shaw Award endured for more than a year, but began to be eroded in August 1921 when 2s. per day was taken off the minimum time rate. From then on a series of reductions between January 1922 and June 1923 brought the rate down to 3s. per day less than the average rate for 1919.[4] Widespread discontent accompanied this rapid fall in wages, and Bevin's newly formed TGWU faced its first major test in July 1923 when the last of these reductions took effect. A two instalment reduction had been negotiated in October 1922 of which the second instalment was tied to a fall of ten points in the cost of living index. This did not occur until the summer of 1923. The genuine discontent over wages was used by some extremists to 'stir up' trouble in the hope of dislodging the moderate union leadership of Bevin and his supporters. They failed in their attempt, but only after a long and costly struggle.[5]

Bevin defended the 1922 wage agreement because he was concerned that whilst fighting over a few shillings they might lose other hard-won benefits, such as the shorter working week and the opportunity to negotiate at local level. Employers had threatened to terminate all national agreements and cease participation in joint negotiating committees.[6] However, even Bevin admitted that at 10s. per day dock wages were "bedrock"[7] and as soon as he felt reasonably confident of success he put in a claim for an increase of 2s. per day. This was in December 1923, and he eventually called an all-out strike in support of the claim when negotiations broke down.

The strike, from February 16-26, 1924, was not catastrophic to the

nation, despite its proportions. Ports were not brought to an immediate stand-still, but port authorities and shipping companies were shaken by its effect. Although not all dockers answered the strike call, ships could only be made ready to sail by the use of volunteer labour, and as crane and locomotive drivers refused to handle goods touched by volunteers, the inconvenience, or nuisance value, of the strike to employers was almost as frustrating as the loss of revenue was depressing. For example, when the Berengaria arrived in Southampton 130 Cunard and White Star Line clerical staff unloaded 3,000 mail bags and 2,000 cases of passenger baggage into a train, but NUR officials refused to permit the train to depart for Waterloo until those waggons had been uncoupled.[8]

In Southampton the week of the strike was a very slack time for shipping, with all but two of the large liners undergoing annual overhaul, but even so, Cunard paid £177 17s. 6d. in wages to volunteers in Southampton for one ship, the equivalent of 355.5 man days at the current rate of 10s. per day. In Liverpool the sum paid was £133 10s., or 267 man days, and in London £35 10s., or 71 man days.[9] However, volunteers were probably not paid standard rates.

The mutually agreed settlement of the strike awarded dockworkers the increase of 2s. per day as requested, but in two stages. The agreement between the NCPLE and the TGWU lasted until January 1932. The Shaw Award of 16s. a day in 1920 had been made because the Court felt that dockers' income should be sufficient to cover the inevitable periods of unemployment which were part of a casual labourer's working life. The reductions which were made from August 1921 to July 1923 were partly because of the rise in costs and fall in trade in the shipping industry, but also because of the reduction in the cost of living.[10]

After eight years of wage stability from 1924 to 1932, the recession again called for a tightening of belts in the shipping industry. In 1924 Bevin had complained bitterly that only the dockers had been asked to make sacrifices on behalf of the industry, but that reduced wages in 1921 and 1922 had not brought about a trade revival. In 1932 the dockers' wage reduction was less than 1s. a day, but both Cunard and White Star Line reduced salaries from the general managers downwards, and there were some staff redundancies as well.

To obtain even part restoration of the reduction when conditions improved Bevin found it necessary to threaten industrial action, but in December 1934 a small increase was granted, and further demands being made by rank and file members of the union supported by branch officials resulted in increases which were really forced from below when Bevin would have preferred to pursue the cause of decasualisation.

Table 35 Changes in dockworkers daily wage rates at large ports from May 5, 1920 to November 13, 1939

Operative Date	Daily Rate in Shillings
May 5, 1920	16
Aug 4, 1921	14
Jan 5, 1922	13
Mar 20 1922	12
Oct 2, 1922	11
Jun 4, 1923	10
Feb 16 1924	11
Jun 1, 1924	12
Jan 4, 1932	11s. 2d.
Dec 17 1934	11s. 7d.
Jan 6, 1936	12
Sep 20 1937	13
Nov 13 1939	14

Sources: MOL Gazette; and National Joint Council for the Port Transport Industry, Schedule of Agreements 1920-1969.

Table 35 shows the basic wage rates in the industry and the dates from which they were applied. It can be seen that the minimum rates reflected the cyclical fluctuations in dock work. Quite apart from alterations in the cost of living the amount of work available during 1922, 1924-32 and 1936 was also very different, so that potential earnings were ranged from very poor to good regardless of the same rate of 12s. having been paid in those years or part thereof. Two and a half to three days in a week during 1922 might well have been the most work the average docker could expect, whereas the average docker had a much better chance of finding four and a half to five days at the same rate in 1936.

Prof. A.L. Bowley stated that 1924 was a "safe fixed point ... in which conditions were temporarily stable."[11] It seems, therefore, to be a satisfactory year from which to consider income in the docks industry and make some comparisons with other industries and the cost of living index.

In Table 36 column a shows the basic daily rates of dockworkers converted to an index with 1924 as the base year; these are compared with average weekly wage rates paid to employees mainly in industrial occupations, based on a constant pattern of employment (column b); average annual earnings of wage earners in mining, manufacturing, building, transport and some services are shown in column c; and the final column d shows the cost of living index at 1924 = 100 for comparison. The figures

in brackets show real earnings converted by deflating the indices with the cost of living.

Table 36. Comparison of wage rates, average earnings and retail prices indices for 1913 and 1919-38.

Year	a Daily wage rate docks industry Dec. each year	b Weekly wage rates	c Average annual wage earnings	d Cost of living index
1913	54.1 (94.2)	52.1	51.6 (90.4)	57.4
1919	108.3 (88.2)	119.7	- -	122.8
1920	133.3 (93.7)	143.7	141.5 (99.5)	142.2
1921	116.6 (90.4)	142.7	132.6 (102.7)	129.0
1922	91.6 (87.6)	109.4	106.4 (101.7)	104.5
1923	88.3 (88.9)	97.9	98.5 (99.1)	99.3
1924	100 (100)	100	100 (100)	100
1925	100 (99.5)	100	100.6 (100.1)	100.5
1926	100 (101.7)	100	97.8 (99.5)	98.3
1927	100 (104.6)	100	100 (104.6)	95.6
1928	100 (105.4)	100	98.6 (103.9)	94.8
1929	100 (106.8)	99.0	98.9 (105.5)	93.6
1930	100 (110.8)	97.9	98.5 (109.1)	90.2
1931	100 (118.7)	96.8	96.7 (114.7)	84.2
1932	93.0 (113.1)	95.8	94.8 (115.4)	82.2
1933	93.0 (116.4)	93.7	93.8 (117.4)	79.9
1934	96.5 (119.9)	93.7	94.9 (117.8)	80.5
1935	96.5 (118.2)	94.8	96.5 (118.2)	81.6
1936	100 (119.2)	96.8	98.7 (117.5)	83.9
1937	108.3 (123.0)	101.0	101.3 (115.0)	88.0
1938	108.3 (121.7)	104.2	104.7 (117.6)	89.0

Source: D.H. Aldcroft, Interwar Economy: Britain 1919-1939 (London, 1970) Table 38 p.352 and Table 41 p.364 (adjusted to 1924=100).

A number of similar tables have been prepared by different economists and statisticians from very carefully considered data. They can probably all be criticised on various grounds, but in this instance average wage rates and earnings are of interest for comparison with dock rates, even if the method of calculation has resulted in uncertainty regarding the validity of some aspects of the series.

The daily wage rates of dockworkers were potential earnings rather than actual earnings, but even after the 16s. award in 1920 and assuming full time work, the rate was not as high as the average annual earnings in

other industries. There were bound to be some dockworkers who earned more than the basic minimum over a number of weeks; there were the differentials to be gained for one thing, and overtime for another. But the cry that 16s. a day was too much, which was heard from the employers' camp in 1920, does not seem to be justified, particularly bearing in mind the reason for the award - that it was to assist where a full weeks wages could rarely be earned.

From 1926 the situation was different. As the cost of living dropped, dock wages held up. Only in 1932-33 were there signs that falling port trades would drag wages down again. The reduction was slight and the daily rate remained steady. However, the daily rate in the docks was one thing, earning that amount every day was an entirely different matter.

The problem in any analysis of dockworkers' wages lies in ascertaining how much was actually earned, rather than looking at the value of potential earnings. Even in the Port of Liverpool, where the clearing houses kept records of wages paid and the number of men engaged, it is only possible to calculate the average amount paid per man per week. One cannot tell in what proportions the weekly total was distributed to individual dockers, unless one assumes that the same men were engaged every day, and worked the same number of hours. On that basis the other 10-15,000 men waiting at the call stands must be assumed to have failed to obtain work and must be completely ignored. A smaller number, but nonetheless a floating surplus, was also present in Southampton, and perhaps the best that can be done is to estimate the number of days that might have been worked each week, but without the benefit of the clearing house records.

Estimated Earnings

Management and union in Southampton were never in agreement as to the average number of days worked per man, nor even whether or not there was a seasonal influence which might affect the number of days worked. The general concensus among employers was to estimate four days per week worked on average, while trade union officials said two days.

The short investigation by Southampton Employment Exchange in 1920 has already been discussed in Chaper Six (pp.180-81). This reached the conclusion that less than three days per week were likely to have been worked by the 2,800 or so casual tally-holders.

The next local information available in chronological order takes us nearly half way through the period. P. Ford, in his local research, refers to "the typical pre-depression year" of 1927, during which there were approximately 3,000 registered tally-holders. The data relates to

the 600 preference men employed by the Southern Railway Company, and a sample of 50 of their 500 'shed' men.[12] In 1927 the national minimum rate for a full week of 44 hours was £3 6s. The average wages of the preference men varied from £3 16s. in summer to £3 9s. 2d. in winter. The shed men averaged only £1 13s. 2d. in summer and £1 6s. 5d. in winter. Thus, on a 44 hour week the average engagements based on the above earnings were:

Preference men	Summer	6.3 days	Winter	5.8 days	6.0 p.a.
Shed men	"	2.8 "	"	2.2 "	2.5 p.a.

The 1920 average for those few autumn weeks becomes good when compared with the winter of 1927 for shed men, but at the time of the earlier investigtion the MOL department responsible for co-ordinating port registration schemes had, quite rightly, been distressed by the poor employment record of so many of Southampton's port transport workers.[13]

The information derived from such small samples is insufficient to use as a basis for port earnings or hours worked, but it certainly highlights the division between regular and irregular, or casual, labourers. Although Ford refers to the apparent levelling effect of the Railway Co.'s rota system, it has yet to be established that the system genuinely provided equal opportunities, and in any case it did not do so for the shipping company stevedores.

Table 37 enables a comparison to be made between the average estimates already obtained for 1927 and some individual workers whose weekly wage totals are available for 1928.

Table 37. Comparison of average weekly wages and average days worked per week.

Year	Class of Worker		Average Weekly Wage	Average Days per 44 Hour Week
1927	Preference men		£3 12s. 7d.	6.0
	Shed men		£1 9s. 9d.	2.5
1928	Nine individual non-preference shed men	1.	£1 6s. 11d.	3.0
		2.	£1 14s. 8d.	3.2
		3.	£1 6s. 2d.	2.7
		4.	£1 7s. 10d.	2.8
		5.	£1 11s. 10d.	3.2
		6.	£2 0s. 9d.	3.8
		7.	£1 9s. 3d.	3.1
		8.	£1 7s. 0d.	3.0
		9.	£1 6s. 4d.	2.7
Jan-Aug	S.R. Preference man (34 week period only)		£2 16s. 8d.	4.4

Sources: P. Ford, Work and Wealth in a Modern Port, (London 1934) pp. 74 and 77; and George Tatford, retired TGWU shop steward, information from his personal wage books.

G. Tatford's average days per week are approximately mid-way between the preference men and shed men in Ford's 1927 sample, and although it is only a part year, it includes the summer months when the Channel Island and cross Channel traffic was at its peak. Ford's preference men seem to have been particularly well favoured, because Tatford regarded himself as more fortunate than many in obtaining work.[14] However, the average weekly engagements of Ford's preference men were worked out from average earnings, because their actual days of employment are not known. In Tatford's case the hours of employment were stated with the wages earned. When Tatford's hours were calculated according to his earnings for the whole year of 1927 the average days per week were nearly half a day less than was the actual case.

Table 38 shows an example of one preference man's employment record, revealing not only his meticulous attention to detail, but also his versatility as a worker and his skill in obtaining employment.

Table 38. Employment record of a preference man showing average number of days per 44 hour week, based on the actual number of days and part days worked.

Year	Average Days per week engaged	Employer	Comment
1925	4.7	S.R. Co. in summer, occasionally Union Castle/Royal Mail in Jan. Nov. Dec.	9 weeks only.
1926	5.0	- " -	No work during Gen. Strike.
1927	5.0	- " -	
1928	4.4 *	S.R. Co., Union Castle then local Tug Co.	34 weeks as an ordinary docker.
1929	4.5 *	S.R. Co., then Tug Co.	8 weeks dockwork, then regular weekly wage £3 18s. 8d.
1930	4.8	Union Castle and occasionally S.R. Co., then Tug Co.	42 weeks on docks, then regular wage £3 18s. 8d.
1931-1935	-	Fully employed during the depression with the Alexandra Towing Co. on the tug Romsey. Hours as 1929/30. (9 a.m. - 5.30 p.m.) December 18, 1935 issued with Tally 2555.	
1936	4.5	S.R. Co., Union Castle and J. Rose & Co., (Master Stevedore).	
1937	5.1	S.R. Co., Union Castle, J. Rose & Co. and Simons (Fruit Importers).	
1938		Except for 7 weeks dock work he was employed by Imperial Airways (Flying Boats) as a stevedore.	

Source: George Tatford's personal wage books.

* Calculated on ordinary dock work only.

George Tatford was in no way unique. He had been a seaman until 1925, like many of his colleagues. When dock work was scarce he used

his experience to obtain work on the tugs. This was not the sort of dovetailing Ford referred to but, together with working on the flying boats, it proved to be a successful way to remain in receipt of wages. Although a Southern Railway preference man, he did not restrict his engagements to one employer on the docks. This employment record is an example of how dockers could manage to earn a satisfactory living.

The above employment record also agrees with Ford's findings that the seasonal gap between high and low wages was very narrow for those with regular earnings. For example:-

	Average weekly wage @ 12s. per day.
Winter Oct. 1926 - Mar. 1927	£2 12s. 6d.
Summer Apl. - Sep. 1927	£3 3s. 4d.
Winter Oct. 1936 - Mar. 1937	£3 8s. 10d.
Summer Apl. - Sep. 1937	£4 9s. 7d.

N.B. The last two weeks in September 1937 included 1s. per day increase.

John Shaw was not a preference man. He acquired a tally in 1938, having just given up a seafaring life as an assistant butcher on White Star Line vessels and the Empress class steamers of Canadian Pacific. His sea-going work had given him the ability to handle meat carcasses, and he found most of his dock work in this particular field, which was not a popular job with dockers in general, despite the extra pay.[15]

The economic situation in the Docks in 1938 was much improved from ten years earlier - the new docks had been working for some years, and Union Castle had increased the size of its fleet, the speed of its mail service and the tonnage of its cargoes. Moreover, transatlantic passengers were once again plentiful. Of interest, therefore, is the number of occasions on which Shaw signed the unemployment book. His work was predominantly mid-week when the ocean-going steamers were in port, when he worked at the beginning and end of the week his employers were either International Cold Storage Co. or Southern Railway Co. The increase in the number of his unemployment signings during the summer of 1939 was off-set in wages by frequent overtime for International Cold Storage.

When Shaw worked meat cargoes from cold chambers his wage rate was enhanced by 1s.1d. per shift over the standard time rate. Together with overtime this bonus rate tends to give a misleading correlation between days worked and wages earned. Similar anomalies must apply to every

example available and statistics can only be offered as a guide to general expectation of labour and rewards.

Table 39. Employment record of a shed man showing average earnings and days worked, together with unemployment record.

Year	No. of weeks	Average weekly earnings	Average of actual days worked	Seasonal variation in signing unemployment book
1938	28	£2 11s. 10d.	2.7	Jun-Sep (14 wks) 17 days Oct-Dec (14 wks) 45 days
1939	52	£2 16s. 7d.	3.8	Jan-Mar 38 days Apl-Sep 53 days Oct-Dec - Final quarter included 4 Saturdays without work, 2 sickness days and last week missing.

Source: John J. Shaw's personal wage book.

The difference in prospects for the preference man and the shed man is very clear. The preference man obtained more days per week in 1930 than the shed man worked in either of his years, and yet the economic situation and general employment opportunities were better in 1938. (From September 1939 was probably not a good period for comparison).

The MOL made a further investigation of Southampton wages in connection with the Port Transport Enquiry carried out by the Maclean Committee. To assist this enquiry the Southern Railway Co. provided the MOL with the total wages per annum paid to their 600 preference men for the period October 2, 1929 to October 1, 1930, at which time the national minimum rate was 12s. per day.

Fifty eight of the 600 tallies were not held for the full period and were not counted, so the data concerns 542 men. Of these 321 (59.2 per cent) earned more than the national minimum time rate over the year. The maximum annual wage total represented a weekly average of £4 14s. 0d., which is the equivalent of 7.8 days per week. At the other end of the scale the minimum annual total represented a weekly average of £2 per week, or 3.3 days work per week.

However, the work was fairly well distributed between the 542, with 252 working up to 49 days over the standard time for 44 hour weeks, and 201 working up to 49 days p.a. less than the standard time required for 44 hour weeks. 56 worked somewhere between 50 - 90 extra days, and 32 worked from 50 - 90 days less than the standard. As these were all preference men the polarisation of earnings reflects a certain doubt

regarding the rota system, by which each tally-holder was supposed to be called in rotation to give all an equal chance of employment. However, when the maximum totals of £245 18s. 9d., £245 14s. 7d. and £237 17s. 10d. are so far removed from the three minimum totals of £111 10s. 7d., £109 10s. 3d. and £107 6s. 9d., it might look as though there were preference men amongst the preference men.

Of course, it was up to tally-holders to be there when they were called, and two of the lowest paid had missed several weeks during the year through illness, but there was considerably more polarisation than the outer six, and there is no doubt that some men were called more often than others by many foremen.[16]

An analysis of the wages sheets can be found in Table 40.

Table 40. Employment record of 542 preference men showing average earnings and average days worked per week.

Oct. 1929- Oct. 1930 Category of Workers	Average earnings per annum	Average earnings per week	Average days per week
Total 542 tally-holders	£185 14s.	£3 12s.	6.0
The highest paid 271 (50%)	£214 14s.	£4 2s.	6.8
The lowest paid 271 (50%)	£156 12s.	£3 0s.	5.0
The lowest paid 237 (43.7%) excluding *	£166 14s.	£3 10s.	5.8

* 68 tally-holders who were amongst the lowest paid, many considerably below the average, were listed as sick or otherwise absent, or as having a poor record of attendance at calls, and because they were not always available for work they have been shown separately in the table

N.B. Earnings have been shown to the nearest shilling.

Source: "Southern Railway. Earnings of Preference Dock Labourers, Southampton Docks, Tally Holders 1-600. (As supplied for Income Tax purposes)."
PRO: LAB 2 1050/34894.

Southampton Port Registration Committee was persuaded by the Maclean Committee to keep records of the amount of work done by all tally-holders during the six month period May 1 - October 30, 1930. The tally-holders listed total 2,899, of whom 600 were the Southern Railway preference men examined above. It seems very likely that the top earners would have been drawn from these 600, but not necessarily all of them.

The period covered by the records is 26 weeks, which is 156 working days when Saturday is counted as 1 day and not as ½ a day. The records reveal that 735 (25.4 per cent) worked all 156 days, and 147 (5.0 per cent) did not work at all. (See Table 41) This represents a considerable improvement on 1920, when almost 16 per cent did no work and only 1 per cent worked all the days counted, but the record falls short of the

preference men's performance when considered on their own; 59.2 per cent of the 542 preference men had worked the equivalent of the complete 12 month period under review in Table 40.

Table 41. Number of days worked by 2,899 tally-holders during part 1930.

No. of days worked	Percentage of total days	No. of tally-holders	Percentage of tally-holders
Nil	Nil	147	5.0
1 - 5	0.6 - 3.2	140	4.8
7 - 66	4.5 - 42.3	529	18.2
67 - 79	42.9 - 50.6	504	17.2
80 - 145	51.3 - 92.9	873	30.1
148 - 154	94.9 - 98.7	7	0.2
156	100	735	25.4

Source: "Southampton Port Registration Committee. Statement of Work obtained in the Port of Southampton by individual workers, for the period 1st May, 1930 to 30th October, 1930." PRO: LAB 2 1050 34894.

The above statistics were looking at work available at the best possible time, from May to October, and the number of vessels and passengers using the port in 1930 was a slight improvement on 1927/28. The Southern Railway Company, who were by far the largest employers of dock labour, had suffered a steady decline in their own cargo traffic from 1926 = 100 to 1930 = 67.[17] So, perhaps it is not surprising that in 1930 only 1,615 (55.7 per cent) of the tally-holders actually worked more than half of the total time. The assumption was made by the PRC that days worked referred to whole days, but as the MOL had found in 1920, there was no indication in the records as to length of engagement, and no doubt, many were only half days.

Employers constantly felt the pressure to "relieve the industry of the high wages cost," [18] but the extent to which wages were high depends on their ratio to the value of port revenue. Dock work did not only involve cargo and baggage handling, there was also the docking and undocking of ships and tenders, but as ships and cargo decreased so did dock work and the amount or money it required in wages. Very little expenditure was lost in unearned wages payments.

* * * *

The wage fluctuations in the basic rates of the industry followed the same direction as the movement of other wages, but if any reliance can

be placed on a comparison with average earnings and average wage rate tables of permanently employed workers in other industries, the Shaw Award was not the high rate it was claimed to be by the employers. The sum was awarded to make allowance for casual workers who did not earn a full week's wages, and that was unprecedented and remarkable, but in real money terms, even a full week's wages in the docks was still below many other industries, and the dockers' wage cuts in 1921/22 were greater. The argument could be put that dockers' hours were shorter, but in physical exertion and discomfort the work might be compared with coal mining, and those who did it felt they were entitled to some recognition of the hardships which their labour involved.[19]

Dockers were not constantly making demands for increases to the basic rate, although port differentials for special jobs and conditions were frequently under review. When wage advances were claimed as amendments to the National Agreement, each time it was necessary to resort to strike action or threats before the advance was conceded. That the workers had one powerful voice to speak for them was surely to their advantage.

The basic rates from 1924 kept dockers high on the list of well-paid occupations, but under-employment through casualism perpetually depressed actual earnings for the majority, regardless of region or season.

In Southampton a number of examples indicate that in general the Southern Railway Company preference men were liable to be better off than the shed men, and in particular they were less affected by the shortage of work in winter. The details of employment in Chapter Six suggest that the same was probably true of a nucleus of stevedores who were regularly employed by the shipping companies. However, there is also evidence that being a preference man did not guarantee regular employment, and the earnings of some were exceptionally low - even where there is no suggestion that the reason was because of limited attendance at calls.

The unemployment records of the non-registered workers made between 1931 and 1938 by the MOL prove that many thousands of men were hopeful of obtaining occasional work, and since the unemployment figures fluctuated some evidently were successful some of the time. The number of men insured as dockworkers in Southampton was in excess of 4,000, but there were never more than 3,000 tally-holders, and it is plain that not all of those obtained work. Non-registered men in Southampton obtained very little employment and, therefore, small earnings and very few stamps on their cards - it was not <u>that</u> easy to keep in benefit if they were unregistered. Nevertheless, they were, by definition, part of the docks industry, and could remain so unless a system of decasualisation should put an end to the way in which they sought work.

These men do not appear in the wages statistics, and they were not included in the computations of average days worked. There was, in fact, an inclination on the part of employers and Ministry officials alike to disregard them altogether. In the port of Southampton the documentation deals only with the difficulties surrounding the employment and earnings of registered men. However,the existence of the unregistered labourers, who might be remembered when extra men were required for the fruit and potato season, shows that the examination of wages, like the examination of employment, is an integral element of the study of casualism, and that the structure of the port transport industry, as well as outside economic influences, controlled the circumstances of its employees.

2. SHIPYARD WORKERS

Among the determinants of wage levels are an industry's capacity to pay wages, the bargaining power of management and workers, the cost of living in relation to wage rates and earnings, and wages schemes in operation within the industry. On a wider front there are also national industrial and economic considerations, and in the case of the port industries, the role of overseas industry in the structure and development of trade, which leads to international competition and comparisons of international wage rates. Between the wars lower rates were very often paid in overseas shipyards, which was not the case in the shipping industry. However, both industries were much afflicted by foreign competition and one of the methods used by employers to meet this was to cut costs by reducing wages. The process of increasing and decreasing wages according to trade had long been a method of cost control, but at a time when a policy to induce growth in trade and industry was called for, wage reductions did not prove to be an adequate response.

The bargaining strength of the shipyard workers was dissipated because of the diverse union structure, and the nature and character of the occupations. Collective action, either in negotiations or industrial pressure, tended to be ineffective. The FEST was not an integrated organisation and from the mid-1920s it did not represent the whole of the industry. The AEU and the Boilermakers (expelled in 1923) were notable ommissions from the members' list. They were large organisations, and the boilermakers in particular had a large percentage of their members in shipbuilding. Even after the craft unions dissociated themselves from the FEST, it continued to function as the prime negotiating body for the shipbuilding industry. Employers regarded the Craft Unions Committee

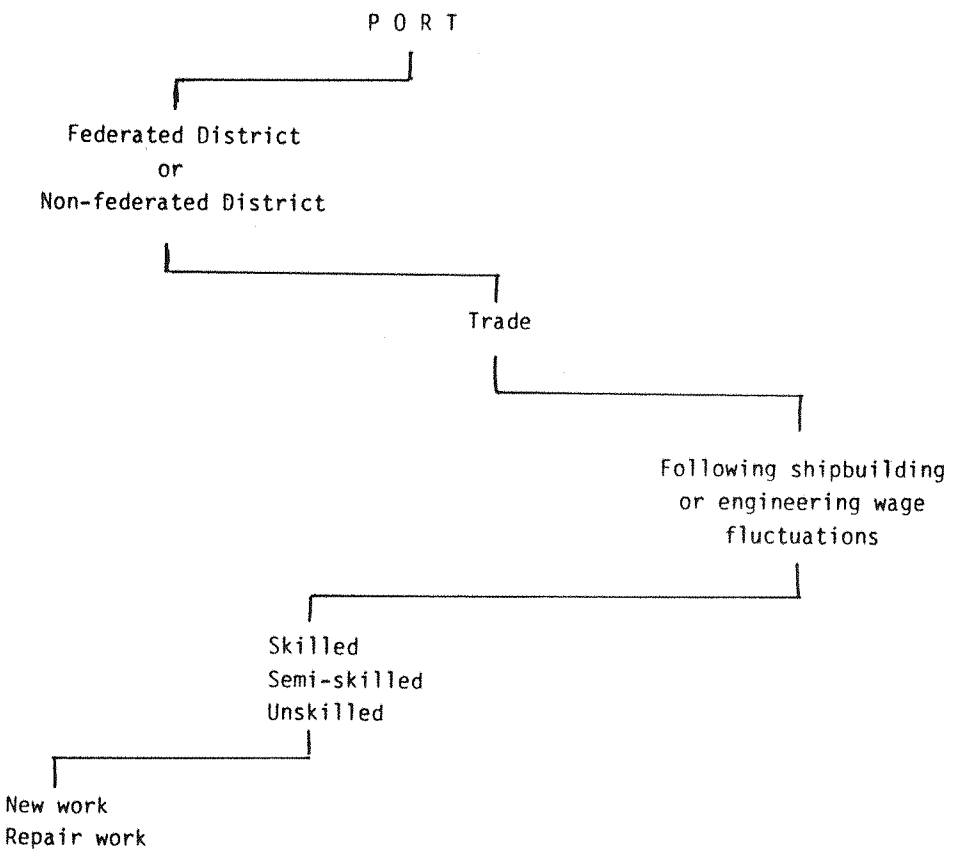
as a secondary body, although it represented the main time working trades whose wage differentials created some of the conflicts in the industry.

Until 1930 there was no uniform wage rate in the shipbuilding industry, and the various trades' wages were negotiated between local union officers and employers, sometimes assisted by their national executives. Where general increments and reductions were agreed between the SEF and the FEST, these were applied in all federated districts to the existing local wage rates. The complex structure of the industry tended to create wage conflicts, and this structure is, therefore, re-examined in the light of its effect on wage fluctuations.

The movement of wages during the period is also examined, bearing in mind the cost of living and local employment levels. Actual earnings are difficult to assess, but the cost of living and employment factors affected both the value of earnings in real terms and level of earnings because of the insecurity and irregularity of employment observed in the previous chapter.

The main preoccupation with wages in Southampton's shipyards between the wars was the inequality with rates paid to similar workers in other ports. This aspect of wages and earnings is examined in detail, with particular emphasis on the issue which arose in 1927/28, which focussed attention on these inequalities and concentrated the arguments of both sides, having previously been aired sporadically over a number of years.

The Wage Structure



The above flow chart represents diagramatically the main features of the industry's structure which influenced the payment of wages. An explanation of these features, together with a comment on the significance of the uniform wage agreement of 1930 are given in order to unravel the complexities.

Prior to 1930 each port made its own arrangements, but where ports were affiliated to the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation they were obliged to keep within the wage agreements and dictates of the Federation. Even here, however, local customs and practices provided for a great many variations in rates, and the SEF had its own grading system according to the number of employees in the district and the average annual output of new tonnage. Thus, Southampton was grouped with the small shipbuilding and repairing centres and its wages fluctuated on a scale with Aberdeen and Dundee, rather than with the Clyde and the northeast coast. This was an arrangement which suited the South Coast Employers' Association because it kept Southampton's rates officially depressed compared with larger districts, but in fact, it did not help member firms to establish good relations with their workers.

Most shipbuilding centres were affiliated to the SEF and were known as the federated districts. Those which were not affiliated included Mersey Shiprepair Employers, Thames Dry Dock Proprietors, Bristol Channel Shiprepairers' Association, and repairing firms in Falmouth, Belfast and South Wales. The first four of these joined the Federation towards the end of the 1920s.

Taking the AEU as one trade, there were more than twenty trades involved in shipbuilding, with wide-ranging differentials between trades and ports. To take one example to illustrate the situation, joiners in February 1919 at eleven ports had six different basic rates of pay, and six of those ports had between them four different additional repair rates. The anomalies within the engineering industry, which have already been described, involved workers organised by a single union being employed by firms affiliated to two different employers' federations, each with its own rates and conditions of employment. In all the major shipbuilding districts marine engineers' wages fluctuated with workers in the engineering industry, even where employers were affiliated to the SEF. In Southampton this was not the case because the port employers had never made a separate agreement for marine engineers. The conditions applying in Southampton were by workers' choice, and even when engineers complained about war bonus anomalies, they showed no inclination to negotiate wage changes with the engineering industry.

Skill divisions within a trade each had a different wage rate, but

not all trades had their own unskilled classes. Marine engineers and boilermakers, in particular, included semi-skilled and unskilled labour, for example, fitters' mates, platers' helpers and rivetting squad labourers. It was common practice for skilled men in those trades to employ their own labourers, with only a percentage of their wages being made up by the shipbuilding firms.

The final section of the flow chart represents the type of work performed by individual workers. Ship-repair work tended to be dirty and wet, most of it being carried out on ships in berths, rather than in the shipyards, although the preparation of parts might be done in workshops. Shipbuilding was also dirty work and often unpleasant, but if anything repairs were even less comfortable than new work and carried the constant pressure of speed. Most districts where a large quantity of repairs were undertaken paid a special rate for the work, and there were additional differentials. For example, in Southampton men were paid an oil rate for working in parts of the ship which had been in contact with oil. Another differential obtainable in Southampton was river rate, which applied when men were sent in tenders to work on ships anchored in the river. Laid up ships to be put back into commission and troopship conversions were the most common vessels in this category. A number of similar payments existed in connection with repair work which were not payable on straightforward shipbuilding. However, the extra rate for repair work rarely exceeded 6d. a day.

When the uniform wage rate was introduced in 1930 it only applied to SEF affiliated districts, having been agreed between the SEF and the unions concerned. Some small anomalies still existed at the beginning, but on the whole, trades were paid equal basic rates according to skill, namely 60s. per week for skilled craftsmen, and 41s. for labourers. Piecework and bonus scheme rates were adjusted in accordance with the national minimum rate. Engineers continued to follow the engineering industry's fluctuations, except in Southampton, but engineers in railway shops and federated shipyards received a similar increase to other workers, resulting from the adoption of the uniform rate. Consequently, fitters were paid around 2s. per week more than shipyard workers, and turners were paid approximately 2s. a week less.

The loss of trade differentials because of the new uniformity was seen as a blow to some, in particular patternmakers, who had always fought for a differential over fitters, but generally it was accepted without undue upheaval. The object of the national rate was to simplify the complex structure of wages and bonus payments and reduce the tensions caused by differentials between trades and ports or districts.

Wage Fluctuations

In 1914 wage rates paid to skilled shipyard workers averaged 40s. per week. Labourers received little more than half that figure. In order to meet war production requirements and keep in line with the rising cost of living, industrial workers were granted increases by the Committee on Production, whose purpose was to review wages regularly in relation to these particular aspects. By 1919 war bonus payments had doubled the pre-war levels, including labourers' rates, which in fact, had increased at a greater rate than skilled men's wages. Further increases during the boom of 1920 brought rates to £5 a week, and even more in some cases. In Southampton the highest wages were enjoyed by those on piecework rates, but although Southampton wages were generally at the lower end of the averages of the principal centres, local workers had benefited from the war bonuses. Owing to the decline in heavy industry and shipping after the war employers turned to wages in order to reduce production costs.

In 1919 and early 1920 the South Coast Employers' Association was not part of the national network of shipbuilding employers, and a number of individual wage claims for various trades were made and settled within the port. After affiliation to the SEF wage fluctuations affecting all federated districts were strictly applied in Southampton. So in 1921 the port made the reductions recommended by the SEF. The decreases were applied to the existing rates and were deducted by instalments during 1921 and 1922.

The number of variables in wage rates applicable to so many trades makes tabulated comparison of wages extremely complex. Therefore, Table 42 shows the amount by which all wages in Southampton fluctuated between 1921 and 1938, which in most cases was the same as fluctuations in other districts.

Although all the decreases were made between May 1921 and the end of 1922 they were very substantial reductions. In 1921 the cost of living fell even more rapidly than it had risen the year before, and war bonuses were eroded to leave an average wage for skilled men in Southampton of 47s. 6d. Because of the unemployment in the early 1920s and the under-employment which occurred in Southampton the wage cuts were particularly harassing, and workers were willing to demonstrate their disapproval in a show of solidarity with larger districts in protesting to the point of industrial action. Three major national strikes and lockouts disrupted production because of dissatisfaction with wages and overtime rates.

In 1924 the cost of living underwent its only check in an otherwise downwards slide until 1935. Also in 1924 part of the war bonus was

Table 42. National wage fluctuations agreed by the SEF and applied in Southampton by the South Coast district. (SCESEA).

DATE	DECREASES PER WEEK	INCREASES PER WEEK
May 1921	3s.	
October 1921	% decrease on piecework	
December 1921	- " -	
March 1922	10s. 6d.	
May 1922	3s.	
June 1922	3s.	
November/ December 1922	10s. on wages of 52s. 6d. lesser amounts on smaller wages down to 37s. 6d. per week, from which there was no reduction	
April 1924		3s. on repairs except boilermakers. Southampton only - strike settlement including AEU award.
June 1924		4s. (1st instalment of 7s. where Nov/Dec 1922 reductions applied).
September 1924		3s. (2nd instalment of above).
July 1928		1s. 6d. except joiners
September 1928		1s. 6d. except joiners
JANUARY 1930	UNIFORM PLAIN TIME WAS ESTABLISHED WHICH INCLUDED ALL BONUSES. skilled rate was 60s., unskilled rate was 41s., plus the 3s. repair allowance awarded to the port in 1924.	
October 1931 and January 1932 instalments	Decreases where wages were in excess of the uniform rates. Only painters' labourers were above the rate in Southampton (1s. excess).	
April 1936		2s. or 4% on piecework
November 1936		3s. to engineers in shipbuilding and marine engineers.
February 1937		2s. or 4% on piecework
July 1937		2s. - " -
August 1937		1s. 6d.
November 1937		1s. 6d. to engineers in shipyards
February 1938		2s.

Sources: MOL Gazette; SCESEA Minutes; and SEF Minutes.

restored, but not until the claim had been taken to arbitration.

The start of the depression saw the introduction of the uniform rate which, being set at a lower rate than the maximum then being paid, gave scope for levelling down the high rates. Trade unions agreed to the uniform rate so that fresh agreements were not necessary to meet the levelling down arrangements in 1931 and 1932. In many ports varying

amounts over the national minimum were paid at the outset, but because Southampton had been one of the lowest paid districts before uniformity, 1s. a week to rough painters was the only excess applicable.

The significance of the war bonuses had been that they were not included in overtime computations, not being part of the basic wage. Another indirect cost reduction, made after uniformity came into operation, was by alteration to what the SEF termed 'onerous agreements'. In Southampton this included a reduction of the shipwrights' manning scales for docking and undocking ships, for which the October 1919 scale was still in use.[20] Efforts were also made to reduce the walking time allowance and obtain full 47 hours of work per week.[21] Walking time had always been a problem in Southampton docks. The extremities of the area covered by shipping were too far to reach from the engagement points within less than 15-20 minutes, and a considerable proportion of the port's repair work (almost all turnround repairs and routine maintenance) was undertaken on the docks at shipping companies' own berths. Unless wages were paid from the time of engagement workers could lose up to half an hour's pay per day. Consequently, an agreement on walking time had been reached in 1919 which, like the shipwrights' docking scale, had been made at a time when trade was buoyant and shipping in the port was expected to increase. The scale of payment was eventually reduced, but the situation was eased when the new docks came into operation offering nearer road access.

So, although no direct reductions were made to shipyard wages after 1922, earnings were nevertheless, reduced by different methods of cost reduction aimed chiefly at the higher rather than the lower paid workers. Labourers received substantial increases during the war and subsequent reductions were in much the same order as those of skilled workers. Labourers did not, however, benefit to the same extent as skilled workers in shipbuilding when wage rates began to increase again.

The MOL collected data from 13 principal shipbuilding centres, including Southampton, and 16 principal engineering centres from which they published the average weekly wage rates of two generally time-working trades, and the average rate for labourers. These rates are shown in Table 43 together with the percentage increases over 1914's average, which were also provided by the MOL. By maintaining the pre-war comparison with subsequent years the labourers' rates appear to have held up remarkably well. However, if the rates for 1923 are compared with 1920, and the 1934 rates are compared with 1923 (as in Table 44), it can be seen that, although the labourers' post-war reductions were in much the same order as the skilled grades, by 1934 they had not made the gains enjoyed by the shipwrights and joiners.

Table 43. Average weekly wage rates of certain shipbuilding and engineering trades.

Year	Ship-wrights		% inc over 1914	Joiners		% inc over 1914	Labourers S/B		% inc over 1914	Fitters and Turners		% inc over 1914	Labourers Eng.		% inc over 1914
	s.	d.	%	s.	d.	%	s.	d.	%	s.	d.	%	s.	d.	%
1914	41	4		40	0		22	10		38	11		22	10	
1920	91	3	121	101	0	153	70	4	208	89	6	130	70	9	210
1922	58	7	42	60	5	51	40	1	75	57	0	48	40	5	77
1923	48	11	18	50	9	27	38	6	39	56	6	45	40	3	77
1924	55	7	35	57	9	44	38	5	68	56	6	45	40	2	75
1925	55	7	35	57	9	44	38	5	68	56	6	45	40	2	75
1927	55	7	35	57	9	44	38	5	68	58	1	49	41	8	82
1928	58	7	42	57	9	44	39	11	75	58	9	51	41	11	83
1929	58	7	42	59	11	45	39	11	75	58	9	51	41	11	83
1930	59	11	45	60	11	50	40	11	80	59	1	52	42	1	84
1931	59	11	45	59	1	50	40	10	79	59	1	52	42	1	84
1932	60	0	44	60	0	49	41	0	78	59	1	52	42	1	84
1933	60	0	44	60	0	49	41	0	78	59	1	52	42	1	84
1934	60	0	44	60	0	40	41	0	78	59	1	52	42	1	84

Source: MOL Gazette.

N.B. These statistics were not published after 1934.

In the engineering industry pre-war rates were lower than those given for the shipbuilding industry, and neither the skilled men nor the labourers made much improvement between 1923 and 1934.

Table 44. Percentage increases and decreases (over preceding year).

Year	Shipwrights	Joiners	Shipyard Labourers	Engineers	Labourers
1914					
1920	121	101	208	130	210
1923	-46.4	-49.7	-45.2	-36.9	-46.5
1934	22.7	18.2	6.5	4.6	4.5

Source: Calculated from Table 43

The shipbuilding labourers' pre-war average rate was only just over 50 per cent of the two skilled trades, whereas the gap between the engineers and their labourers was smaller because of the fitters' and turners' lower rate. By 1934 wage rates had increased considerably and the gap between engineers and labourers was still less than the gap between shipyard workers' grades.

The cost of living index did not start to rise until 1935. Wages increased generally at the same time, but not until 1936 in the shipbuilding industry, and then by only 2s. a week.

Average weekly earnings of shipyard workers and marine engineers were well below the basic rates given for shipwrights and joiners and fitters and turners in engineering establishments. For example:-

	Shipbuilders and Repairers	Marine Engineers
W/e October 18, 1924	54s. 5d.	52s. 1d.
W/e October 27, 1928	53s. 10d.	53s. 0d.
W/e January 17, 1933	51s. 10d.	46s. 1d.
W/e October 12, 1935	62s. 0d.	65s. 4d.

(Source: MOL Gazette). By 1935 a considerable amount of overtime was being worked for the average earnings to exceed the basic national minimum. Unemployment was also falling and the wages earned were distributed among a greater number of workers. Earnings almost certainly increased from then on as shipbuilding enjoyed a small revival leading up to the second war.

Southampton followed the wage fluctuations of the industry and shared the misfortunes and labour relations deterioration which were brought about by the reductions made in 1921 and 1922. The part restoration of the war bonus in 1924 was awarded by the Court of Arbitration, but the Court showed greater generosity in making an award to the labouring class of boilerscalers, who were also ship-repair workers. The award to these workers in Southampton prompted a spate of differential increases for boilerscalers in a number of other ports, which put Southampton back to the bottom of the list, but the increase received satisfied the workers who did the unpleasant job of boilerscaling and shipscraping.

Earnings were related to unemployment on one hand, and underemployment which might include overtime on the other. Such was the pattern of employment in Southampton that overtime could produce good earnings without actually working a full week, but this happy state was for the few. More common was part-week working which did not produce a full week's wages, and which did not provide any sort of regularity that could be relied upon. Nevertheless, unemployment was much less in the southern port than in the shipbuilding districts and earnings for part weeks or some whole weeks were better than long term unemployment and poor law relief.

The increase in passengers at the latter end of the 1930s did not bring an increase in vessels to the port, but it did increase the size of the vessels, and from the moment the Queen Mary arrived in Southampton she was a source of benefit to ship-repairers. The larger the tonnage

the greater the wages bill for maintenance.

Differentials and Anomalies

Even before the war it is apparent from available wage rates that in most trades there were differences between port wage rates, and Southampton was often at the lower end of the scale. In some cases, however, the southern port compared favourably with the principal shipbuilding centres. Table 45 shows five trades with a wide range of rates between ports in which three of the trades were amongst the better paid in Southampton, and two were amongst the poorest. These are not necessarily maximum and minimum rates, nor the average. Owing to the scarcity of rates available these are examples showing the variety of rates in different ports at different times.

Table 45. Some pre-1919 wage comparisons.

Date	Trade	Port	Rate per hour/week	
February 1913	Marine Engineers	Bristol Channel	9.28d.	
		Southampton	8.83d.	
		Liverpool	8.83d.	
		Northwest majority	8.66d.	
		Northeast majority	8.37d.	
		Barrow in Furness	8.15d. and 8.37d.	
September 1913	French Polishers	Northeast coast	9.5d.	
		Southampton	9.2d.	
		Birkenhead	9.2d.	
		Clyde	8.7d.	
		Some others	10.0d.	
February 1915	Shipwrights	Southampton	9.36d.	(41s.4½d.p.w.)
		Average shipyard wage	9.0d.	(40s.0d. p.w.)
May 1913	Painters	Average port rate	8.5d.	(37s.6½d. p.w.)
		Southampton port rate	7.8d.	(34s.6d. p.w.)
		" special skilled work on yachts	8.0d.	(35s.6d. p.w.)
November 1912	Electricians	Northeast coast		(39s.0d. p.w.)
		Clyde		(38s.0d. p.w.)
		Barrow in Furness		(37s.0d. p.w.)
		Southampton		(36s.0d. p.w.)
		BOT standard rate		(36s.0d. p.w.)

Source: SEF Minutes and SCESEA Minutes.

In July 1913 Southampton electricians obtained 1s. per week increase, but this still left them behind the major centres. Particularly frustrating for Southampton's shipyard electricians was the fact that in Liverpool men were paid 39s. 9d a week, (2s. 9d. a week more), for doing the same work on the same liners.

Joiners, electricians, sheet metal workers, upholsterers, pattern-makers, blacksmiths, ironmoulders, riggers, platers' helpers and rough painters, as well as members of the AEU, were amongst those whose wage rates were lower in Southampton. The ports which were consistently cited as paying better rates were London, Liverpool and the Bristol Channel, all of which were predominantly ship-repairing centres. The fact that these ports were not federated was the reason usually given for their higher rates, but Southampton was not federated either until 1920 and the South Coast Employers' Association still managed to pay below the average rates.

Immediately after the war the situation in the woodworking trade provides a good example of the wage disparity which existed. (Table 46).

Table 46. Wage rates for joiners in 1919.

London	48s.	Clyde	41s.
Liverpool	45s.	Belfast	40s.
Hull	43s.	Tyne	40s.
Cardiff	42s.	Tees and Hartlepool	39s. 6d.
Bristol	41s.	Wear	39s. 6d.
		Southampton	39s. 6d.

The above rates are basic - total wage rates were made up by adding war bonuses of 26s. 6d. and 12 per cent.

The following ports also paid 6d. per day extra to men working with insulation materials, as well as a variety of extra rates for repair work - listed below.

Wear	3s. per week
Bristol	4d. per day
Liverpool	10d. per day
Clyde	½d. per hour
Tees and Hartlepool	3s. per week
Tyne	3s. per week

Source: SCESEA Minutes.

The standard of craftsmanship demanded on passenger cabins and public rooms on liners was considerably superior to the skill required for dismantling wooden partitions on troopships. Southampton woodworkers, doing the former work, objected to being paid the same rate as the Tees

men whose ship-repairers probably never saw the inside of a passenger liner.

The rapid increase in rates during the war, and steady reductions in the 1920s did not lessen inter-port differentials, and although the rates of skilled workers in a single port may have become closer, the gap between the highest and lowest paid ports was as great as before. In May 1927 when the shipwrights claimed parity with the joiners, the scale of wages for the two trades expresses not only the difference between the two, but the extent of port differentials which still existed. Table 47 shows the hourly and weekly rates for sixteen districts as provided by the president of the Federated Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades, Will Sherwood (NUGMW).

Table 47. Hourly and weekly rates of shipwrights and joiners in May 1927.

Port	Rate per hour		Rate per week	
	Shipwrights	Joiners	Shipwrights	Joiners
Thames	18.40d.	18.40d.	72s.	72s.
Bristol Channel	17.87d.	17.87d.	70s.	70s.
Mersey and Liverpool	16.34d.	17.11d.	64s.	67s.
Manchester	16.34d.	20.00d.	64s.	78s. 4d.
East Scotland	14.52d.	15.06d.	56s. 10½d.	58s. 11½d.
Barrow	14.43d.	14.87d.	56s. 6d.	58s. 3d.
Clyde	14.41d.	15.06d.	56s. 5d.	58s. 11½d.
Birkenhead	14.17d.	14.68d.	55s. 6d.	57s. 6d.
Wear	14.17d.	14.68d.	55s. 6d.	57s. 6d.
Tyne	14.17d.	14.81d.	55s. 6d.	58s.
Hull	14.17d.	14.81d.	55s. 6d.	58s.
Tees and Hartlepool	14.04d.	14.68d.	55s.	57s. 6d.
Dundee	13.92d.	14.53d.	54s. 6d.	56s. 11d.
South Coast [Soton]	13.92d.	14.68d.	54s. 6d.	57s. 6d.
Aberdeen	13.85d.	14.47d.	54s. 3d.	56s. 8d.
East Cowes	13.63d.	13.82d.	53s. 4½d.	54s. 1½d.

Source: SEF Minutes, May 27, 1927.

These trades are good examples of skilled craftsmen employed in new and repair work, one working piecework rates, the other strictly on time-work. The first five ports on the list were not federated until 1927. The last three (excluding Southampton) were small ports with a low tonnage of shipping. In fact, probably no port in the U.K. did more repair work of a refurbishing nature on luxury liners than Southampton, but employers

were disinclined to regard it as different from damage repairs on cargo vessels. Comparison of Tables 47 and 43 (on p.295) shows that Southampton shipwrights and joiners were below the average of the thirteen principal centres. They were also well below the rates paid in London and Liverpool, the ports where a percentage of similar work was likely to have been found.

In 1927 the Thames Dry Dock Proprietors, the Mersey and Liverpool Shiprepairing Employers' Association, and the Port of Bristol Employers' Association joined the SEF because signs of improvement in the industry at that time led them to fear substantial increase demands from trade unions. The SEF had for some time attempted to persuade the non-federated ports to accept the security of a national organisation, and when they did the workers in Southampton reacted to the change in circumstances.

The strike by Southampton shipyard workers in 1924,which had been caused by failed negotiations over a pay issue, was largely aimed at obtaining an equal wage rate with the Thames Ship-repairers. The employers' answer, and that of the Court of Arbitration, had been that Southampton could not be de-federated, and that work done in Southampton was similar to that done in other federated ports, such as the northeast coast. Therefore, although the unions maintained Southampton was more like the non-federated ports, the Court and employers insisted their work was closer to the federated ports. So, when the repairing ports in question were federated it encouraged Southampton's union leaders to attempt to put right what had seemed to them to be an ignominious defeat in 1924, and very unfair treatment.

A notable similarity between 1924 and 1927 was that on both occasions Southampton shipyard workers' independent application for an increase in wages overlapped a wage claim on behalf of the industry made by the FEST, which the local issue threatened to delay. In 1924 the general disquiet in the port co-incided with the busy overhaul season and immediately prompted strike action. It is less likely that the withdrawal of labour was seriously considered in 1927, despite the application having been made just before the start of the 1927/28 overhaul season.

The reason for the claim was expressed by the plumbers' executive council: "The position at Southampton is that the rates of wages of all classes of workers in the shipbuilding industry are below the usual standard for ship-repairing work. Owing to the transfer of certain companies from other ports to Southampton the consequent result is that the repairs which had previously been done at the other ports are now done at Southampton at a wage considerably less than had been paid in the other ports."[22] Not surprisingly the Southampton men were told that as

a federated port they were covered by the national claim which was still outstanding. In fact, the employers were attempting to introduce a wage index, similar to the sliding scale operated by the building trade, and in this connection the SEF accepted that "some preliminary levelling up of relatively low time rates would be necessary,"[23] indicating an awareness that these anomalies should be removed. The idea did not, however, impress the South Coast Association, who even refused to discuss the issue until the workers' delegates were granted a local conference by the SEF.

The local conference and subsequent general conferences with the SEF made it clear that the claim was in connection with reconditioning and high class work which was similar to the work done in London and Liverpool, where wage rates were from 5s. to 13s. per week greater, (15s. in the case of labourers). Another fact which added fuel to the unions' fire was that sub-contract firms who were engaged to undertake some of the liners' specialised interior decor, brought their own labour and paid building trade rates, plus a subsistence allowance and railway fares. The sub-contractors were ship fitters and decorators and not eligible for membership of the SCESEA. They brought with them specialist painters and woodworkers and the local employers had no control over the rates and conditions offered to these men.[24]

As in 1924 the SCESEA still believed that Southampton's work could be done on the northeast coast, and they regarded 'reconditioning' as a wartime expression. In their opinion all work was 'repair' unless it was 'new', and they were not prepared to concede that liners required anything over and above cargo ships. The employers also contended that it was impossible to separate new and old work in Southampton as both were developing simultaneously, and the effect of this claim on shipbuilding rates could not be ignored. The view was put forward by the general secretary of the plumbers' unions that as repairs formed the major part of the district's work it should have governed the rates paid for new work. Since at least 60 per cent of Southampton's work was repair the plumbers' suggestion sounded very reasonable, but if Southampton's rates were depressed it was likely to attract more work to the port. In 1927 the desperate need for work which was to descend in a few years' time was not anticipated, and the situation in the present was always of greater interest to workers than safeguarding the future.

The unions pressed for parity with the newly federated districts, but it was pointed out that it was for the new districts to come into line with standard federation rates, not the other way around. In the building trade, printing trade, electrical installations and pipe-fitting

there were graded wage systems with different rates in different districts. These rates were negotiated by employers and unions and, although nothing to do with ship-repairing, it is significant that in Southampton the rates were lower than in any other shipbuilding and ship-repairing district.

A comparison of Liverpool's rates with Southampton for a range of trades reinforces Southampton's argument. (See Table 48).

Table 48. A comparison of wage rates in Southampton and Liverpool, March 1928

TRADE	RATE PER WEEK	
	SOUTHAMPTON	LIVERPOOL
Woodcutting Machinists	57s. 6d.	66s.
Blacksmiths	57s	62.
Sheet Metal Workers	57s.	61s. 6d.
Furnishing Trades	57s.	67s.
Sailmakers	57s. 6d.	60s.
Riggers	45s.	56s.
Fitters' Mates	42s.	50s.
Rough Painters	41s. 2d.	56s.
Lorry Drivers	50s.	65s.
Labourers	41s. 2d.	-
Uphosterers	57s.	67s.
Woodworkers	60s. 6d.	70s. 8d.
Shipwrights	57s. 6d.	64s.
Plumbers	57s.	64s. 2d.
Painters	55s.	60s. 6d.

Source: SEF Minutes, March 30, 1928.

On June 15, 1928 a general conference between the SEF and the Southampton joint committee of the FEST and Craft Unions was held with an independent chairman (owing to the employers' refusal to go to arbitration). The chairman thought Southampton had a good case and suggested that employers might make some concession, at least as a gesture of goodwill, for two reasons:

a) because he thought it might be worthwhile to get a result from the first general conference held under the new Avoidance of Disputes Agreement; and

b) because it might be diplomatic, since employers would have considerable difficulty in levelling down newly federated districts to Southampton's rates.

The main fear of the SEF was that if increases were granted to

Southampton the demands would spread to the Tyne and Clyde districts which would then re-act to the detriment of shipbuilding. They claimed that the high rates in the Bristol Channel and the Mersey were driving work away, just as high rates had destroyed shipbuilding in the Thames.

It was true that not all work on liners was in those parts of the vessel which were seen by passengers; much of the work was similar to work done on freighters, but the specialist jobs did exist for those with a high degree of competence and expertise. The unions thought Southampton's workmen were unfairly exploited if they received work simply because they were cheaper. No one in the argument commented on the effect of restrictive work practices and demarcation squabbles on the non-competitiveness of British shipbuilding. Furthermore, it was not in the main shipbuilding centres of the Tyne and Clyde where the highest rates were paid, and yet the industry was struggling in those districts. The SEF backed the SCESEA whole-heartedly. They were not interested in any workers' points of view. To them an increase to an individual district was as good as an open invitation for a general advance.

As it happened, the national advance negotiations which had begun in March 1927 did not result in the 10s a week asked for, but the industry was granted 1s. 6d. a week from July and a further 1s. 6d. in September "as a gesture", not because it was "justified by the state of the industry."[25] The increase was withheld from the highly paid newly federated districts of Thames, Mersey and Bristol, to the immense satisfaction of Southampton workers.

The national settlement did not remove the lingering hope in Southampton that they might still achieve part of their demands, and it was exactly a year after the first request that the men's side suggested they should forget all past negotiations and start again to get employers to remove at least part of the differential between Southampton and Mersey rates.[26] When the employers refused to alter their previous decision the unions applied to the MOL in accordance with the provisions of the Industrial Courts Act. To no avail. The SEF did not need the Permanent Secretary of the MOL to point out that a number of classes of workers in Southampton earned less than on the northeast coast, and the employers did not change their minds.

Only the port's strike action in 1924 drew more attention to its wage rate issue than the above struggle, but many anomalies existed and were contested by management and labour throughout the period under review.

One such area was where trades were inter-changeable between industries, in particular the building and furnishing trades, which paid lower rates to shipyard workers than to other sections of the trade's work.

Some of the port's upholstery workers were women who were paid lower rates in any case, but the complaints made by Southampton upholsterers was not only the low shipyard rates compared with town rates, but also compared with other shipyard rates in Liverpool and London, whose upholsterers were consistently better paid.

In May 1920 all shipyard joiners were granted 12s. a week increase because the higher rates paid to housebuilding joiners were attracting men away from the shipyards. Southampton joiners were awarded the increase to keep them "in line with other districts," which meant maintaining the same differential, 86s. 7½d. in Southampton against 88s. 3½d. on Clydeside. Unfortunately, the increase to one trade provoked unstable relations with others. Workers seemed to think the regular increase of wages,which had become standard practice during the war, could be continued indefinitely. (Wages rose with the cost of living, which dropped again after the war). During the first six months of 1920 there were wage demands in Southampton from sailmakers, bricklayers, ironfounders, furnishing trades, donkeymen, greasers, painters and plumbers. Similar demands occurred in ports round the country and employers decided the special advance already awarded to the joiners in affiliated districts must be withdrawn. Taking away what joiners saw as rightfully theirs, since they regarded the increase as a tool allowance, raised such hostility from the Amalgamated Woodworkers' Society that joiners were on strike from December 1, 1920 to August 22, 1921 (August 29 in Southampton), bringing woodcutting machinists and labourers out with them. This was a national issue, but it was particularly significant in Southampton because of the unemployment and loss of work it caused to the port's ship-repair.

The anomalies in marine engineering continued throughout the period, because uniformity in shipyard trades did not apply to engineers outside the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation. In 1936 when Southampton marine engineers elected to follow wage fluctuations in the engineering industry their rates were still the lowest of the principal districts, as shown in Table 49.

Table 49. Comparison of engineers' weekly wage rates in the principal shipbuilding districts - April 1936.

Bristol Channel	67s. 6d.	Tyneside	65s. 6d.
Grays and Tilbury	66s. 6d.	Sunderland	65s. 6d.
London District	66s. 6d.	Manchester	65s. and 69s.
Hartlepools	66s.	Belfast	63s. 9d.
Teeside	66s.	Southampton	62s. and 63s.

Source: SCESEA Minutes, April 1936.

The special allowance for repair work in Southampton was not paid uniformly. In the early years among the trades not included were drillers, electricians, joiners, painters, furnishing trades, sheet metal workers, blacksmiths and foundryworkers. A repair allowance seems to have been used by the South Coast Employers' Association as a means of settling wage demands, and a number of trades received their allowances in this way. The most common of the extra payments over and above the repair allowance were for dirty jobs, particularly in connection with oil fuelled vessels and for working coal shoots and bunkers. With the increasing use of oil more and more unions gradually managed to arrange for their members to be included in the oil allowance, sometimes as a permanent arrangement and sometimes for individual jobs with special features. Plumbers made claims for "dirty money" outside the area of oil and coal, and they were granted special rates for what they described as "working in trying conditions." These were unpleasant w.c.s and pipes, brine pipes and refrigeration installations.

It was not until 1938 that the TGWU concluded a list of port working rules covering special allowances for labourers. On the unpleasant jobs it was usually the labourers who were sent first, and when they got dirty and oily their clothes cost no less to clean and replace. It seemed only fair to the union that when skilled men were granted allowances for working in bad conditions, the labourers who worked with them should be entitled to the same concessions.

* * * *

A central feature of wage rates in Southampton shipyards was the port's affiliation to the SEF because it assisted in keeping the rates low. Even when the workers took strike action to improve their basic rates employers resisted, and the SEF locked out all shipyard workers in support of the SCESEA.

The complexity of the rates in the industry makes it difficult to summarise other than trends. Averages are not very helpful because of the wide spread of variations and frequent changes. Consistent series of minimum/maximum rates for either trades or ports are rare, and information on actual earnings is not available. The MOL did not record earnings relating to pieceworkers, and although it was generally agreed they earned more than timeworkers, there are very few references as to how much more. In Southampton there was a feeling amongst other trades that the boiler-makers considered themselves to be superior, and that this attitude stemmed from their ability to earn more.

Whether or not Southampton gained in the long term by keeping its labour costs down depends on the amount of work which the low rates generated. At the very least cheaper rates should have prevented work normally done at Southampton being sent to alternative shipyards. However, in the first place, repair work was lost due to the shortage of berthing space; some was also lost due to industrial action. In the second place, even if costs had been greater, there is no certainty that ships would have been sent elsewhere for repairs. Without altering routes and sailing schedules turnround repairs could not have been done anywhere else on ships for which Southampton was the terminal port. In the case of major overhauls, facilities in other ports sufficiently large to take the big liners in dry dock were limited, and only Southampton was capable of handling the largest three. It seems unlikely that a great deal of work would have been lost if Southampton's wages had been a little closer to shipbuilding rates in other ports, and greater reward for work done might well have reduced the friction which often caused poor relations with employers.

The concentration of work into a few weeks for a large number of men, followed by unemployment for some and under-employment for others was frustrating for those who were affected. Whatever the wage rates offered they would not have helped the largely unemployed, but the regular part-week under-employed workers could have fared better. Employers in Southampton were convinced that men liked part-week employment. "It was common knowledge," they said, "that men preferred high wages for several days with overtime and weekends ... it was almost impossible to get ship-repairers to transfer to new work."[27] Employers' references to earnings always used the highest paid as examples and overlooked the larger percentage of men who did not regularly work overtime and weekends.

Although long-term unemployment was not the industrial crisis in Southampton that occurred in the shipbuilding districts, the irregularity of earnings presented a similar problem to that of the docks industry and it involved a lot more men. Coupled with this during the 1920s was the aggravation of unfair port differentials which, fortunately, were largely unified during the following decade.

3. SEAFARERS

The wage structure of the shipping industry was as complex as the shipbuilding industry. In this instance the variables were not the differentials between ports and trades, but were the extensive range of

wage rates identifying rank and type of shipping. A very distinct line of demarcation separated foreign-going officers and seamen on monthly wage rates from officers and seamen engaged in the home and coastal trades, who were on weekly wage rates and who, for the most part, provided their own food on board. Foreign-going seamen were given food and accommodation as part of their wages, but a large proportion of them had homes and families of their own to provide for as well.

Wage rates were based on a national structure by the Shipping Federation (employers only) before the war, and by the National Maritime Board, which included men's representatives from 1917. The re-constituted NMB of 1919 remained very much the same as the original institution and continued to decide wage fluctuations jointly with ship owners and seamen's unions.

The wage structure of the industry is described below and the principal fluctuations in rates are traced for both officers and ratings, which were applied throughout all ports in the U.K. and depended on the size and type of ship. There was no particular feature which differentiated Southampton from other ports, except its type and volume of shipping. Earnings cannot be estimated from the number of engagements made, but where the number of seamen sailing can be estimated from more detailed information obtained for Southampton a possible earnings range has been suggested.

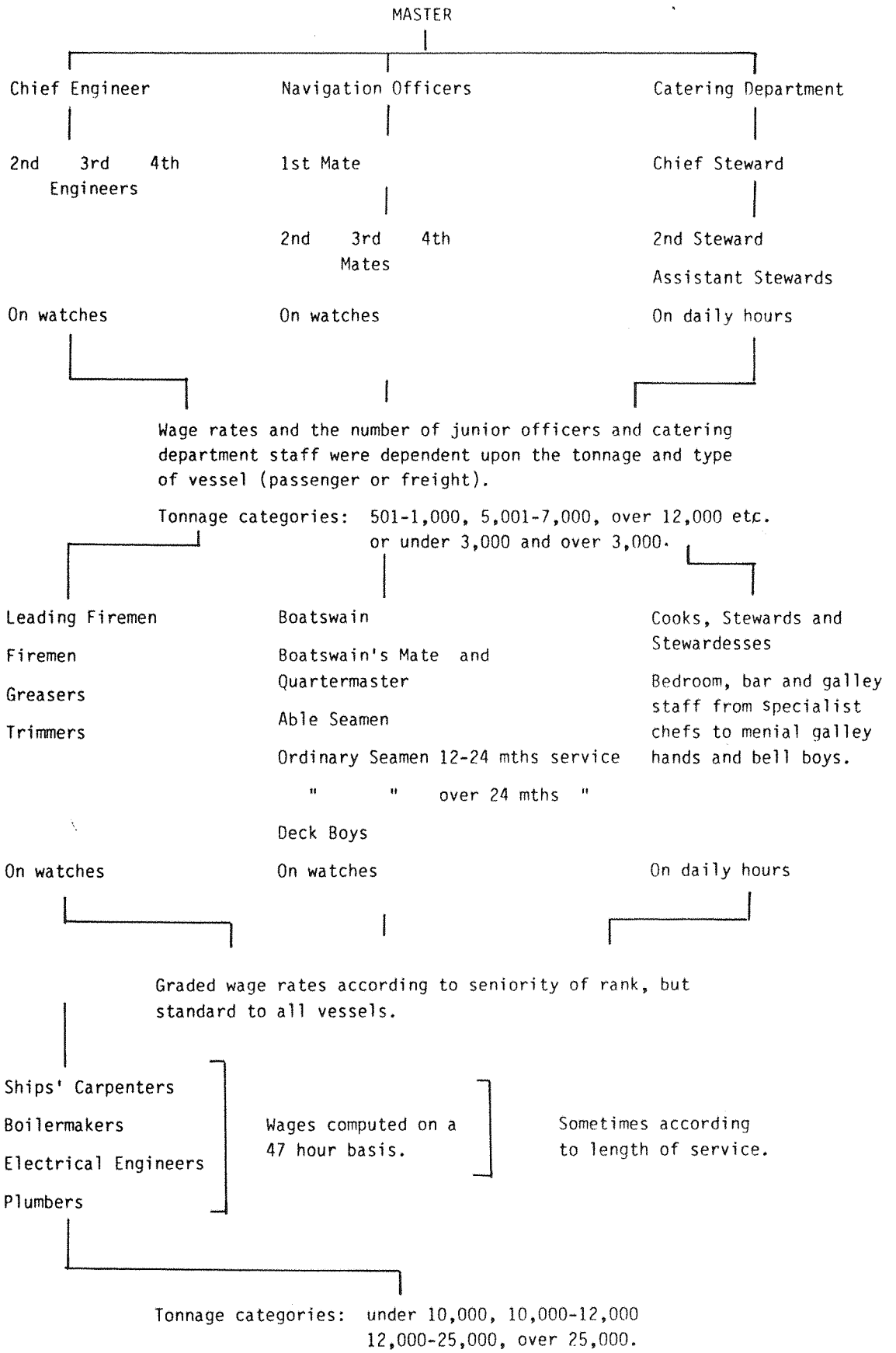
The reaction of local seafarers to wage changes (of a downward nature) was more demonstrative than in most other ports. This was partly because of the number of seamen engaged in Southampton, and partly because of the port's independent unionism, but it was certainly Southampton men who most often took the initiative in matters affecting seamen's disapproval of wage alterations. Comment is made on the significance of wages and labour relations in the port.

Wage Structure

The categories of trade in the shipping industry were so different from one another that they were considered separately in all statistical analyses and definitions. The only cross reference which occurred was in the Board of Trade's annual statistics of vessels and tonnage of shipping entering and leaving ports. In that series home trade vessels were combined with foreign-going, although coastwise trade was counted as a separate category.

Wages were classified in three broad categories: foreign-going services computed monthly; weekly computed wages for the home and coasting trade; and weekly rates for tug crews, dredgers and miscellaneous

Figure 33. Monthly crew/wage structure. With food provided.



harbour and river craft.

Figure 33 shows the structure of crew/wages for those engaged on a monthly wage basis, although wages were payable to all ratings at voyage termination. Although the catering department did not work the two watch system, most grades worked longer hours than deck and engineroom hands in each twenty four hour period, except for some of the miscellaneous occupations on liners. Cargo vessels with twelve or more passengers carried appropriate catering and steward personnel. Freighters without passengers probably only carried one cook, one steward and one messroom attendant, but crew numbers and categories depended on the size of the ship. The ratings mentioned are examples of those on board, but do not necessarily include all grades serving on vessels in the mercantile marine.

Two exceptional forms of payment were made to foreign-going seamen. An advance was paid at the time of signing on to enable men to settle their immediate shore commitments and obtain requirements for the period of service. The second payment was a regular allotment paid to wife or other nominee of a percentage of the monthly wage. Sometimes seamen were away for several months and the allotment was to ensure the well-being of the family during the wage-earner's absence.

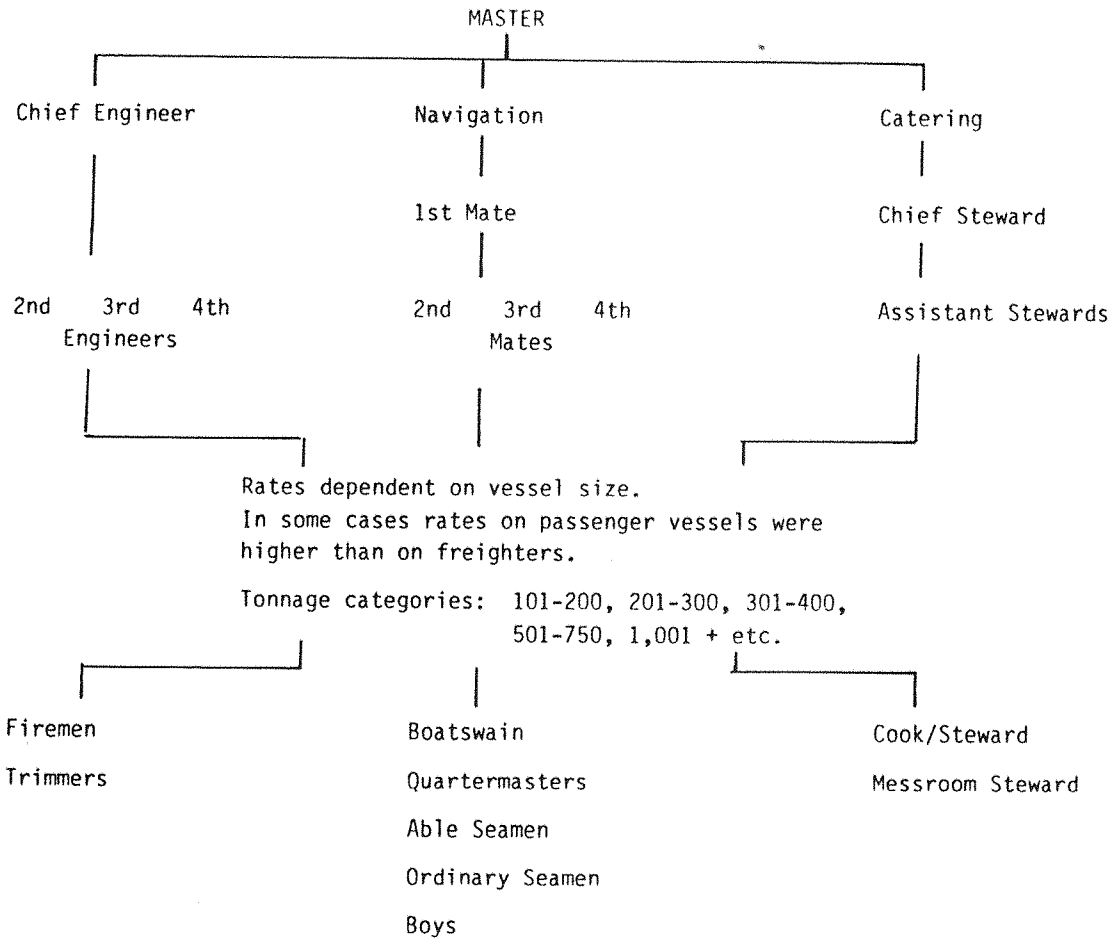
These payments were deducted from the final reckoning when seamen were paid at the time of discharge.

The weekly wage structure, shown in Figure 34, covers crews on generally smaller vessels and is less complex. Crews, including officers, brought their own food on board with them in most instances, but where provisions were found by the shipping company a deduction of 21s. per week was made from wages. All wages were computed weekly, but were payable on discharge if this was less than a full week's employment. Officer's pay was governed by the size of the vessel as with monthly paid officers, but there were fewer categories.

In both monthly and weekly employment crews could be discharged at the end of a voyage, but weekly paid men could also be engaged on articles which covered a six month period. However, if there was no work available six monthly articles did not guarantee payment of wages. Seamen could be retained on shore rates while their ship was in port. In this case they earned a lower rate, which was laid down by the NMB, and during this time they could be employed on maintenance work such as painting, mending rigging, or moving stores and ships' supplies. Work on shore rates was for a 47 hour week.

The final category of seamen's wages included the small harbour and river craft whose rates were not governed by a national minimum. These crews were usually very small, but engineers, navigation officers, firemen,

Figure 34. Weekly crew/wage structure. Without food.



trimmers, able seamen and ordinary seamen were included. It was common practice on the Thames for Masters to be paid a percentage of a tug's earnings, and their weekly rate could be lower than the engineers'. There is no evidence that the practice was applied in Southampton, or elsewhere, but Hull would have been an appropriate port for such a system. Hours and wages were recommended by the NMB, and although there was talk of a national agreement on wages in 1919, individual ports were still making independent wage changes in the second half of the 1930s. Tug crews provided their own food, and in the early part of the period worked exceedingly long hours. In Southampton this seems to have applied to the Isle of Wight Steam Packet Company ferries. The hours given by Tatford in his wage records (p.282) were most congenial. On the whole, tug and barge work was more secure than many of the port occupations, but to a seaman it may have been extremely tedious.

Wage Fluctuations

Because of the diversity of wage rates the simplest method of following the trends and fluctuations is to take a representative sample of crew members and trace changes applied to these grades. As all but tug crews were nationally agreed, the fluctuations in Southampton followed the same course as others.

Ships' officers were not comparable with other port workers examined in this study, but chargehands, foremen and supervisors were the nearest counterparts in shore occupations. Foremen on Southampton Docks were paid more than twice the basic rate of stevedores between 1918 and 1923.[28] Before the war junior deck and engineer officers on monthly articles were paid £7 10s. per month. By 1919 it had doubled to £16. The reductions imposed between 1921 and 1923 brought 4th mates and 4th engineers down to £10 10s. per month. This was only marginally above bosuns and able seamen. The pre-war gap was slightly greater.

Navigation officers (1st mates) and 2nd engineers, whose monthly rates were £16-£25 in 1923, depending on the tonnage of the ships they sailed, dropped to £15 12.-£21 9s. by July 1936, indicating a larger decrease for senior positions (those in charge of a larger tonnage of shipping). The lowest point for both senior and junior officers was 1932 when rates were reduced to £14 8s.-£19 16s. for holders of the ordinary certificate. An enhanced rate was paid to holders of the superior certificate, £15 6s.-£20 14s. The rates of 4th mates and 4th engineers on certificate rating had not declined in the same order as senior officers (£10 7s. or a 3s. decrease), and the superior certificate actually gave holders an increase over April 1923. Senior officers' rates dropped by £1 12s. and £2 4s. between 1923 and 1932, and the earlier rates had not been regained by the end of 1936, being 8s. to 11s. below 1923.

The rates of able seamen more than doubled during the war, and in keeping with the boom in shipping rose a further £3 per month in 1920. Other ratings received corresponding increases. The crisis in shipping in 1921, which was exacerbated by the coal shortage, brought wages down at a faster rate than the cost of living, but in fact, the decrease of £2 10s. in May 1921 was much less than employers had originally contemplated. (Seamen's wage rates are shown in Table 50).

Catering men's wages were lower than most deck department ratings. Assistant stewards' rates were lower than able seamen, and some of the kitchen helpers and lower ranked stewards earned less than ordinary seamen. The Cooks and Stewards' Union considered that it was wrong that its members should have to depend on passengers' goodwill to make up their

Table 50. Wage rates of certain seafaring grades, 1919-1937. (Monthly)

Date	Able Seamen	Ordinary Seamen	Firemen Quartermasters Bosun's Mates	Bosuns	Assistant Stewards
Pre-war	£5 10s. 0d.				
1919	£11 10s. 0d.				
1920	£14 10s. 0d.	£ 9 15s. 0d.* £11 5s. 0d.			
May 1921	£12 0s. 0d.	£ 7 5s. 0d.* £ 8 15s. 0d.			£10 6s. 0d.
Feb 1922	£10 10s. 0d.	£ 6 0s. 0d.* £ 7 10s. 0d.	£11 0s. 0d.	£12 0s. 0d.	£ 8 14s. 0d.
May 1922	£10 0s. 0d.	£ 5 10s. 0d.* £ 7 0s. 0d.	£10 10s. 0d.	£11 10s. 0d.	£ 8 4s. 0d.
Apl 1923	£ 9 0s. 0d.	£ 4 15s. 0d.* £ 6 5s. 0d.	£ 9 10s. 0d.	£10 10s. 0d.	£ 7 14s. 0d.
Jun 1924	£ 9 10s. 0d.	£ 5 5s. 0d.* £ 6 15s. 0d.	£10 0s. 0d.	£11 0s. 0d.	£ 8 4s. 0d.
Sep 1924	£10 5s. 0d.	£ 5 10s. 0d.* £ 6 17s. 6d.	£10 15s. 0d.	£11 15s. 0d.	£ 8 14s. 0d.
Aug 1925	£ 9 0s. 0d.	£ 4 10s. 0d.* £ 5 17s. 6d.	£ 9 10s. 0d.	£10 10s. 0d.#	£ 7 9s. 0d.
Jun 1932	£ 8 2s. 0d.	£ 4 1s. 0d.* £ 5 5s. 6d.	£ 8 12s. 0d.	‡	£ 7 7s. 0d.
Mar 1935	£8 6s. 6d.	£ 4 3s. 3d.* £ 5 8s. 6d.	£ 8 16s. 6d.		£ 7 11s. 6d.
Feb 1936	£ 8 11s. 0d.	£ 4 5s. 6d.* £ 5 11s. 6d.	£ 9 1s. 0d.		£ 7 16s. 0d.
Jul 1936	£ 8 15s. 0d.	£ 4 7s. 9d.* £ 5 14s. 6d.	£ 9 5s. 6d.		£ 8 0s. 6d.
Nov 1937	£9 12s. 6d.	£ 4 16s. 3d.* £ 6 7s. 6d.	£10 2s. 6d.		£ 8 17s. 6d.

* 12 - 24 months service. The second figure denotes the wage rate for over 24 months service.

\# Some Liverpool bosuns were still being paid £12 10s. 0d., but the MOL Gazette did not indicate why this was so.

‡ This grade was not mentioned in the Gazette from 1932, but presumably followed the same fluctuations.

In all grades the increase over 1923 by 1937 was slight - 2s. 6d. to 12s. 6d.

The decrease from 1920 - Able seamen = £4 17s. 6d.
Ordinary seamen = £4 19s. 6d.* and £4 17s. 6d.

Source: MOL Gazette.

wages. The amount which stewards could make in gratuities was extremely variable from ship to ship and voyage to voyage, and even when all tips were pooled and shared by those who did not come into personal contact with passengers, on some trips their wages may have been substantially increased, while on others they might have been less fortunate. The transatlantic journey was much shorter than the voyage to the Cape, and catering department seafarers could make almost three trips to North America in the time it took Union Castle ships to complete one voyage to South Africa. The transatlantic route had obvious advantages for gratuities. However, the inequalities in tipping rendered it a very unfair system of wage advance, but employers (and the NMB) always made allowance for it in wage rates awarded because they did not regard gratuities as deserved over and above normal wages in return for either the long hours worked or the good service given to passengers. No one was willing to divulge how much he made in tips. It was because cooks and stewards were on lower wages than some others that their union applied for an increase in 1920, before wages were reduced. The union application was rejected and when employers in their turn applied for a reduction, they originally requested a greater reduction from catering class rates.

Shipyard workers' wage rates were higher than seamen's in 1920, particularly joiners who were awarded a 12s. per week increase. Dockers were capable of earning a basic rate of £4 8s. 0d. for a 44 hour week, which could have given them £17 12s. 0d. on a 4 week basis - nearer to the wages of junior officers. Of course, the dockers' rate signified potential earnings only, and the majority did not take home that much. A low point in seamen's rates was reached in 1923, but even before that their wages, and especially the catering class, were poor compared with other industries. Direct comparison is difficult because of the board and accommodation provided to seamen, but they worked much longer hours on a seven day week, except for the sea-going tradesmen, or craftsmen.

The improved trading prospects of 1924 were reflected in increased wages, but unlike the dockers and shipyard workers, whose 1924 rates were maintained until 1931, seamen's wages were reduced back to the April 1923 level in the summer of 1925. Of all port trades only seamen's wages were reduced in the mid-1920s.

Total decreases on weekly rates in the shipyards during 1921 and 1922 amounted to 29s. 6d. In 1924 standard wages in federated areas were increased by 7s. per week, giving a total difference between 1921 and 1924 of 22s. 6d. per week deficit. Dockers lost 2s. a day, or 11s. for a 5½ day week. In the same period foreign-going seamen lost 15s. a week, had their wages been computed weekly.

Two points should be taken into account, apart from the provision of food and beds, these are that the starting point of shipyard wages was much higher than seamen's, and that if the reckoning was based on the number of hours worked, seamen at 84 hours a week, were worse off. In the shipyards the average rate in Southampton in 1924 was 47s. 6d., which was twice the hourly rate of the seamen. Even if one were to give seamen the benefit of an extra 21s. a week for their food, the best they could achieve is around 9d. an hour, 3d. less than the shipyard workers.

The gap between the wages of able seamen and ordinary seamen widened between 1920 and 1925, particularly ordinary seamen in their first two years of service.

Table 51. Wage rates of certain seafaring grades, 1922-1937. (Weekly)

Date	Able Seamen	Ordinary Seamen	Firemen Quartermasters	Bosuns	Stewards
Pre-war*	£1 7s..6d.		£1 10s. 6d.		
1918/19*			£3 10s. 0d.		
Pre-war‡	£1 8s. 6d.		£1 11s. 0d.		£1 7s. 0d.
					£4 4s. 6d. reduced to
Feb 1922	£3 8s. 6d.	£2 10s. 0d.	£3 8s. 6d.	£3 13s. 6d.	£3 15s. 0d.
Apl 1923	£3 2s. 0d.	£2 5s. 0d.	£3 2s. 0d.# £3 4s. 6d.°	£3 7s. 0d.	
Jun 1924	£3 5s. 3d.	£2 5s. 0d.	£3 5s. 3d.# £3 7s. 9d.°	£3 10s. 3d.	
Sep 1924	£3 8s. 6d.	£2 5s. 0d.	£3 8s. 6d.# £3 11s. 0d.°	£3 13s. 6d.	
Aug 1925	£3 2s. 0d.	£2 3s. 9d.	£3 2s. 0d.# £3 4s. 6d.°	£3 7s. 0d.	
Jun 1932	£2 16s. 0d.	£1 3s. 0d.	£2 16s. 0d.# £2 18s. 6d.°	£3 1s. 0d.	
Mar 1935	£2 17s. 6d.	£1 3s.11d.	£2 17s. 6d.# £3 0s. 0d.°	£3 2s. 6d.	
Feb 1936	£2 19s. 0d.	£1 4s. 9d.	£2 19s. 0d.# £3 1s. 6d.°	£3 4s. 0d.	
Nov 1937	£3 3s. 6d.	£1 7s. 6d.	£3 3s. 6d.# £3 6s. 0d.°	£3 8s. 6d.	

* Isle of Wight Steam Packet Company.

‡ Southern Railway Company

\# Firemen

° Quartermasters

Source: MOL gazette

The Isle of Wight Steam Packet Company paid higher rates on their

passenger boats than on their tugs and barges, and other coasting companies may have paid different rates from home trade companies.

There is no indication that ordinary seamen received the increase which able seamen were given in 1924, but otherwise the wage fluctuations of weekly paid men followed the same course as the monthly paid wages. Cooks and stewards received a higher rate than ordinary seamen on weekly class articles, but they had less chance to make up the balance in tips. Some of the Channel Island and continental ships carried large numbers of passengers, but journeys were very short, and unless on cruising trips stewards were not likely to have very much contact with passengers. Cooks and messroom stewards on cargo ships made up a large proportion of the catering class on weekly pay.

The rates of weekly paid able seamen compared favourably with shipyard workers in 1923/24, and ordinary seamen were only just below the most common basic rates, if the comparison is made with Southampton shipyards. In London it was a different situation. London shipyard workers were still paid 18s. to £1 a week more than ordinary seamen, even after a 4s. decrease in 1923, and able seamen were not paid as much as most of the London shipyard grades, despite their skill and experience.

As with the other port industries, if weekly and monthly paid seamen had earned their basic minimum rates on a regular basis throughout the year they could have stayed above the poverty line and indulged in an occasional luxury. Unfortunately shipping in Southampton was severely affected by seasonal fluctuations both by comparison with shipping in other ports and with the other port industries in Southampton. This seasonality factor had an enormous bearing on actual earnings.

Earnings

The records of the Southern Railway Company's Marine Department have provided details of the number of trips their ships made from Southampton each year between 1927 and 1937 from which the number of trips made by each ship and its crew can be estimated, assuming that the total trips were equally divided between the ships, giving their crews an equal amount of employment. By this means it is possible to estimate the potential earnings of a given number of seamen. Allowing an average of fifty per passenger ship and fifteen per cargo ship.

It is doubtful if the ships listed actually provided full time work because they did not sail regularly throughout the year. Fortunately many seamen were retained on shore rates when not sailing, but in hard times crews of laid up ships inter-changed with those still sailing. Opportunities for overtime also existed because the bulk of the passengers

travelled during holiday periods, Easter, summer and Christmas, with Bank Holidays being particularly busy. The cargo boats experienced a rush period of intense activity during the fresh produce season, but it was only in 1927 that the annual average of trips made reached 100 per cent, or a normal six day working week.

Table 52. Estimated annual earnings of Southern Railway Company able and ordinary seamen on weekly rates.

	PASSENGERS SHIPS			CARGO SHIPS		
Year	Average % of employment	Estimated annual earnings		Average % of Employment	Estimated annual earnings	
		Able seamen	Ordinary seamen		Able seamen	Ordinary seamen
1927	100	£161.2	£113.7	100	£161.2	£113.7
1928	100	£161.2	£113.7			
1929	100	£161.2	£113.7	50	£ 80.6	£ 56.8
1930	100	£161.2	£113.7	50	£ 80.6	£ 56.8
1931	100	£161.2	£113.7	50	£ 80.6	£ 56.8
1932	83	£120.8	£ 49.6	50	£ 72.8	£ 29.9
1933						
1934	84	£122.3	£ 50.2	50	£ 72.8	£ 29.9
1935	100	£149.5	£ 62.4	50	£ 74.7	£ 31.2
1936	85	£139.3	£ 54.6	50	£ 76.7	£ 32.1
1937	85	£140.3	£ 60.7	66	£108.9	£ 47.2

Source: Calculated from S.R. Co. Marine Department Annual Reports 1927-1937. PRO: RAIL 655 59-64.

Table 52 assumes that each man worked two days per trip and that the total work was evenly distributed among all crews. It is very unlikely that work was evenly divided between the men, nor can the length of employment per trip be more than estimated, and as the longest crossing was only a few hours, two days is probably too generous an allowance.

Firemen's wage rates were closely similar to able seamen's on weekly paid ships, so their average annual earnings could have been in the same order.

Unless seamen on the cargo boats were retained on shore rates, or were able to find employment in the shipyards for example, perhaps as riggers, painters, boilerscalers or general labourers, the majority of their income had to be found from the unemployment insurance fund. Earnings from trips listed by the Company were far below the poverty line suggested by Percy Ford.[29]

Men on passenger services found more employment, and if cruises were included in the Southern Railway lists then the annual wages could have been greater than the amounts given in Table 52 because cruise voyages provided continuous employment for three to four days. It is quite likely that some of the cargo boat crews also crewed passenger boats and made up some of their employment in this way. Although we know the number of trips made and the approximate number of crew per ship, we do not know the number of seamen employed by the Southern Railway Company or how they were deployed.[30]

An estimate of foreign-going seamen's earnings is very uncertain because neither the exact number of seamen sailing nor the number of voyages made by the various shipping lines is known. The Atlantic round trip took 17 days, which was followed by 4 days ashore without pay. Although men might have expected 12 such sequences in a year, Ford estimated that even in a "normal" year only ten might be obtained.[31] The total engagements between 1923 and 1930 inclusive exceeded 100,000 per year, and are the years which might best be described as normal. However, owing to the gradual decrease in the number of seamen insured and the continued decrease in total engagements after the depression years, a high annual engagement figure is not necessarily a reliable criterion of normal trade.

The estimated number of seamen in the port in 1927 was 16,000 and for the years 1927-1929 the number of seamen on the live register each month is available. If the average unemployed for the year is deducted from the number insured, it at least gives an idea of the number of men who could have sailed during the year. The total engagements divided by the approximate number of men obtaining employment gives an indication of the possible number of engagements made by each seaman. Thus, we see from Table 53 that men sailing the North Atlantic routes were not working throughout the year. The indication is that around three quarters of the potential annual wages could be earned by seamen who only made scheduled transatlantic crossings. Where engagements include cruise voyages the employment pattern is altered and it is not possible to estimate earnings.

Table 53. Average annual engagements per seaman. (Foreign-going)

Year	Total engagements	No. of seamen sailing	Engagements per man
1927	116,125	15,250	7.6
1928	121,569	15,185	8.0
1929	118,428	15,080	7.8
1930	111,439	15,000	7.4

Source: Estimates calculated from known total engagements and approximate number of men sailing, the latter based on the Port's Live Register and local press statements.

The South African voyage was much longer than the Atlantic crossing, the return trip being seven weeks, followed by 12 days ashore unpaid. Five or six such trips might be expected in a year. The number of individual engagements suggests, therefore, that seamen on Union Castle mail steamers may have been fully employed. Other ships sailing were the Union Castle intermediate ships and those sailing routes to Australia, New Zealand and South America, as well as pleasure cruises and troopships. The longer the journey the fewer the engagements made each year, but the majority of the seamen were on the transatlantic crossing because that route carried the largest proportion of Southampton's shipping and sailed the ships with the largest crews. Based on the individual engagements and the wage rates for the years concerned Table 54 shows an estimate of possible earnings of some of Southampton's foreign-going seamen.

Table 54. Estimated annual earnings of certain classes of foreign-going seamen. 1927-1930 based on full time employment wage rates.

Destination	Able Seamen	Ordinary Seaman 12-24 months	Ordinary Seamen over 24 months
South Africa	£117	£58.5	£73.3
North America	£ 87.7	£43.8	£57.2

Source: Calculated from Monthly Wage Alteration Tables - MOL Gazette

In the above table the South African route has been calculated as full employment and the North American as 75 per cent. From all previous information it seems very unlikely that these potential earnings were obtained by more than a minority of the seamen looking for work in Southampton. The estimates are for unchanging crews taking ship on each trip during the year. However, in actuality changes of crew were bound to occur, so that as was discovered with the docks and shipyard workers, it is not the same men who are being counted on each occasion, and therefore, fewer engagements were made and less wages obtained by individual seamen of all classes in each year.

By computing foreign-going seamen's wages on a weekly basis and adding 21s. for their food allowance, during the years 1927-1930 firemen and able seamen were on an earnings rating which almost equalled the dockworkers' basic minimum, which was a good sum for any who managed to earn that much regularly. The upper rate for ordinary seamen was just in advance of general shipyard labourers in cash terms, but as with all seafarers' employment, labour per hour was very cheap when such long hours were worked. Shore labourers had to wait for wage increases in order to enhance their income, but the ordinary seaman was in line for automatic promotion and wage increases to top grade ordinary seaman and able seaman. If he remained at sea long enough he was sure of an increase.

Labour Relations

The adverse effect on labour relations of wage reductions in the three port industries between the wars was not surprising; there had been widespread disruption of work before the war in clashes between unions and management, which had even occurred in shipping. In 1911 Southampton had been the first port whose seamen benefited from a stoppage of work. When examining trade union activity in Southampton in Chapter Three, it was seen that the seamen stood apart from other ports in some ways, even from the other liner ports. The separation was the result of Southampton's union independence. The majority of seamen in other ports, if they were union members at all, belonged to the NSFU and did not demonstrate against wage cuts until led by Southampton. The seafarers of Southampton, with their own thwarted British Seafarers' Union and later the Amalgamated Marine Workers, were as much making a protest about and to the NSFU as protesting to employers about wage reductions. They protested because the national union agreed to the reductions instead of protesting on their behalf.

Dialogue between the BSU/AMWU and employers in Southampton was difficult because of the employers' non-recognition of the union, and their communications through the District Maritime Board carried little weight. Wage negotiations were national matters and a single port could not alter the rates for its own men. Southampton's union was not in a position to influence wage negotiators. Dialogue between employers and the NSFU was no problem, and there were those who considered that Havelock Wilson's relations with several shipowners were too friendly, and they resented his attendance at a dinner on board a liner in Southampton Docks. Since Wilson did not represent very many of the Southampton men it was not their wishes he put forward and they were seldom in agreement with his policies.

Wage issues were inflammatory topics and protests about reductions were made by other unions; for example, the AEU and the Boilermakers' Society in the early 1920s, followed by an unofficial dock strike which created a breakaway union of dockers and lightermen. Southampton was one of the very few ports not to have been involved at any time in the last of these disputes, and only joined the other two on instructions from their executives. However, Southampton shipyard workers were not always passive, and in 1924 they stood firm on their own in an effort to obtain better wages. Their dispute lasted many weeks, despite lengthy negotiations between the parties concerned.

National wage negotiations were advantageous in the long term, but

meant that Southampton's labour problems could not always be solved by local arrangements, and the state of local labour relations was not necessarily responsible for the failure to resolve outstanding questions.

* * * *

It is obvious from the state of employment in Southampton that earnings were much reduced for many workers by the effects of casualism and seasonality, even though precise earnings cannot be shown. In jobs where irregular earnings were common and where access to removable goods was part of the routine work, there followed a high incidence of theft and pilferage. Southampton was not the only port in which such crimes occurred, and in fact, the enclosed boundaries and small area of Southampton made it more difficult to get goods away from the docks than in the larger ports, even without considering the efficiency of the dock police.

Pilfering in the form of "perks" was common amongst dockworkers who helped themselves to small items of food stuffs and liquor from cargoes, seamen found passengers' valuables and ships' stores tempting, and shipyard workers also had access to the contents of ships' holds as well as tools and material from the workshops.

The problem reached a peak in the early 1920s when the port's unemployment was high. Insurance claims in 1913 amounted to 1.44d. per ton, and by 1921 had increased to 26.91d. per ton.[31] Southampton Chamber of Commerce appointed a special committee to consider and report on pilfering whilst at the same time approaching the Association of British Chambers of Commerce in the hope of obtaining more effective legislation to deal with 'unlawful possession'. The committee's recommendation that deck officers should be made responsible for cargo reception, carriage and delivery ex ship was not well received by either of the officers' organisations.[32] On most steamers officers were already over-stretched and worked anything from 70 hours a week upwards while at sea. The suggestions made by their employment organisations that too few officers were carried on vessels, and that this was one of the causes of so much pilfering taking place, were noted by the Southampton press, but no provisions were made for ships to carry special cargo officers.

The Chamber of Shipping of the U.K. set up a committee of enquiry to "investigate pilferage and gang-thefts by stevedores at holds and rails,"[33] which published its recommendations in February 1922. These were for stricter examination and control of goods in transit from the docks, better security of personnel permitted to enter and leave dock and harbour

premises, and harsher penalties for offenders.[34] However, no action was taken.

With the passing of severe unemployment and the arrival of better trade and employment prospects in the mid-1920s, the problem of pilfering was described as no longer "particularly heavy" in Southampton. There appears to be a correlation between theft or pilfering levels and earning levels, but pilfering did not stop when there was a higher level of employment, it merely decreased. Nor was pilfering from ships' stores necessarily related to irregular employment. It was regular practice for senior catering staff to bribe their subordinates to conceal spirits and other goods in ships stores, and both they, and seamen who broke open cargoes, were adept at smuggling goods off the ships. A large amount of pilfering by both dockers and seamen went undetected in Southampton and clearly it was a useful addition to the income of those who were proficient at it.

It is unlikely that pilfering would have ceased if wages had been higher and regular although there was less need for it when employment was adequate. Like tips, it was a hidden benefit which raised the level of income, but which could not be relied upon.

The national wages agreement of May 1920 made dockwork attractive to casual workers which worked against the need to reduce the number of men in the industry. However, the trade recession co-incided with the formation of the TGWU and a period of caution in docks union affairs, so that wages were allowed to drop 6s. a day without official protest. At the same time the reduction in shipyard war bonuses and a new agreement on overtime and nightshift which was particularly detrimental to pieceworking boilermakers, did not pass smoothly, and large scale official disruptions of work took place in shipyards in all federated districts. When the tide turned and increased wages became a possibility in 1924, a national dock strike was called in support of the dockers' wage claim, and Southampton's ship-repairers created an opportunity to demonstrate their demand for equality with the wage rates of the better-paid non-federated districts. The tiny concession achieved then was the only gain made by Southampton's shipyard craftsmen prior to the introduction of the uniform rate.

Seamen's protests about wage reductions were largely incited and sustained by Southampton seamen, but they were entirely unsuccessful in obtaining concessions. In 1925 seamen, alone among port trades, regressed to their 1923 wage level, after increases all round the previous year. There were times when it seemed as if Havelock Wilson was more interested in serving the shipping industry than his members, but on the wages issue

it might well be that had the industry not minimised its wage bill, employment for seamen could have been much scarcer, at the same time reducing employment correspondingly in those industries which depended upon shipping. The situation was so tight that staff salaries were cut and passenger fares were cut, but having attracted passengers, even with a reduced profit margin, and kept the seamen's wages low, Southampton's shipping came through the worst years of the 1930s perhaps rather better than Liverpool and certainly better than Glasgow. Some internal re-organisation in the industry then ensured its future progress.

It was not only the port industries in Southampton which depended upon the flow of passengers. The railway, hotels, shops, provision merchants and importers were all affected by the shipping lines' ability to keep their liners in commission with a plentiful supply of passengers. The reduction of wages probably was a prerequisite for low running costs at times when ships were sailing with less than their full pay loads, and without ships the rest of Southampton's labour must inevitably have suffered.

1. Report of Court of Enquiry into Wages, Rates and Conditions of Men Employed in Docks and Waterside Labour 1920. Appendix 3 Table A/4.
2. Cunard records. Booth Papers. LUA C1/285
3. The difference in pay rates denoted longer hours being worked in these ports during the summer, similar to the shipbuilding industry in some districts before the war. It was not strictly an indication of seasonality.
4. The average of the 13 ports listed in Table 34.
5. It was costly to the port authorities in delayed business and port congestion; there was no union strike pay, of course, but the cost to the TGWU was counted in lost members who joined a breakaway union; the cost to the district concerned Poplar and Bermondsey Board of Guardians who paid poor relief to strikers out of ratepayers' funds.
6. The employers denied making this threat when it was brought up during the joint negotiations in 1924, but Bevin maintained that it was what had forced him to accept the wage reductions of 1922. Times, February 21, 1924.
7. Times, July 3, 1923.
8. PEA Minutes, February 23, 1924; and Times, February 25, 1924.
9. Cunard record. LUA C1/285.
10. The MOL Cost of Living Index based on July 1914 = 100 fell from 126 in August 1921 to 62 in June 1923.
11. A.L. Bowley, Wages and Income in the U.K. Since 1860. p.xiv
12. P. Ford, op. cit. P.74.
13. PRO: LAB 2 1038 DPL 100/4/1920
14. Oral evidence of George Tatford.
15. The meat differential was 1s. 1d. per shift extra based on London rates.
16. There is much oral evidence of this, supported by similar comments in Col. R.B. Oram, The Dockers' Tragedy, (1970), Prof. T.S. Simey (gen. editor) The Dockworker, Manchester Social Research Series (1956) and MOL records: LAB 2/1050 34894.
17. PRO: RAIL 655 62. S.R. Co. Marine Department Annual Report 1932.
18. PEA Minutes, April 30, 1931.
19. Dockworkers did not compare themselves with coal miners, neither is the statement intended as an implication that either their wages or hours were comparable.
20. This involved moving ships for repair and to facilitate loading and unloading, not liner arrivals and departures.
21. Since not all employees worked 47 hours what employers meant was

that men should give the full hours for which they were paid.

22. UOPA Quarterly Report of December 1927. EETPU Archives, Hayes.
23. SEF Minutes, December 15/16, 1927.
24. These firms had been responsible for the interiors of saloons and state rooms when the ships were built.
25. SEF Minutes of General Conference June 15, 1928.
26. SEF Minutes, September 28, 1928.
27. ibid.
28. Comparison of Southampton stevedores and foremen - wage rates.

	Stevedores	Foremen (Average of 2 grades)
1918	11s.	17s. 9d.
1919	11s. 8d.	21s. 9d.
1920	16s.	28s.
1922	13s.	26s. 6d.
1923	11s. 10s.	25s. 3d. 23s. 4d.

29. See page 198.
30. An example of the calculations made for S.R. Co. seamen is:-
    1927 1,561 trips ÷ 9 passenger ships used that year = 173.4 trips per ship that year ÷ 52 weeks = 3.3 trips per week.
    At 2 days per trip this is equivalent to full time work.
31. Southampton Chamber of Commerce, Annual Report 1921-22. Southampton Reference Library.
32. Southampton Times, July 23, 1921.
33. Byrsson Cunningham, Port Administration and Operation, Chapman and Hall, London, 1925. p.143.
34. Report of the Chamber of Shipping of the U.K. Committee of Enquiry into Pilferage, Southampton Times, February 11, 1922.
35. Southampton Times, November 16, 1929.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TRADE DISPUTES

The disputes examined in this chapter are those which were caused by grievances arising between workers and employers, rather than where a stoppage was caused by one trade union protesting to employers about the distribution of labour to another. The effects of demarcation disputes were examined in Chapter Three.

For clarity previous chapters have been divided into three broad-based trade groups, a method which could also be utilised for examining industrial action. However, the disputes can be sub-divided into three further categories relating to the significance of the strike to Southampton's labour. These divisions are:-

A. National strikes/lockouts in which Southampton participated.
B. Strikes initiated by Southampton workers.
C. Strikes confined to Southampton port workers.

Not all the strikes are discussed in detail, but those which had the most profound effect upon the port are commented on individually. Also considered under category B is an issue which did not result in a stoppage of work, but which owes its importance to the settlement it achieved in relation to the situation of other port workers at the time. This issue is the wage claim made for Southampton boilerscalers in 1924 which was influenced by the strikes in the docks and shipyards.

The progress of the general strike in Southampton is included because, although the issues over which the TUC called the strike were outside the specific labour interests of Southampton, the way in which it was conducted locally throws some light on the attitudes of Southampton's trade union leaders towards industrial action.

Although there is an argument for examining disputes in chronological order because they relate to the development of industrial relations generally, in this particular instance the significance of actions in an individual port are of greater importance than national events over which Southampton had no control. Thus, whilst it is tempting to relate the national strikes of 1922/23 to the disruption in Southampton which occurred in 1924, Southampton's shipyard disputes in 1924 were of its own making and were ignited by the successful dock strike in the same year, rather than by the failures of 1922/23. Consequently, the category divisions take precedence, but each section is discussed chronologically.

All the strikes between 1919 and 1938 in which Southampton port workers were involved are shown in Table 55.

Table 55. Strikes and lockouts involving Southampton port workers 1919-1938

YEAR	TRADE GROUP	DATE START	DATE END	NUMBER OF DAYS	NUMBER OF MEN	CATEGORY
1919	Joiners	24.03.19.	14.06.19.	84	200	C
	Joiners	9.08.19.	13.10.19.	55	800	C
	Tugboatmen *	9.05.19.	14.06.19.	31	-	B
	Ironfounders	27.09.19.	18.10.19.	19	45	C
1920	Electricians *	21.02.20.	28.02.20.	7	-	C
1921	Seamen (Catering) Southampton men	6.05.21.	3.06.21.	19	10,000 3,000	B
	Joiners	1.12.20.	27. 08.21.	232	2,000	A
	Shipyard workers, mostly electricians, in 7 districts	4.05.21	21.05.21.	16	1,000	A
1922	Engineers (AEU) Southampton men	13. 02.22.	8.05.22	49	160,000 1,000	A
	Shipyard workers Southampton men	29.03.22.	8.05.22.	33	80,000 5,000	A
1923	Boilermakers	16.02.23	24.11.23	106	10,000	A
	Seamen	6.04.23.	9.04.23.	3	172	B
1924	Dockworkers Southampton men	16.02.24	26.02.24	9	100,000 3,000	A
	Marine Engineers (AEU)	20.02.24.	23.05.24	78	700	B
	Shipyard Workers	23.02.24.	23.05.24.	75	7,000	B
1925	Seamen	12.08.25.	12.10.25.	53	5,000	B
1926	GENERAL STRIKE	4.05.26.	19.05.26.			A
1927	Boilermakers	5.11.27.	8.11.27.	4	500	C
1929	Seamen not all ports	29.06.29.	3.07.29.	5	1,500	A
	Dockworkers not all ports	3.07.29.	5.07.29.	3	10,000	A
1934	Plumbers	#	31.05.34.	#	32	C

* The number of men involved is not available.

\# The exact dates of this stoppage are not clear because there was also an embargo on the work which caused the dispute, without a full withdrawal of labour.

Sources: Trade Disputes, Monthly Statistics, MOL Gazette; additional information on shipyard disputes from SCESEA and SEF Minutes.

Finally, the strikes which occurred in the six comparative ports in each of the three trade groups are analysed in order to see how Southampton's strike record compared with the other ports and districts,

and whether certain trade groups were more prone to strike action in one area than another.

CATEGORY A. Joiners - December 1, 1920 - August 27, 1921.

Joiners were awarded a 12s. a week wage increase in April 1920 because of the high demand for joiners at that time, and because they were being lost to the building trade which offered better wages than the shipbuilding industry. The boom in shipbuilding unfortunately passed quickly and before the end of the year the SEF felt that it was necessary to withdraw the increase because of the adverse effect it had on other trades. It had been followed by a spate of increase applications which the industry was unable to grant. The declared intention to reduce wages to shipyard joiners by 12s. a week provoked an exceedingly long strike. 1,250 joiners from Southampton's shipyards answered the call to cease work on December 1, 1920. Some 10,000 altogether stopped, and enforced idleness upon the woodcutting machinists and labourers.

The local FEST committee in Southampton offered its support, and some were in favour of giving more than moral support. It was Matt Connor, chairman of the FEST committee and a councillor, who managed to convince them that a general strike of shipyard workers was not what was required. He pointed out that financial assistance for the labourers thrown out of work was what he really needed.[1] The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners joined with the General Union of Carpenters on January 1, 1921 to become the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, a wealthy union which increased its strike pay to £1 10s. a week. Further help came from house-building joiners who imposed a levy to support their shipyard colleagues, so joiners were much more comfortably situated than labourers. The law stated that men thrown out of work by others on strike in the same industry were not entitled to unemployment benefit. Hence Connor's plea for the labourers. However, the ASW had not envisaged that the strike would continue for eight months and that the slump would worsen, obliging building joiners to accept a wage decrease of 7s. 4d. a week in accordance with the sliding scale they had just negotiated.

Two of the smaller firms on Southampton Water restored the 12s. in wages and their men returned to work. Other work in the port began to be affected by the lack of joiners, and more and more was sent away as the strike wore on. Forty ships, allegedly waiting for repair and reconditioning, were standing by at Falmouth, they should have been work for Southampton firms; several vessels were sent to the continent for completion; and local work on troopship conversions was reduced to two.

Ten or twelve troopers were sent elsewhere, and the Arabic, a White Star liner, was sent to Portsmouth. The non-federated dockyards at Portsmouth had not awarded the 12s. increase to their joiners, so they were not deducting it and the men were still at work, taking advantage of the situation in Southampton.

A battle of words raged in Southampton Borough Council between the Labour members and the Ratepayers as to whether or not the joiners were contributing to unemployment, and hindering the Council's plans to alleviate it. The joiners may not have made much difference to the Council's plans, but they certainly caused considerable hardship to the trades who found themselves unable to work because of them. By the summer many shipyard joiners in Southampton and Mersey had found work for themselves in the building trade, leaving the indirectly affected to "watch the store." The joiners' strike had a much greater effect on Southampton than the miners' strike which occurred concurrently, resulting in a shortage of coal.

By July the loss of work was so acute that Southampton shipyard workers were no longer concerned about the joiners, and the FEST committee wrote to the executive council about "the great distress." The SCESEA had tested the temperature of the water and finding it to its liking asked Southampton FEST committee to give an undertaking that work offered in Southampton would be completed. The FEST secretary supported the local committee in giving that undertaking, but the Federation Council refused to endorse action taken in Southampton which meant treachery to the joiners. However, the Federation decided it was time to meet the joiners' executive council and bring the dispute to a close.

The settlement reached was for the deduction of the 12s. to be made in three instalments and a resumption of work was, therefore, scheduled for August 22. After being ready to start before the settlement, Southampton joiners refused to resume work on the date appointed, despite pressure from other workers. They would not start work until the Railway Company had re-instated the older men whom it was decided should not be re-engaged. Resumption was delayed until August 29.

The situation in Southampton over this dispute was not quite the same as in other districts due to the nature of the port's shipyard work. When shipbuilding work was at a standstill it remained on the stocks for completion when the dispute was settled. In Southampton's case repair work sent away and done elsewhere was lost for ever. It was for this reason that Southampton workers showed an independent spirit in attempting to resume work. In doing so they moved the dispute nearer to its conclusion.

Amalgamated Engineering Union and Shipyard Workers - February - May, 1922.

In this major national dispute of engineers Southampton men were not originally involved because they were not employed by members of the Engineering Employers' Federation, with whom the conflict arose. However, the marine engineers appear to have joined in with their own cause at the same time as the strike of shipyard workers which began soon after the engineers' dispute.

The first signs of trouble in engineering arose in February 1922 when workers rejected the provisional overtime agreement which the executive had decided to recommend. The problem went deeper than that, however, and involved the principles of managerial functions regarding the right to make decisions on manning and introduce new working conditions without prior consultation. The employers called on other trade unions in the engineering industry to denounce the AEU for its rejection of the overtime proposals, but the other unions, although not covered by the overtime agreement, supported the AEU and were eventually locked out themselves.

In a Court of Enquiry (Arbitration) under Sir William Mackenzie, a settlement was made in favour of the employers, which was accepted by all trade unions except the Boilermakers' Society.

During the progress of the above dispute the SEF was in conflict with shipyard workers over their proposed wage reduction. The proposal of January 19, 1922 was that the war bonus of 26s. 6d. should be discontinued by deducting 16s. 6d. from March 15, with a further conference to decide the date of the withdrawal of the remaining 10s. The unions rejected the proposal by 115,000 votes to 13,000.[2] Slightly modified terms failed to gain acceptance and the FEST called for work to cease on March 29.

In Southampton some 5,000 ship-repairers were idle and only staff foremen and apprentices were said to be arriving for work. Approximately 1,000 engineers were also making a protest. Elsewhere engineers were supporting their own colleagues in the engineering industry proper, but as the marine engineers' wages fluctuated with the shipyards in Southampton, they were probably protesting about that as well, although they were not affiliated to the FEST.

The settlement at the end of April was reached because the FEST ballot only included 30 per cent of its members, and it was decided to resume work on May 8. This meant acceptance of a reduction of 10s. 6d. from March 29 and a further 6s. reduction in two instalments during May and June.

Southampton workers responded well to the strike call, but repair work was not plentiful at that time of the year, and new work was very scarce. There was still dissatisfaction in the port. There was the feeling that things should have been better after the war, and because they were not (1921 had been a grievous year for Southampton port employment), they were dissatisfied, and the withdrawal of the war bonus was the last straw. Workers did not relate wages to a cost of living index.

Boilermakers - February 16 - November 24, 1923.

The cause of this dispute was the shipyard boilermakers' rejection of the overtime and nightshift agreement which had been negotiated by the SEF and the FEST, and accepted by a majority vote from a pooled ballot. It was a separate agreement, but in detail very similar to the engineers' agreement which boilermakers in that industry had rejected in 1922.

The boilermakers were not the only members of the FEST to reject the agreement initially; they were joined by the woodworkers (ASW) and the plumbers (UOPA). However, when the SEF threatened to lock out trades still not accepting by April 30, 1923, the latter two acquiesced and signed the agreement.

By May the 10,000 boilermakers directly locked out had caused 14,000 other workers to be laid off in the federated districts, including Southampton, and the Boilermakers' Society had been expelled from the FEST.[3]

The shipyard boilermakers looked to the engineering industry for help as there was none from their own industry, and the TUC general council agreed with them that the agreement was prejudicial to their trade.[4] No help came from the engineers, nor from the Ministry of Labour which said it could not interfere where one union was holding nineteen others in defiance.[5] John Hill, general secretary of the boilermakers, blamed the obstruction by other unions for his inability to negotiate an honourable settlement.[6]

After 30 weeks the lock out ended on November 16, but the status quo was maintained, and boilermakers were told that anomalies affecting their piecework could be discussed with a view to correcting them. In fact, agreement was not reached and an Industrial Court settled the outstanding matter in May 1924, at which time boilermakers received the concession of 33 1/3 per cent payment for overtime instead of 25 per cent, because of their special circumstances.

* * * *

The recessional years 1921-23 were much occupied with employers taking back concessions and wage increases granted during the war, while the trade union movement endeavoured to get its forces into a better position to stave off this encroachment of their conditions. However, the AEU achieved nothing, except being locked out for 14 weeks. Unemployment was high and funds were low even before the conflict began, and by the end of it the union was considerably weakened financially and in membership.[7]

The significance of this dispute to Southampton was not so much the events of 1922, but rather the situation and attitude of the AEU executive as a result of the these events, which were to have a bearing on the Southampton engineers' crisis in 1924.

Lack of unity in the engineering industry and the craft attitude of the AEU were blamed for the failure of their industrial action. Unity was certainly not an outstanding feature of shipyard workers either, but in a wages crisis there was at least a single purpose, if not always agreement on how to tackle the problem. Their strike did not give the workers or the FEST negotiating committee the upper hand, but they gained considerably more than the engineers. The final 10s. of the war bonus was not deducted until the end of the year, and then only in a graduated scale according to basic rates, so that the lowest paid workers retained the full 10s.

When the shipyard strike was settled Southampton's marine engineers also voted to return to work, having made a token stand in defence of one dispute or the other. The lockout situation in the AEU gave employers the initiative and left the engineers nothing to bargain with. The lockout of the boilermakers escalated to include tens of thousands of other shipyard workers who were held up without the boilermakers. The boilermakers had supported the AEU throughout its struggle, but the AEU was not afterwards in a sound enough position to go to the aid of the boilermakers. Southampton's engineers made no effort to involve themselves in the 1923 dispute. The port's work was not too seriously affected, because ship-repairers were able to work without boilermakers, and there was not the same consternation over lost work as had occurred during the joiners' strike two years earlier.

Dockworkers - February 16-26, 1924

When the TGWU claimed 2s. a day increase in wages from January 1,1924 the NCPLE had no intention of making any concession, a position which was unanimously supported by the Southampton port employers.

Bevin gave notification to terminate the agreement on wages early in December 1923, but the first contact with employers was not until January 16, at which time, so Bevin maintained, "Lord Devonport for the employers dismissed the union within half an hour, without retiring, without considering a single word he had said, without submitting any reasons, without the presentation of a single figure in justification of their attitude."[9]

When the two sides came together after the strike notice had been issued on January 29 their arguments were much the same as they had been at the Shaw Enquiry. Dockworkers felt that their rate of pay was too low, but the employers replied that it was impossible for the industry to pay higher wages because of the poor state of trade, and the increased costs to consumers which would result. Bevin insisted that the problems of casualism could only be solved by a maintenance scheme which guaranteed a week's wages, whereas the employers saw it as impractical and unacceptable for a single industry to maintain its workers in this way. The chairman of the NCPLE, F.C. Allen (chairman of P & O), added that the large profits of the shipping companies and low wages of the dockworkers, as stated by the union, had been misrepresented. Bevin claimed that the employers' statements about high wages paid to dockworkers were distorted, being carefully selected examples, not representative of the general position.

The Times suggested that it was a contradiction to ask for a wage increase and a guaranteed week, because the 16s. award in 1920 had been made on the grounds that dockers did not have a guaranteed week. In fact, Lord Shaw had recommended both, but the industry had yet to take positive action on the latter.

Bevin looked more to long-term than immediate gain. He was a believer in gradual change, and he had agreed to the wage cuts in 1922 in order to preserve the gains which had been established on hours and negotiating procedures. Most dockworkers, however, were less concerned with an advantageous future than with the money they could earn in the present, and the 1923 reduction in wages had sent waves of discontent through ports, making under-employed, low-earners easy targets for political agitators.[10] It was important for Bevin in 1924 to show union members that he could obtain more for them than could be achieved by unofficial action. To do this he called upon, and was promised, the support of two useful allies - the NUR, who were to cease work simultaneously with the TGWU where wages were regulated by the National Docks Agreement of May 1920; and the Road Transport section of the TGWU, which undertook to prevent blacklegging by its members.

There was a fear that the rival union, National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockworkers, might weaken solidarity by remaining at work. This was the union formed at the time of the 1923 unofficial dock strike, and its members were exclusively in London and Hull, the two ports which depended on lighterage to a large extent. They could have spoilt the effectiveness of the strike in both ports, but after two days of 'go slow' they joined the TGWU men on strike.

Southampton employers did not seem to be unduly concerned by the strike threat, and only an hour before it was due to start they met "to consider and make local arrangements in the event of the dockers' strike materialising."[11] The strike began at noon on Saturday, February 16, and by Sunday morning the Southampton Manager of White Star Line was telephoning all the committee members he could contact for an urgent meeting that could not wait until Monday. The probable reason for his sudden burst of activity was that the Olympic was due to sail on Tuesday, February 20, and the PEA had, undoubtedly, been guilty of complacency.

A dock strike in February offered the least inconvenience to the port of Southampton. All but two of the big liners were undergoing their annual overhaul, and the port was not expecting any terminal ships to arrive during the first week of the strike. Calling vessels were expected, but they seldom picked up cargo. If this situation caused the employers' complacency, it also added to the degree of support for the strike in all probability. How many of the 2,600 tally-holders said to be on strike might, in any case, have been largely unemployed at this time? The Times said of Southampton that the solidarity and determination of the men had caused some surprise in the town, and that "employment being more intermittent and uncertain than ports chiefly concerned with cargo there might have been many waverers in a strike a year ago."[12]

The handling of mails and passenger baggage, and even some perishable cargo left on the Kenilworth Castle, was the work of volunteer clerical staff. The Olympic was got away on time, but the NUR refused to carry any goods unloaded from ships.

A settlement was eventually reached with the aid of Sir David Shackleton,[13] which awarded the dockers the 2s. they asked, but in two stages, and they were also granted a joint enquiry into finding ways to realise the recommendations of the Shaw Report - the guaranteed week.

The NCPLE was disappointed at the outcome and suggested that dock strikes were deliberately fostered because they created a backlog of work which could then be cleared partly at enhanced rates. There was certainly a backlog of work to clear. Glasgow and Hull had been brought to a standstill, with nearly 100 ships trapped in Hull. 10,000 ware-

housemen in Liverpool had joined the 30,000 dockers on strike there, and carters had refused to handle blackleg goods. In Bristol, Avonmouth and Portishead 5,000 men were reported as having joined the strike, which must have been almost the total work force.[14]

The dock strike, firmly and ably led by the TGWU and backed by the TUC, created an immediate impact on the country's transport, and it demonstrated the power of the large union. The TGWU was successful in controlling its members and achieving its aims. Thus, the size of the strike was important, but the scope of the economic disruption and public inconvenience were major factors in deciding the outcome. Additionally, the industry had the assistance of the MOL and the growing understanding of a number of civil servants engaged in that government department who were aware of the industry's problems. There was also the negotiating skill of Ernest Bevin and his dynamic personality. Factors like these did not all come together in the other disputes discussed, and none had such a swift settlement, nor terms so pleasing to the workers.

Southampton's involvement in the General Strike 1926.

There was a difference of opinion in Southampton over who was to control local arrangements for the strike. In other towns and ports Trades Councils were given responsibility for co-ordinating strike action and liaising with the TUC, but Dan Hillman (TGWU) and Harry Vincent (NUR) wanted the trade unions to control the strike. A number of prominent trade unionists were representatives on the Southampton Trades and Labour Council, but the NUR was one of the unions not affiliated. The TUC liaised with the Trades Council, and neither the TUC nor the Port Employers' Association were prepared to recognise the strike committee, but nevertheless, having been set up it managed to conduct some business on its own account.

The constitution of the committee was not detailed in the records, but its members were those who were at the forefront of other strike action in the port. D. Hillman (for transport), M. Connor (for ship-building and engineering), A.E. Goulden (for the building trade) and H. Vincent (for the railways). These men may have felt that the Trades Council might take too moderate a line, or they may have wished to work within the framework of the trade unions. They were all port workers' delegates,[15] probably influenced by shop floor attitudes rather than party politics. The Trades and Labour Council was strongly connected with the Labour Party and was more political than industrial. The four union leaders probably wished to organise events in their own way without having

to seek the approval of the Trades Council. There may have been others, but none were named.

On day 1 of the strike pickets were despatched by the Trades Council and communication lines were established using their own members who either owned, or had the use of, motorcycles. Nearly all dockers, coal porters and coal trimmers stopped work and no goods were moved.[16] On day 2 volunteers were brought in to dischrage a fruit cargo, and stores were loaded onto the Majestic by non-striking shore gangs and catering department seamen. Despite the Majestic being able to sail on schedule, the response from the docks presented a pleasing outlook to strike organisers.

In the shipyards the situation was not so straightforward.[17] There was considerable confusion nationally among foundryworkers and Southampton branch wrote to Head Office for advice. They were told that unless they were engaged on new construction they should be at work. The implication was that ship-repairers were not included in the TUC instructions.[18] Neither shipbuilding nor engineering workers were called out at the beginning of the strike, but where unions had members involved in more than one industry confusion arose over the division.

On the first day men reported for work at Thornycroft and Harland and Wolff, but by 9 o'clock ship-repairers engaged in the docks began to leave, and by 2 o'clock there were only enough men in the shipyards "to keep certain departments going."[19]

Tom Lewis reported to the TUC Intelligence Committee (on behalf of the Trades and Labour Council), and the Southampton Daily Echo informed the local populace, but their information regarding which trades were working and which had stopped were conflicting. Unions who had members in other industries which were on strike, for example, painters, plumbers and joiners, seem to have been encouraged to strike, whereas those with members in engineering who were not on strike, for example, patternmakers, boilermakers and foundrymen, in general did not strike, except the repair workers. The existence of two strike committees in Southampton no doubt played its part in adding to the confusion, with some unions following instructions from one committee and some from the other.

Shipwrights were not influenced by workers in other industries and they remained at work in Southampton. 95 per cent of the northeast coast shipwrights and 75 per cent of those on the Clyde also refrained from striking.[20]

Trades Councils were asked by the TUC not to publish Strike Bulletins or to add or embellish anything beyond the information supplied by the General Council. Most did, and thereby "incurred the wrath of the General Council."[21] Southampton Trades Council was one of these because

Tom Lewis published his first Strike Bulletin on behalf of the Trades and Labour Council on May 6. He referred to all Southampton workers when he said "the response had been greater than anticipated," and there had been difficulty in restraining those not called out.

In the Bulletin Lewis claimed that road and rail transport had been brought to a standstill, but in his report to the TUC Intelligence Committee he admitted that a partial tram service was operating, with only 80 per cent off the road.[22] The Borough Council had decided "after prolonged negotiations with the trade unions concerned" that it would continue the services of trams and electricity. The prolonged negotiations were more in the nature of a running battle between the Council and the Transport and Railway unions (both NUR and ASLEF), whose negotiators were from the trade union strike committee, not the Trades Council, and they were also dictating the conduct of the "union in charge of the generating station." However, they failed to stop the trams and the service gradually increased.[23] Southampton's buses were back on the road by May 10.[24] The train service was reduced to one or two trains a day between Southampton and Bournemouth, driven apparently, by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu. The service did not greatly improve, despite the fact that as many as 40 per cent of the local NUR men were on duty at times. Vincent seems to have been unable to control his own men, but the trains were prevented from running because there were no drivers (except volunteers from the House of Lords).[25]

Although efforts continued in Southampton to bring the seamen out there were "few cessations due entirely to the attitude of the NSFU." Wilson had previously amended the constitution of the NSFU to demand a ballot of two thirds of the members before strike action could be sanctioned, because his arrangement with employers did not allow for strikes. The AMWU men who withdrew their labour were left without work and their places were filled by others. Officers had been instructed by the Imperial Merchant Service Guild not to take part in the dispute, but to carry on with their duties and maintain law and order. In Southampton officers not only did their own work but filled in for striking shore workers where necessary. For example, the Homeric was moored by a gang which included three captains.[27] The port's use of volunteers was sufficient to keep all ships sailing to schedule.[28]

The Southern Railway's cross channel and Channel Island services were the worst affected of Southampton's shipping, but the reason was the coal shortage, rather than the labour shortage. All their vessels were coal burners. Even before the strike started all coal stocks were placed in the hands of Customs and Excise, so that, although the Railway Company had

laid up a month's supply for their own use, their forethought was of little benefit. Mail and passenger services to the Channel Islands were suspended and cargo services were much disorganised. The Isle of Wight ferries kept sailing between Southampton and Cowes throughout the strike, and afterwards shorestaff, officers and men were each given 5s. in appreciation of their loyalty.

During the strike Tom Lewis was at pains to stress the importance of an orderly strike, and each of his Bulletins contained warnings, and also praise for the "quiet determination." The aim of the Trades Council strike committee, as well as giving effect to TUC instructions, was to "preserve peace and order," and the Trades Council refused to accept responsibility for anyone "who by provocative language or otherwise incites workers to disorder."[29]

The Southampton Daily Echo reported well on the town's conduct and praised both police and people for "nowhere were conditions more peaceful... officials...more satisfactory...and private citizens more willing...to give their services."[30] However, it should be noted that after the strike a special meeting of the Southampton Port Registration Committee was called because of the number of assaults taking place on volunteers by returning strikers.[31]

When the strike was called off there was once again confusion in the port industries. The TUC said they had not given the official instruction to bring shipbuilding and engineering into the strike. Harry Vincent questioned the accuracy of the statement. He claimed official instructions had been given. The Merseyside men said they had received similar instructions to Southampton's and that work had ceased from 5.00 p.m. on May 11.[32]

On the evening of May 12 there was a mass meeting in Southampton at which it was decided, by the trade union leaders, "that it was better to remain out for one more day than have men victimised," and they wanted the assurance of employers that all strikers would be reinstated. The employers refused to negotiate with the strike committee "whose constitution and powers were unknown ... and which could have no permanent existence," and they were also determined to carry out the Prime Minister's request not to desert the volunteers who had shown loyalty in time of crisis.[33] An agreement was, therefore, concluded with the dockers on May 15, in which union negotiations were conducted solely with the TGWU, (with Hillman in his correct capacity as Area Secretary). However, the agreement also covered ship-building, engineering and repairing establishments and the employers' side included John Smith of J.I. Thornycroft who was president of the SCESEA.[34]

As a morale booster on May 22 the Hampshire Advertiser informed its readers that Southampton "had weathered the strike well and in fact suffered very little as a result of the men's unconstitutional action." The proof, they said, was to be seen in the statistics showing the number of vessels through the port for May 1926 compared with May 1925 (which was only a part-month comparison). The credit for the achievement was given to "the magnificent efforts of the volunteers." It was not until June 19 that readers learned "the disastrous effect of the general strike on Southampton's shipping" which was demonstrated by comparing the May 1926 dock statistics with May 1925!

Despite being a bad year for shipping nationally, 1925 had returned record figures in Southampton, and a comparison of the full month in 1926 with 1925 is by no means "disastrous."

Vessels	nearly 94% of the 1925 total
Cargo	nearly 83% " " " "
Passengers and troops	nearly 77% " " " "

The claim that Southampton was more fortunate than other ports is a reasonable supposition, because of the other ports' dependence on cargo handling. Mails and baggage did not demand the same skill and experience in handling as most cargoes. Passenger liners were able to continue sailing without cargoes, and there was no hold up of congested shipping in Southampton Water.

The situation for the strikers, however, was not relieved more in Southampton than elsewhere. There was no unemployment benefit which meant that men relied heavily upon their unions, which placed some in immediate difficulties.[35] Unmoved, the Southampton Guardians refused to relieve strikers' families until May 11, and then only provided "the necessities of life" in kind, and as a loan.[36]

The industrial strike committee was the more militant of the two, but they were unsuccessful in persuading men to strike unless they were of a mind to do so. Trains, buses, trams and lorries were available for public use. To show their good community spirit the Southampton TGWU offered lorries to the Council for the distribution of food and had their offer rejected. The leader of the Independent Party, S.G. Kimber, was not a man to accept favours from Dan Hillman.

The largest work forces in Southampton to have problems about the reinstatement of workers after the resumption were the railway, tramway and Pirelli workers - the latter still had 150 not working on May 26 due to volunteers in their places and the shortage of work. On the trams the hundred or so men who failed to secure reinstatement were still being excluded in 1927, despite strong pressure from the Trades Council and

Tom Lewis making "stormy scenes" at Borough Council Meetings.[37]

A settlement involving the reinstatement of workers in the port industries was a tricky subject because of the large number of floating casuals, and the Port Employers' Association could hardly be expected to reinstate all dockworkers. The conditions offered to the workers and accepted by Hillman, Waygood and Hart, the TGWU docks' officers, was that men would be reinstated as and when there was work for them. This included all port workers in docks and shipyards, and it even applied to foremen on the docks.

The General Strike gained much publicity; it also reduced the strength and standing of the trade union movement, and in that sense was influential in the future course of industrial relations. Would the next twelve years have been so free from major disturbances without it? However, from Southampton's point of view it was not nearly so damaging to the port as the joiners' strike of 1921, or the disruptions in the shipyards in 1924.

CATEGORY B Southampton Marine Engineers - February 20-May 23, 1924.

Mechanics, fitters, turners and brass workers were members of the AEU and were employed in the shipyards for both new and repair work. February and March was the season for overhauls and any disaffection amongst ship-repairers then was liable to disrupt employment at its busiest time. Whilst such an occurrence might have the greatest impact on shipowners and shipping companies, it could also risk losing work for the yards, thereby decreasing employment opportunities. This fact was not unknown to the engineers, but nevertheless, it was February 1924 when the national dock strike acted as the catalyst to a series of upheavals which began with the engineers' grievance.

The cause of their discontent was the overtime and nightshift agreement which, when put into force, involved the loss of 2d. per hour on the previous rate. The origin of the trouble was really the low rate of pay which had resulted from the deduction of the final 10s. of the war bonus at the end of 1922, and which had been smouldering among Southampton engineers ever since. The 10s. had been retained by engineers whose wages fluctuated with the engineering industry, even when they were employed in shipbuilding establishments.

Negotiations on overtime were perennial, but an agreement, negotiated by the FEST, was accepted by the AEU executive on January 28, 1924, to which the Southampton men still objected. William Moss, Manager of

Harland and Wolff, anxious to avoid the stoppage of work he could see was brewing, declared that the agreement was being imposed without due local consultation, and he suspended it for a week. His action was regarded as a serious breach of Association rules and he was reprimanded by the SCESEA president, Col. Campbell Day.

The dockers' wage claim was outstanding and the date of their threatened strike was drawing close, so when the engineers refused to work the overtime agreement on February 11, their shop stewards used the disturbance to initiate a wage claim of grandiose proportions. At an informal meeting with SCESEA secretary, William Nelson, a shop steward stated the case plainly. "The overtime question is an item and we do not attach much importance to it... we want a decent wage for a decent day's work... the main thing is we want a wage increase." He said that Southampton engineers were lower paid than in other ports, that men were running into debt, selling their homes, and were "put to considerable inconvenience in trying to exist." They wanted an increase of 17s. 6d. a week.[38]

Meanwhile, the FEST representing other shipyard workers, had put in a national claim for 10s. a week advance, and Sir Andrew Duncan, secretary of the SEF, came to Southampton with some urgency for a private meeting with the SCESEA committee on February 18 to ensure that the views of the SEF were clearly understood. "It will be quite easy to give way," he told them, "but unless you hold to some kind of principle, giving way today means giving way tomorrow... If the 10s. was conceded there is not the slightest doubt it would be followed by demands from every shipyard trade." Not surprisingly, he suggested the engineers should be treated in a similar way.[39]

After the meeting the employers offered the engineers a joint committee to frame a new wage agreement, and a repair allowance of 2s. 6d. per week in the same manner as the Tyne ports, and also that they should receive whatever was decided for the shipyard workers in their 10s. per week claim.[40] Sir Andrew Duncan had told the SCESEA that very day that the SEF was hopeful of getting the 10s. claim withdrawn by the FEST.

The local AEU committee not only refused the offer (having failed to gain acceptance at a mass meeting), but they also resented the AEU being placed in a position subordinate to the FEST. The strike by Southampton marine engineers began on February 20, and it placed the AEU district committee in a difficult situation. They had not given instructions to strike and they wished to uphold central office directions, but at the same time, they believed the strike was warranted.

The engineers insisted they were separate from the FEST and claimed

the right to make their own settlement. They were given no support by the national executive. The original cause of the stoppage having been rejection of the overtime agreement gave the executive an easy way out. The Southampton engineers had supported the main body of the union in its conflict with employers in 1922, but the executive members were not prepared to risk another confrontation for the sake of a handful of men. For their part, Southampton men saw themselves unreasonably deprived of their war bonus, but there was no suggestion recorded that they should fluctuate their wages with the engineering industry in future.[41]

There was no official end to the strike. It was decided to have their case heard by the Court of Arbitration which was arranged to settle the shipyard claim, and from the beginning of May there was a fairly rapid, but staggered resumption of work.

The award made by the Court was a very disappointing 3s. a week on repair work, which was only 6d. more than the offer made before they withdrew their labour. The engineers had overstretched themselves in demanding an increase of 17s. 6d., but it was a hastily arranged claim made without the benefit of their district committee's guidance. They were courageous in holding out on their own, but without any national leverage they had little chance of achieving their aim. The AEU was not in a comfortable position and its executives were thankful that the Southampton men returned to work without further mishap to the shaky fabric of the organisation.

Perhaps a more sensitive approach when the difficulties involving the overtime agreement were discovered, might not have resulted in a breakdown of relations. The SCESEA might have pondered later whether they had been hasty in reprimanding William Moss. Had the men been given some leeway on overtime rates, there might not have been a wage claim or a strike.

Southampton Shipyard Workers - February 23 - May 23, 1924.

A wage claim submitted to employers by the Southampton FEST committee on October 2, 1923 asking for parity with the workers of Clydeside, resulted in an offer of 3s. per week on repair work, which was not made until January 18, 1924. Dissatisfaction with the offer and the lack of attention being given to the claim induced the FEST district committee in February to press for their case to be heard by the SEF. Possibly prompted by the marine engineers who had just withdrawn their labour and the port's dockers, who were on a national strike, a shipyard workers' strike threat was issued on February 21, the original claim having been

significantly altered to 17s. a week increase for steelworkers and parity with London.

The strike began at noon on February 23 as no further offer came from the employers. The shipwrights withheld the decision to strike until the 25th, and the boilermakers, who were not members of the FEST, and who were still awaiting settlement of their own seven month national lockout, declined to join the action.

William Moss, anxious as ever to keep his work schedule flowing, employed women to wash and clean paintwork on a Royal Mail Steam Packet liner. They were given seaboots and were paid 1s. a day extra, but a spokesman for the strikers called it "degrading to working class women."[42]

It was not until March 7 that the FEST national committee officially recognised the strike and representatives met the SEF to find a basis for a settlement. The national claim for 10s. had been put into abeyance, pending a Southampton settlement, and the threat of a national lockout was making FEST members feel uneasy.

As previously commented, February, when all three strikes started, was a slack time for dockwork, but in the ship-repair departments it was the season they had waited all year for. In January men had been brought from Cowes and Falmouth to help with the volume of work.[43] By the time the strike was over the work had gone and there was little employment available.[44]

The SCESEA had appealed to the SEF for assistance in solving the South Coast problem, and the SEF response was the threat of a national lockout. In no way would they agree to any increase in rates for Southampton men, fearing that such an award would lead to a new round of wage claims to maintain the differentials which Southampton was hoping to eliminate.

The FEST national committee was greatly alarmed by the lockout threat and put forward a complicated series of proposals worked out with the local strike committee, which were aimed at ending the dispute whilst allowing the wage claim to continue. The FEST intimated that the majority of trades accepted a return to work proposal, and attempted to force Southampton to resume by suggesting they were losing the support of their national executives. In fact, the Southampton shipwrights had been suspended by their executive council for refusing to resume work, but the shipwrights' general secretary had never approved of militancy. It was not true that the executives were backing down, but there was a shortage of strike pay, should it be needed, and this was worrying them.

Owing to the failure to obtain a resumption of work the national lockout was imposed on April 12, except for the shipwrights who were

excluded. It was a visit to Southampton by TUC members Fred Bramley and Arthur Purcell which produced more easily understood proposals which the men voted to accept by some 2,000 out of about 2,500. This was a very small percentage of those on strike, but it led to a return to work on April 23. The subsequent negotiation with employers was unsuccessful and arbitration was mutually agreed.

There was more support for the strike than employers had, perhaps, anticipated. They may have believed that because the AEU did not support the marine engineers, other unions would not condone a local disturbance which was bound to jeopardise the national wage claim which was still outstanding. If individual unions refused to support Southampton, employers could be confident that neither would the FEST support an irregular, local movement. However, a number of FEST-affiliated unions had offered financial support to their men at the beginning.

The SEF supported its affiliated Association in Southampton to the point of enforcing a national lockout. No doubt the hard line SCESEA was glad of their support, but the SEF acted without due regard for local labour relations, as if it wished to avoid an increase at all costs, because of the consequences in other ports, rather than out of concern for Southampton. The unacceptable offers made to both groups of workers, and the impetuous reactions of the men, precipitated the crises, and prevented any real effort to get into negotiating situations. William Moss attempted to speak on the men's behalf, as he had done for the engineers. He suggested that Southampton's wages were low, and presented some figures in support of his belief. He was told that he had not used the same method of computation as the SEF.[45]

As in the case of the dock strike, it was third party intervention which secured a return to work. However, had the men known what was to happen to the terms upon which they agreed to resume, they might not have done so.

The agreement to return to work was based on the understanding that parity with London rates was the objective. This actually meant that a variety of amounts, some more and some less than 17s. were being asked for, and because there was no uniform wage scale the FEST national executive adopted the figure of 17s. 6d. a week as general guidance in negotiation, since it was close to the average amount being claimed by the shipyard workers, but not because it was to be regarded as a standard increase. That was left to the national claim for 10s. a week to shipyard workers, which complicated the issue. To add to the confusion, the marine engineers' claim, which was also for 17s. 6d., may have been mistaken for the shipyard claim, which was originally for 17s., plus parity

with London for the time workers. The press, both local and national, and certainly the general secretary of the Coppersmiths' Society, and no doubt others as well, seemed to make the mistake of thinking that Southampton's 17s. 6d. was the 10s. of the national claim, plus 7s. 6d. for its own workers. Thus, the May 10 issue of the Southampton Times carried the report that arbitration had been fixed at 7s. 6d. The following week it referred to letters received from shipyard workers querying this. "If your statement is correct, then all I can say is we have been tricked," wrote one correspondent.[46]

The terms of the arbitration were arrived at by the SEF and the national executive of the FEST, with two local employers to advise, but without consultation with local workers. The terms were probably altered due to a misunderstanding, rather than by deliberate pressure from the SEF, but when the mistake was known the protestations of the local FEST committee were ignored. The terms read: "...a special increase of 7s. 6d. a week on repair rates in the Southampton district on the grounds that there are special aspects which differentiate repair work at Southampton from other federated districts and relate more particularly to certain non-federated repair ports."[47]

Ernest Bevin, together with Allan Findlay and Frank Smith, president and secretary of the FEST, put the case for the workers. Findlay, the moderate leader of the patternmakers, was committed to the FEST as a negotiating body for the joint engineering and shipbuilding trades, but like several other unions in the FEST, the bulk of his members were employed in engineering. There was probably no union in Southampton with fewer members on strike than patternmakers, and Findlay may not have been the best person to support Southampton's cause. It made little difference to the frustrated strike committee who knew that whatever the outcome they could not win, because the terms under discussion were not those for which they had been on strike.

As seen when looking at wages in Chapter Seven, the SEF would not agree to 'de-federate' Southampton, and employers denied that Southampton work was more than normally irregular. The Court, therefore, awarded 3s. a week increase on repair rate. One of the complaints about the award was that labourers, other than brass-finishers' labourers, did not benefit, and the national claim for shipyard workers, which was decided at the same time, also left labourers unrewarded.

On the national claim the original 10s. was commuted to 7s., but it was regarded as part restoration of the war bonus, which meant that only those who had lost either part or the whole of the 10s. could benefit, and there was no change in rates for the low paid.

The Court's findings were given in the same words as those used by Sir Andrew Duncan in his arguments against an increase, and Sir William Mackenzie seems to have been influenced by the powerful shipbuilding lobby. The disparity in wages paid in Southampton and other districts continued to cause uneasy relations with employers until it resurfaced as a major issue in 1927/28, the negotiations of which were discussed in the previous chapter.

Southampton Boilerscalers and Blackgangs 1924.

Boilerscalers and ships'scrapers were unskilled labourers who, as their name implies, were employed to clean the inside of ships' boilers and the outside of ships. Before the first war and immediately after it a large proportion of boilerscalers were youths, persons of small stature being preferable for entering the boilers. It probably accounts for the poor union organisation of this class of worker.

Blackgang was the collective name for firemen and trimmers and engineroom hands who kept the ships engines working while in port in order to provide the vessel with power. Donkeymen, a similar class of labourer, tended the ships' donkey engine. They were all repair workers, partly organised by the BSU/AMWU, and partly by the general labourers' unions.

By the time the TGWU took up their cause men were already being employed more extensively as boilerscalers in place of youths, and the NUGW was also organising scalers and shore gangs. In 1923 the Southampton delegate for unskilled shipyard workers raised the issue of boilerscalers' and blackgangs' wages, because on a comparative scale with Bristol, Liverpool, Birkenhead, London and the Clyde, Southampton rates were low. The boilerscalers joined the dock strike in February 1924 in support of their local dockers, but whether by persuasion or by their own volition was not stated. As the dock strike neared its conclusion Dan Hillman warned the port employers that he wanted boilerscalers and blackgangs to be included in the settlement because nothing had resulted from their wage application of October 1923. He managed to extract from the dockers' mass meeting of February 24 the resolution that although dockers accepted the terms of their settlement "no resumpton of work will take place until the question of Southampton boilerscalers and blackgangs has been satisfactorily defined."[48]

Hillman claimed to have 629 boilerscalers and 40 donkeymen on his books, but he admitted that 70 percent of them were six monthly members (they were usually seamen during the other six months), and the remaining

30 per cent had joined recently, some only in the previous week. Hillman was making a genuine attempt to improve the conditions of these workers, but at the same time, it was a strong move by the TGWU to take over their interests. Claiming the status of dockworkers for them because they were members of the Transport Workers' Union brought immediate resistance from the port employers. They maintained boiler-scalers were part of the FEST and, therefore, included in the 10s. a week shipyard claim then outstanding.

Southampton was the only district in which boilerscalers were employed direct by the shipbuilding or repairing firms, elsewhere they were sub-contracted, for example, the London Scaling Company. This is the reason for the port's rates being so much lower than other ports. The SCESEA, who were handling the claim, consulted the SEF, who in turn, discussed it with Ernest Bevin. Sir Andrew Duncan and Bevin decided that in future boilerscalers were not to be regarded as part of the engineering and shipbuilding federation, which was not the answer South-ampton wanted. The shipping line representatives on the SCESEA declared that on no account were they willing to have boilerscalers "in with the dockers,"[49] so there was no alternative but to have a separate arrangement for them.

Five hours of negotiation on March 27 resulted in an offer of 2d. an hour from the employers and the suggestion of calling the dockers out again from Hillman.

Negotiations continued, and in London and Hull boilerscalers were awarded increases, putting London at 11s. 6d. for an 8 hour day, and Hull at 10s. for 8½ hours.[50] In Southampton they were paid 7s. 1d. per 8½ hour day, which employers were prepared to increase to 8s. 6d. This amount put boilerscalers only 5s. a week behind some of the port's skilled workers, and since they were to have 3s. a week extra for working in exceptionally dirty conditions, it was a reasonable offer by the standards of Southampton shipyard workers.

The controversy over their status was as much at stake as their wages, and it had not been resolved locally when the wages issue went to arbitration. The Court's decision, given on May 10, 1924, was that boilerscalers were a class of workers in their own right. Their scale of wages was increased to 10s. for an 8½ hour day, with a further increase of 1s. a day from the first full week in June. They were also awarded 25 per cent extra for dirty jobs connected with oil-fired boilers. Blackgangs on shore work were included in the award and with the June increase firemen were to receive £4 0s. 9d. a week, and trimmers £3 17s. 6d. It is not surprising that W.A. Appleton, secretary of the General

Federation of Trade Unions, stated in his quarterly report of May 15: "These Southampton men have emphasised the iniquity of the position which permits the payment of lower wages to the skilled than the unskilled, which forces them to a lower standard of living than is possible to some who are in receipt of Poor Law relief."[51]

In this instance there was no national issue at stake and a mere 600 or so men were involved, who were not even on strike at the time; although prevented from working by the shipyard workers' dispute, they were not causing economic or public inconvenience. Why then did the boilerscalers gain such a large award from Sir William Mackenzie who had granted so little to the AEU, the boilermakers, the marine engineers and the shipyard workers?

Crawling about in six inches of oily sludge with a candle and a scraper was one of the most repellent of all shipyard occupations, but that was hardly likely to influence the arbitrator. Casualism was an important feature, but casualism and low wages were the arguments of the shipyard workers as well. Poor results - either no increases or very small increases - were obtained by all workers between 1921 and 1924 when they were in conflict with the SEF. The strike and the threatened strike which involved the transport workers' union in conflict with the NCPLE and the SCESEA (without the support of the SEF) achieved settlements which were far more advantageous to the men. Whether it was the SEF which influenced the Court of Arbitration more than the cases in question is not certain, but it seems that way. The position of Southampton's shipyard workers was as strong a case for improvement as the boilerscalers, and the only differences were in the number of men concerned and the involvement of the SEF.

Tugboatmen - Isle of Wight Steam Packet Company. May 9 - June 14, 1919

Another group of disputes initiated in Southampton were those of the seamen. The first of these was the tugboat crews who, having waited during the war, expected improved conditions and wages after it.

The tug crews earned £3 5s. a week in 1919; they provided their own food out of it, and they worked 72 hours. Advantageous agreements were being made for land workers, and they, too, anticipated a reward after the praise and commendations given to the merchant fleet. Admiralty tug crews at Chatham and Portsmouth operated a 47 hour week and were paid £3 10s. The IOW Steam Packet men wanted £4 for 56 hour week. They were offered £3 5s. 6d. for 72 hours on tugs and £3 10s. for 62 hours on

pleasure steamers.

The offer was rejected and a strike was called. Pickets were posted to prevent employers engaging replacement crews, but owing to the very calm weather it proved to be possible to turn the liners at their berths and no shipping was delayed. Little shipping sailed in 1919, but the Aquitania and the Olympic were turned manually during the strike. Shipping was also disrupted and launchings were delayed by industrial action from tugboatmen on the Tyne and Clyde, in Liverpool and on the Manchester Ship Canal. All wanted shorter hours, but in each case employers said they felt bound by the 1918 National Maritime Board decision which gave the tugboatmen 72 hours.

Charles J. Sharp, chairman of IOWSPCo., explained his view in a letter to the Southampton Times.[52] The men were said to be averaging 70 hours for a 7 day week, but as they did not work a 7 day week they were working less hours. Each man had one day off per week plus one week-end in four. However, the number of hours actually worked was not so much the issue in dispute, it was the hours which constituted a pay week. 72 hours made overtime almost impossible, so they were never paid an enhanced rate.

The MOL requested a meeting with the two sides on June 4 and a Board was set up under the chairmanship of Sir David Shackleton to determine the outcome of disputes which were not settled locally. The settlement was reached on June 13, when reduced hours and recognition of overtime were offered by Sharp and accepted with slight modifications by the BSU and men. Within hours the steamers were ready to sail and services to the IOW and tug work were resumed after 5 weeks industrial action.

Organised labour in the port had offered its support, both verbal and financial and by the end of May almost every shipyard in Southampton was collecting on behalf of striking tugboatmen. When the Ministry of Shipping sent Portsmouth tugs to launch eight government barges they only managed to get two into the water before protests caused the tugs to be sent back.

The coal tugboatmen, who came under a separate agreement made with the port's coal merchants, were more fortunate. They obtained a 48 hour week. Coaling companies were not part of the seamen's agreement made with the NMB, and as there was still plenty of coal bunkering required in 1919 Rhea & Company preferred to settle with their men.

The settlement was reached due to intervention by the MOL which formed a sub-committee to investigate conditions of employment on privately owned tug companies in all ports, because of the numerous disturbances.

The sub-committee was to draw up a national agreement on hours, wages and overtime. Evidence of the agreement has not been discovered, but the reference to tug work in the wage books of George Tatford, previously discussed, indicate that 72 hours were not worked by men on the Alexandra tugboats during the depression - at least, not men in Tatford's capacity.

Stewards - May 7 to June 6, 1921.

This dispute does not strictly belong in Category B because it originated in Liverpool, but the only port in a position to respond was Southampton, which it did, wholeheartedly and perhaps even more energetically than Liverpool.

A wage reduction negotiated without consultation with the Cooks and Stewards' Union provoked its leader into calling a strike without fully thinking through the consequences. Shipping was on a falling tide; unemployment was high, work was slack and without immediate prospects of improvement, and Joseph Cotter, the stewards' leader had lost his place on the NMB panel for catering department seamen and was unable to make further representations or negotiate effectively.

Having called his strike the first crew to respond was on the Royal Mail Steam Packet's Almanzora in Southampton, and from there it spread rapidly to other ships in port. However, even in Southampton the response was not unanimous. There were plenty of men willing to accept the reduced rates. (It may have been the first chance of a job they had seen that year). The NSFU and the Shipping Federation did their utmost to provide crews and despite many cases of intimidation in Southampton to prevent men taking ship, no liners were delayed and the strike had very little affect on shipping.

Apart from the General Strike, this is the first dispute so far discussed in which there were cases of personal animosity, but the incitement to violence came from the top. The National Transport Workers' Federation Annual Report for 1921 contains information regarding Circular No. 35 which was put out in Cotter's name, but which the NTWF believed might have been the work of Havelock Wilson.[53] This Circular was a recommendation to the stewards to commit sabotage, for example, by destroying ships' crockery and cutlery and deliberately confusing passengers' luggage. Basil Mogridge was of the opinion that it would not have been out of character for either man to have been responsible.[54] Whoever was resonsible, it seems to have been instrumental in causing a serious drop in membership of the Cooks and Stewards, and a number of Liverpool-based senior stewards broke away and formed their own short-

lived Mercantile Caterers' Guild.

There was no official settlement of this dispute by means of the two sides coming together for negotiations. Cotter merely decided that his union had made its point and that it was all he was likely to achieve. So he capitulated and instructed his men to return to work on June 4.

Southampton employers took their lead from the National Maritime Board and resolved not to recognise the Stewards' Union,[55] although it had been negotiating with employers since 1909. Since they did not recognise the BSU in any case they refused to accept a stewards' branch as recognisable and regarded it as interference with the catering department.[56]

The combined forces of the BSU and the stewards were unable to make any impression on the combined forces of the Shipping Federation and the NSFU - a point which they should perhaps have taken note of. Both the small unions attracted the more specialist class of seamen found in liner ports, and they were unsuccessful in winning members from among sailors and firemen.

Seamen - April 1923 and August 22 to October 12, 1925.

One of the reasons the Cooks' and Stewards' Union and the BSU failed to increase their membership sufficiently, even after their amalgamation, was because of Joseph Havelock Wilson's introduction of the PC5 engagement system with the support of the shipping employers. Resentment of the PC5 form, by NSFU members as well as other seamen, was one of the causes of the disputes which occurred in 1923 and 1925. On the surface these strikes were about wage reductions, but the wage issues only served to ignite the resentment which had been smouldering.

When the wage reduction was put into effect in April it was once again the men of RMSP's Almanzora who led the industrial action. Shortly before sailing time 80 firemen left the ship, followed later by 92 engineroom hands from the Windsor Castle. Both ships sailed with replacement crews which Captain Braithwaite of Royal Mail Steam Packet confirmed had been easy to find.[57] Philip Curry, Manager of White Star Line, took the opportunity to replace AMWU deck and engineroom crew on the Majestic with NSFU men. The original crew had not signed-on at the end of their voyage as usual, having only just heard about the dispute, so Curry signed-on a new crew, despite having been asked to postpone signing. The Southampton joint secretary of the AMWU said: "All over the country men are seething with discontent at the present method of business."[58]

There was nothing the AMWU could do about it, and the strikers were confined to a few Southampton crews and some persistent seamen in Hull who were still refusing to sign-on more than a week later.

Strike-breaking by the Shipping Federation, and summonses issued against 134 firemen from the Almanzora took the edge off the men's enthusiasm. Within three days shipping was back to normal, but some formerly employed Southampton seamen found themselves out of work. The 1923 strike was spontaneous and a failure. To defeat the NSFU and the Shipping Federation required prior planning and a firm foundation. Before that could be achieved the rift developed between the old BSU and the former Cooks and Stewards, so that the international strike in the summer of 1925 lost the support of some of the seamen who might otherwise have joined.

The 1925 strike began when a large number of British seamen in Australia left their ships because of the wage reduction which was imposed. The following day the stokehold crew of the RMSP Orbita berthed in Southampton walked off. Most of them returned later and the ship sailed the same day, but it signalled Southampton's entry into the strike. There was a communist-backed strike committee in London which organised the strike, even if it had not planned it, but there is no evidence that it gave directions to the Southampton committee. Southampton was in constant communication with South Africa, but it had its own aims for strike action and they were rather more parochial than political. What was left of the Marine Workers' Union wanted to score over the NSFU, entice its members away and be rid of PC5 and the crippling effects of the law suits continually being brought against the union by Wilson.

The London committee organised efforts in the Dominions, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, where men refused to sail and where there were no strike-breaking facilities or queues of unemployed seamen waiting to sign-on. The Australian government imprisoned many seamen, but the ships were not manned; and in South Africa the government helped the strikers' cause by confining them to "prohibited immigrants" camps at the shipowners' expense.

The international aspect of the strike was a new departure, but so also was the support of the shipyard workers, stirred up by Matt Connor of the plumbers. He raised enough enthusiasm to prevent work being started on re-conditioning two laid up liners for Union Castle to use as replacements.[59]

The progress of the strike was hampered in Southampton by the NSFU, and by the Federation's strike-breaking depot ship which brought men from different ports to fill gaps in crews wherever they were needed, and which

was used for the last time in the 1925 strike. A Federation man joined in-coming ships at Cherbourg and sent a radio message from the ship advising how many of the crew were unwilling to sign-on again. This number was then brought to the Solent in tugs via Portsmouth to link up with out-going vessels and avoid the picket lines.[60] It was a method they used very successfully.

Before long the non-arrival of the shipping lines' vessels from South Africa began to be felt. Dock and ship-repair work were reduced; industry and commerce were affected by delays in mail and imports; and the crop exports from the Cape were beginning to be moved by foreign-owned vessels. In all there were 24 ships strike-bound in South Africa, 39 in Australia and 15 in New Zealand. Nine of these ships were from Southampton, excluding Union Castle vessels, which had increased to twelve, and twenty three per cent of the striking seamen were from Southampton.[61]

In the previous strikes discussed the Southampton Guardians had not shown any particular sympathy with strikers' difficulties, nor had they been much concerned in cases where men had been put out of work by others; they were always reluctant to add more names to their lists of needy. In 1925 extreme hardship was experienced by many local seamen and families as a result of the strike, and special meetings of the Guardians were held to arrange relief on a loan basis for wives and children, and also for families where the husband was at home. The worst difficulties seem to have been encountered by families whose bread winner was on strike in South Africa, because Union Castle cut off their weekly allotment.[62] The Guardians were anxious, however, because they anticipated that many seamen were likely to be unemployed after the strike and they would be unable to repay the loans.

Strikers and their families always suffered to some extent because union strike pay was less than adequate, and NSFU men were not entitled to it, but with so many of the strikers away the plight of women and children was high-lighted.

The strike was officially declared to be at an end on October 12, but as it was not possible to arrange a mass return to work along the lines of industrial workers on shore, the resumption was not immediate. In Australia the seamen's strike became entangled in domestic trade union affairs, and dragged on into November with 40-50 vessels still involved.[63] It had become obvious to strike leaders that employers were not going to give way on any of the seamen's grievances, despite huge port and harbour dues being expended on strike-bound ships. The AMWU had counted on the support of the docks and shipyards, and Matt Connor had almost managed to bring the latter out, but like the seamen's strikes before, resistance

to the conditions imposed melted, and the strike achieved no advantages. Afterwards many seamen were stranded in Australia, unable to find vacancies on returning ships, and the prolonged hardships of men and families was an unfortunate consequence of the strike, which the AMMU was powerless to alleviate, being already in financial difficulties owing to litigation expenses.

Seafarers were not much in the public eye, and their case tended to be regarded in the light of the employers' presentation of it. The shipping managers and local employers in Southampton put all the blame for the disruption to shipping on the communist influence behind the AMMU strike committee, being careful to indicate that it was a small number who were influencing the rest. Nevertheless, whatever blame, or credit, was attributable to Southampton, it should have been placed on the hard-working, well-meaning union leaders. They believed that Wilson and the NSFU would never attempt to improve seamen's conditions in the vigorous, militant way they thought was necessary.

The 1925 strike was the most effective demonstration of resentment by seamen between 1911 and 1966, but the AMMU had not planned it, nor were they prepared for it. The seamen's section of the Minority Movement organised it in the beginning and gave it its communist complexion. The greatest commitment to the strike was in Australia where there was a strong communist influence, but it would be a mistake to include the Marine Workers' involvement with these motives.

To Havelock Wilson the strike was as unofficial as the 1923 stoppage. He believed that more could be achieved by co-operation with shipowners, but seamen's wages and the disputes which arose out of crews' dissatisfaction with them were closely involved with the inter-union struggle for control of the organisation of seafarers. This struggle sometimes led to actions which were not in the best interests of the seafarers.

CATEGORY C

Apart from the joiners' strikes in 1919 the disputes in Category C were of short duration. They each involved only one individual trade or section of workers, and caused less inconvenience to the port and other workers.

The 1919 disputes were concerned with wages and earnings, and in each case the strikers received a concession. The disputes which occurred after the General Strike varied. The boilermakers objected to the employment of a non-union member, and the plumbers resented the

withdrawal of special allowances for welding on repair work, the inference being that if a special rate was warranted it was special work. The plumbers maintained that welding was part of their normal work, but that an allowance for it was part of their port working rules in Southampton. Southampton and parts of the Clyde were the only plumbers to withdraw their labour, but in several ports men refused to do welding work without the special rate. Ports settled individually on piecework at first, which was against union principles, so finally the special rate was restored on all ship-repair welding, as well as new work.[64] This settlement was not, strictly speaking, a workers' gain, because it was a restoration, but it was a healthy sign in an industry which had been in such dire straits for so long.

The five and three day stoppages by seamen and dockers in 1929 involved some of the seamen on the crossings from Liverpool to the Irish ports and some of the Southern Railway ships' crews in Southampton who supported them. Dockworkers in Liverpool and Southampton made a token stoppage in support of the seamen. The strikes were unofficial, and the dockworkers were mildly reprimanded by their union leaders.

* * * *

The primary cause of most of the disputes discussed in this chapter concerned wages and earnings, but there was frequently a secondary cause which was instrumental in turning a wage claim into a strike.

The joiners' strike in 1921 was a case of disappointment at the removal of a bonus they had become accumstomed to. However, the flames of strife were fanned to some extent by the housebuilding joiners who were not on strike.[65] Secondary issues in the dock strike were Bevin's personal concern because the dockers' main interest was in higher wages.

The shipyard strikes in Southampton were certainly concerned with wages, but the significant point was the inequality of the Southampton rates with similar workers elsewhere. Their case was wrongly conceived and badly put together; being negotiated from different stand points and asking for different increases for different trades laid itself open to confusion and complication. It revealed the weakness in the organisation of the FEST which should have realised that such a clumsy approach was doomed to failure, but instead of sorting out a clear cut demand and direct negotiating point, it shrouded itself in ambiguous proposals and then got its own facts wrong. The marine engineers, being an unofficial strike, lacked any authority and would probably have been much less significant but for the co-incidence of the shipyard trades' similar demands.

The success of the boilerscalers is far more difficult to interpret than the failure of the shipyard workers. Why was the Court of Arbitration suddenly filled with compassion for these labourers? Their case may have been eloquently put by Ernest Bevin, but Bevin also spoke on behalf of the shipyard trades. The wage rate before the increase was exceptionally low, and boilerscalers in London, Liverpool, Hull and a number of other ports were paid a higher rate for similar work. It was common knowledge that cleaning boilers on turnround was a short duration occupation, rarely providing a full week's work, but this fact was not taken into account where other shipyard workers' earnings were concerned. Had boilerscalers or blackgangs been included in either the shipyard or docks settlements their award would have been different. In the event, because a new labour category was created for them, and because there were very few employed in Southampton, the low earning potential seems to have been considered by the Court in this instance. Above all, having avoided the inclusion of these workers in the agreements covering shipyard trades, the SEF was not called upon to exert pressure to uphold their low rate status.

The seamen's disputes, as already seen, were unlikely to succeed. The stewards' strike was ill-judged and ill-timed, although industrial action was a recognised method of protesting against wage reductions. The amalgamation of the stewards and the BSU proved to be a mistake and unhelpful to labour relations, partly through the initial pique of the union side and subsequently through the intransigence of the employers. Unfortunately, a mere fraction of a scattered workforce, without even adequate representation on a joint board, was unlikely to prevail against the Shipping Federation and a much larger union which made its employment regulations more or less according to employers' wishes.

The rivalry between certain union officials and the more politically-minded Trades Council highlighted a division in labour affairs which had not been apparent from local sources prior to the general strike. Some unions refrained from affiliating to the Trades Council for most of the period which caused some dissatisfaction within the Council, but apart from the NUR they were not unions with a large local membership. One of the main protagonists in the altercations on the general strike was Dan Hillman of the TGWU, which was always represented on the Trades Council, but which did not always take note of its requests. The intention of both factions was to make the best possible local use of the strike and a clash of personalities may well have contributed to the argument. However the differences over who should control labour administration during the strike probably made

little difference to its conduct or local outcome.

The general strike clearly marked a turning point in Trade Union influence in Southampton. As elsewhere membership declined and funds were reduced after it. More decisive, however, was the lesson learned that strike action was not always worth the sacrifices which had to be made. Even in 1927 and 1928, which were reasonably prosperous years, shipyard workers could not be provoked into striking when their wage demand was rejected. The furthest men were prepared to commit themselves after 1926 was to put embargoes on certain types of work and overtime. Although a few minor skirmishes occurred in the following years, not until after the second war was there another large scale strike by Southampton port workers.

* * * *

The final section of this chapter examines labour relations by analysing the disputes in shipping and shipbuilding from the information provided by the MOL Gazette. The six ports or districts already looked at in the earlier chapters are used again here, but for its own statistical purposes the MOL divided London into Thames and southeast. The exact areas were not defined in the Gazette, but London Thames included the PLA and some of the docks and wharves down river, and the southeast covered the lower end of the river including Tilbury and Gravesend. Some of the disputes in the northwest involved workers in the whole Merseyside area, and others were recorded as arising only in Liverpool, so these were also separated in the Gazette; likewise the port of Glasgow and the larger area of Clydeside, of which Glasgow is part.

The trade disputes listed each month involved more than ten workers, but the number of men and the duration of the stoppage were sometimes given as estimates, and sometimes the details were omitted.

Table 56 shows the number of strikes by trade or category of worker, and it can be seen that dockworkers had by far the largest total of stoppages. However, only one of these was an official national strike.

Table 56. Comparison of strikes and lockouts by trade categories in selected ports, 1919-1938.

	Southampton	London Thames	London & S.E.	Liverpool	Merseyside	Glasgow	Clydeside	N.E. Coast	Humberside	Bristol Channel	TOTAL
Dockers - General Cargo	2	3	13	5	11	6	8	5	8	8	69
Dockers - Specialist	-	1	7	-	1	2	-	1	1	-	13
Lightermen, Watermen and Bargees	-	1	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	6
Tugboatmen	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	-	-	6
Joiners	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
Plumbers #	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Painters	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Shipwrights	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
Shipyard Workers General	3	2	3	2	2	2	5	3	2	3	27
Boilermakers	2	4	1	1	4	2	7	13	1	1	36
Electricans	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	5
Marine Engineers	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	-	2	21
Engineer Apprentices	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Seafarers	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	37
Boilerscalers	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	19	20	36	17	32	19	33	32	16	18	242

Source: MOL Gazette.

\# The source for the plumbers' strike was the Minutes of the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation, and in fairness to Southampton and the plumbers it should be noted that Southampton was not the only port where labour was withdrawn. Two shipyards on the Clyde also stopped work briefly.

Dockstrikes were sometimes confined to a single port, and even to a portion of the work force within a port. The majority of these disputes were in London and Mersey, where the majority of the dockers were, but it is interesting that fewer disputes occurred in the area of London docks

worked by the PLA, where the preference men enjoyed more regular employment. This implies that labour relations were smoother in the PLA than in the Ocean Shipping Companies, and that there were fewer arguments about work practices and better acceptance of port rules. The largest number of strikes in a single port occurred in London and Southeast, where men worked for many different employers, all of whom were in business to make a profit.[66] Strikes by specialist dockers, for example, grain and timber porters, and lightermen have been listed separately where they were given separately by the MOL, but they were all dockers, and their disputes considerably increase the number of London strikes.

Bristol's dock strike record is surprising, bearing in mind the efficiency of labour management which we are led to believe was a feature of the port. The disputes were often small affairs, but nevertheless, there was more unrest than might have been expected, because its strike total equals that of Hull.[67]

Southampton was only involved in the national strike and the few days' stoppage in 1929 previously mentioned. The good relations between management and dock labour which study of the port has shown, appear to be borne out by the strike record.

Among the shipbuilding trades the boilermakers exceeded all others in the number of disputes recorded. The large work force of boilermakers and their method of working were contributory factors. Piecework could be a system which provided a good income, but it depended on individual port agreements and there was much scope for argument. There seems to have been a tradition of aggression and a more lively response to union activity from boilermakers.

Whereas dock strikes were widely spread among all ports, except Southampton, it was only the shipbuilding areas of the northeast coast and Clydeside which were seriously troubled by the boilermakers.

A significant number of stoppages was recorded by the marine engineers, but the total is boosted because so many ports were involved in each strike. This was also the reason for the high total of seamen's strikes, but two of the four stoppages by seamen were of short duration and involved very few men.

As described earlier in the chapter, joiners were a difficult body of workers in Southampton, but their disputes all occurred between 1919 and 1921. The joiners' district secretary remained a hard bargainer, but as a member of the Craft Unions Committee in later years, rather than on behalf of his own trade alone.

The other shipyard trades, that is those both shown and not shown[68] in Table 56, were not disruptive elements on their own, but that did not

Table 57. Comparison of strikes and lockouts by trade categories in selected ports, as percentages of each port's total, 1919-38.

	Southampton %	London Thames %	London & S.E. %	Liverpool %	Merseyside %	Glasgow %	Clydeside %	N.E. Coast %	Humberside %	Bristol Channel %	TOTAL %
Dockers - General Cargo	10.5	15.0	36.1	29.4	34.3	31.5	24.2	15.6	50.0	44.4	28.5
Dockers - Specialist	-	5.0	19.4	-	3.1	10.5	-	3.1	6.2	-	5.3
Lightermen, Watermen and Bargees	-	5.0	8.3	-	6.2	-	-	-	-	-	2.4
Tugboatmen	5.2	-	-	5.8	3.1	-	3.0	6.2	-	-	2.5
Joiners	15.7	10.0	2.7	5.8	3.1	5.2	3.0	3.1	6.2	5.5	5.3
Plumbers	5.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4
Painters	-	5.0	2.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.8
Shipwrights	-	-	2.7	-	6.2	-	-	-	-	-	1.2
Shipyard Workers General	15.7	10.0	8.3	11.7	6.2	10.5	15.1	9.3	12.5	16.6	11.1
Boilermakers	10.5	20.0	2.7	5.8	12.5	10.5	21.2	40.6	6.2	5.5	14.8
Electricians	5.2	-	-	5.8	3.1	-	3.0	3.1	-	-	2.0
Marine Engineers	10.5	10.0	5.5	11.7	6.2	10.5	12.1	9.3	-	11.1	8.6
Engineer Apprentices	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.0	-	-	-	0.8
Seafarers	21.0	20.0	11.1	23.5	12.5	21.0	12.1	9.3	18.7	16.6	15.2
Boilerscalers	-	-	-	-	3.1	-	-	-	-	-	0.4
Percentage of total strikes	7.8	8.2	14.8	7.0	13.2	7.8	13.6	13.2	6.6	7.4	100.0
		23.1*		20.2*		21.4*					

Source: Calculated from Table 56.

* Percentage total of the whole port or district.

mean they did not take full part in local negotiations. The district secretaries of the plumbers, painters and ironfounders were particularly prominent in Southampton.

In Table 57 the strikes by trade categories are shown as percentages of the total strikes in each port, and also of the combined ports/districts

where they were shown separately. Although Liverpool on its own appears to have been remarkably stable the port was also included in the strikes listed under Merseyside. So, it can be seen that London and Liverpool were each involved in nearly a quarter of the strikes which occurred during the period. The situation is not quite so clear for Clydeside where there were many shipyards working, and the MOL Gazette was not explicit as to whether or not Glasgow men were included in all stoppages.

Overall Bristol, Hull and Southampton show very low percentages of the total strikes in all major ports and districts, Southampton being slightly higher than the other two. The majority of Southampton's labour difficulties came from the seamen, with joiners as the next most disruptive trade. In Bristol and Hull seafarers were the second highest category, each port having been involved of three strikes, but dockworkers were overwhelmingly the most unsettled labour group. Both ports had more dockworkers than Southampton, Hull considerably more, but reports from the MOL and the trade union regarding registration and organisation in these ports made Hull and Bristol complete opposites. Hull experienced major disturbances through lack of organisation and for much of the period the register of port workers was non-operational; Bristol, on the other hand, was said to have a smooth-running system of transference of labour to the outlying ports, a steadily decreasing register to match more closely to the work on offer, and more consistent regularity of employment. Most of the disputes concerned wages issues, that is, those dealing with special rates for certain work. The docks manager was much opposed to these extra payments,[69] and perhaps abrasive labour relations developed as a result of this.

The port employers in Southampton were never willing to concede extra payments, but as well as the small number of dockers, which made the labour situation less volatile than in ports with several thousands of dockworkers, the work of the local joint negotiating committee was extremely successful in dealing with matters of a potentially inflammatory nature.

The general dispute has been omitted from these calculations as its origin lay outside the port industries.

Table 58 gives a summary of disputes in the combined trade groups. This shows that when the individual disputes by separate trades in the shipbuilding and repairing industry are added together they exceed the dockworkers' total, and represent 45.8 per cent of the total disputes. The dockworkers, both general and special, combined with lightermen account for 36.3 per cent; and the seafarers, including the tugboatmen, only represent 17.7 per cent of the total disputes in the port industries.

Table 58. Comparison of disputes in the three trade groups - 1919-1938.

	Southampton	London Thames	London & S.E.	Liverpool	Merseyside	Glasgow	Clydeside	N.E. Coast	Humberside	Bristol Channel	TOTAL
Operating Ports and Docks											
Number of Disputes	2	5	23	5	14	8	8	6	9	8	88
Port Total Disputes	19	20	36	17	32	19	33	32	16	18	242
% of Total Disputes	10.5	25.0	63.8	29.4	43.7	42.1	24.2	18.7	56.2	44.4	36.3
Combined port/district			50.00		38.7		30.7				
Seafarers including tugboatmen											
Number of Disputes	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	3	3	43
Port Total Disputes	19	20	36	17	32	19	33	32	16	18	242
% of Total Disputes	26.3	20.0	11.1	29.4	15.6	21.0	15.1	15.6	18.7	16.6	17.7
Combined port/district			14.2		20.4		17.3				
Shipbuilding and Repairing											
Number of Disputes	12	11	9	7	13	7	20	21	4	7	111
Port Total Disputes	19	21	36	17	32	19	33	32	16	18	242
% of Total Disputes	63.1	55.0	25.0	41.1	40.6	36.8	60.6	65.6	25.0	38.8	45.8
Combined port/district			35.7		40.8		51.9				

Source: Calculated from Table 56.

There were instances in Southampton when stoppages of work involving less than ten men occurred, and these were not recorded by the MOL. If such disputes were few and short, as in Southampton, they did little damage to overall relations, being confined to one employer. If, however, they were frequent and not easily settled, the cumulative effect on a port's labour relations might have been detrimental.

Undoubtedly, if the many interruptions to production caused by demarcation disputes were added to the port totals, then all ports and districts employing shipyard workers would show large increases in the totals of that trade group. In most cases these were "private" affairs, and the problems in one district were rarely relevant to another, and the

settlements were seldom applicable elsewhere.

In all ports the majority of strikes occurred before 1926 and there were no national strikes in the port industries after that date. Amongst trade unionists there was general disillusion following the general strike, and the trade union movement which, up to that point, had been growing in strength, suffered a set-back. Membership decreased, partly through apathy, and partly because of difficulties encountered in keeping up weekly contributions. The 1927 Trade Union Act, which restricted the use of pickets in industrial disputes, made strike action less effective and uncertain as a weapon against unsatisfactory conditions, but trade unions were not in a position to make demands, or finance large scale industrial action, even after the second Labour government repealed the Act.

Workers, therefore, often took matters into their own hands with the help of branch officers, and small localised stoppages occurred. On the whole there was a preferred tendency to disrupt output by embargoes on work involving the offending conditions, which included frequent embargoes on overtime.

It is a measure of Southampton's success in local negotiations that such interruptions were the lowest of all the ports examined. However, its strike record prior to 1926 was slightly greater than either Hull or Bristol, so the reduction also marks a change of attitude.

After the demise of the Southampton-based seamen's union this trade group offered no further local resistance, merely supporting colleagues in Liverpool for a few days in 1929. The SCESEA showed no softening of attitude towards maintaining minimum labour at the lowest possible cost in order to keep work in the port. They were troubled by demarcation and overtime embargoes, but in general local trade unionists accepted that the main drawback to improvements in wages and conditions was the shortage of work, and refrained from taking the ultimate step even when negotiations broke down after a year of endeavouring to level up their wage rates in 1927/28.

There was no apparent change of attitude in the PEA, but having established their port rules in 1923 and been without the presence of a union area secretary for some of the time, there were fewer demands made by the docks' branch of the TGWU. The national standing on dockwork by the union was one of tolerance and moderation, while Bevin tried valiantly to make progress on decasualisation. Southampton dockworkers, who had not disrupted work for more than half a day on isolated occasions since 1924, and then only by a few men at a time, were, nevertheless, prepared to strike in support of their wage claim in 1937. As previously stated, the good labour relations owed much to the local joint committee.

1. Southampton Times, December 11, 1920. Matt Connor's attitude is interesting here in view of the later insinuations that he was an extremist, influenced by the Left. He was certainly a leader, but often found in the role of a moderate pacifier.
2. MOL Gazette, March 1922.
3. MOL Gazette, June 1922, estimated figures. The number of men indirectly affected by the dispute continued to increase throughout its duration. July 17,000; August 20,000; September 24,000; October 30,000.
4. The special circumstances of this trade and its dispute are described in J.E. Mortimer, History of the Boilermakers' Society, Vol.II 1906-1939, London, 1982.
5. Times, August 16, 1923.
6. J.E. Mortimer, op. cit. p.140.
7. The significance of the AEU dispute and its aftermath are described in J.B. Jeffreys, The Story of the Engineers, 1800-1945, Lawrence and Wishart, 1945.
8. PEA Minutes, January 7, 1924.
9. Times, February 21, 1924.
10. F. Lindop refers to communist party efforts "to create a mass united front organisation of trade unionists," but it was also an effort by the Left's supporters to oust Bevin and his moderate colleagues and gain control of the TGWU. The communists had not favoured the formation of the breakaway union which resulted from the strike. According to Lindop they preferred "the boring from within strategy." F. Lindop, Seamen and Dockers' Trade Union Militancy in the 1920s. Society for the Study of Labour History, Bulletin 38, 1979.
11. PEA Minutes, February 16, 1924.
12. Times, February 20, 1924. Southampton dockers took no part at all in the unofficial strike of 1923, and they even agreed to accept ships diverted from London.
13. Sir David Shackleton was elected to Parliament between 1900 and 1906 in a Bye-election as a Labour Representation Committee candidate. Sir Lynden Macassey, op. cit. p.22.
14. Times, February 22, 1924.
15. Goulden was district secretary of the ASW which had many shipyard joiners, and the railway was part of the dock system, although not a port industry.
16. Confirmed by Thomas Lewis in his report to the TUC, General Strike

File - Southampton. TUC Library; also S.R. Co. Docks and Marine Committee, PRO: RAIL 645 13; and Southampton Daily Echo, May 5,1926.

17. The problem seems to have been a failure of communications.
18. National Union of Foundryworkers, Executive Council Minutes, May 2-7 1926. MRC: MSS 41/NUFW/1/10.
19. Southampton Daily Echo, May 4 and 5, 1926.
20. A deciding factor here may have been that the union was so short of funds it stopped paying superannuation and gave up its affiliation to the TUC, the General Federation of Trade Unions and the Labour Party in 1926. David Dougan, The Shipwrights. The History of the Shipconstructors' and Shipwrights' Association 1882-1963, Newcastle, 1975. p.218.
21. Alan Clinton, Trade Union Rank and File, Manchester University Press, 1977. pp.29-30.
22. General Strike Files - Southampton. TUC Library.
23. The negotiators were Hillman and Vincent. TUC Library and Hampshire Advertiser, May 8, 1926.
24. Southampton Daily Echo, May 10 and 11, 1926.
25. Southampton Daily Echo, May 4, 1926 and TUC Library.
26. TUC Library.
27. Southampton Daily Echo, May 10, 1926 and Hampshire Advertiser, May 8, 1926.
28. The Port Employers' Association was still endeavouring to recoup its expenditure on volunteers from the government the following year.
29. Hampshire Advertiser, May 8, 1926.
30. Southampton Daily Echo, May 13, 1926.
31. Southampton Port Registration Committee Minutes, May 21, 1926. PRO: LAB 2 1050 ET/3995/1931.
32. The TUC was poised to bring in the shipbuilders and engineers when the strike collapsed, but large scale communications were a problem.
33. Hampshire Advertiser, March 15, 1926.
34. Southampton Daily Echo, May 17, 1926.
35. The foundryworkers, the boilermakers, the shipwrights, the transport workers, the painters and the plumbers were all short of funds and the AEU was in debt to the Co-operative Society and J.H. Wilson, NSFU. H.J. Fyrth and Henry Collins, The Foundry Workers, A Trade Union History, Manchester 1959, p.183; J.E. Mortimer, op. cit. D. Dougan, op. cit. p.219; Bevin Papers, TGWU Library; Painters' Executive Council Minutes, MRC: MSS 78/NASOHSPD/1/1/1/-43; UOPA, Executive Council Minutes, EETPU Archives, Hayes, J.O. French, Plumbers in Unity, History of the Plumbing Trades Union, 1865-1965, p.128; and

J.B. Jeffreys, op. cit. p.232.

36. Hampshire Advertiser, May 8 and 15, 1926.
37. Southampton Daily Echo, May 18 and 28, 1926. Tramwaymen who had been on strike were kept out of employment by the Borough Council, principally by S.G. Kimber.
38. SCESEA Minutes, February 11, 1924.
39. SCESEA Minutes, February 18, 1924.
40. SCESEA Minutes, February 18, 1924.
41. Sir Andrew Duncan confirmed that Southampton engineers were the only ones in the federated districts to lose the last 10s. SCESEA Minutes, February 18, 1924.
42. Southampton Times, March, 1924. The women's opinion on the matter might be interesting.
43. MOL Gazette, February, 1924.
44. MOL Gazette, May 1924.
45. SCESEA Minutes, March 19, 1924.
46. Southampton Times, May 17, 1924.
47. Southampton Times, May 17, 1924.
48. PEA Minutes, March 13, 1924.
49. SCESEA Minutes, March 27, 1924.
50. MOL Gazette, April, 1924.
51. Southampton Times, May 17, 1924.
52. Southampton Times, May 24, 1919
53. F. Lindop, A History of Seamen's Trade Unionism to 1929. London M.Phil., 1972 p.190.
54. Basil Mogridge, op. cit. p.396 n6.
55. PEA Minutes, May 19, 1921.
56. PEA Minutes, June 6, 1921.
57. Southampton Daily Echo, April 7, 1923.
58. Southampton Daily Echo, April 7, 1923.
59. From the beginning of the strike Union Castle had five liners held up by the stoppage of work in the Cape. This number increased during the strike.
60. L.H. Powell, op. cit. p.13. Powell claims the Federation supplied over 17,000 men locally and transferred nearly 3,500 from one district to another. p.33. See also Edward Tupper, op. cit. p.274.
61. Southampton Times, September 26, 1925.
62. That portion of a seamen's wages paid directly by the shipping line to the person nominated by the employee.
63. Southampton Times, October 24, 1925.
64. This dispute stemmed from a much larger issue which was an attempt

by the SEF to create a class of ships' welders to do previously established work at a lower rate. New techniques in welding also introduced new work. The ships' welder scheme was abandoned owing to worker opposition.

65. See T.J. Connelly, The Woodworkers 1860-1960, London, 1960.
66. The Port of London Authority was a non-profit making organisation.
67. Humberside also included Goole, Immingham and the fishing port of Grimsby.
68. The trades not shown did not appear in the Gazette as having taken industrial action individually.
69. D. Ross-Johnson, Bristol Docks manager, letter to the Times, July 25, 1923.

CHAPTER 9

The increasing national importance of Southampton's passenger traffic was the most striking feature of the port between the wars, and the dominance of this type of shipping influenced the other port industries and much of its commercial business as well. However, the South African connection, its principal source of imports, was long-established in Southampton and should not be attributed solely to the growth of inter-war passenger traffic. Nevertheless, it was the passenger trade which partly determined which employers used the port and, to some extent, determined the goods imported and exported. Freight shippers were not attracted to the port because warehousing and goods handling facilities were sparse and the southern port did not offer any particular advantages, either geographical or financial, over ports nearer to the manufacturing regions of the U.K. This was not the case with transatlantic mail and passenger services, for which Southampton was ideally situated with Europe being easily accessible and London only a short train journey distant. The development in ship construction to larger ships, which had begun before the war, also encouraged passengers to turn from Liverpool to Southampton where the large liners could be accommodated more conveniently for passenger embarkation. Shipping companies, which preferred to separate their freight and passenger trades, were thus enabled to dock their freighters at Liverpool and London and berth their huge passenger liners at Southampton. The type of cargo brought to Southampton was extremely varied, but it was, nevertheless, partly restricted to goods suitable for stowage in liners within a limited period of dock working time. As a result, passenger shipping exerted its influence over the entire work of the port, including the shipyards.

Southampton's shipyards were not concerned with the construction of large vessels and most construction work was for the Admiralty, foreign governments and small vessel owners. However, two thirds of the work force in the shipyards was engaged in the maintenance and repair of Southampton's shipping, rather than in ship-building, and the work of this branch of the industry was derived from the enormous tonnage of passenger liners and troop carriers using the port.

Thus seafarers and ship repairers were of greater significance to the port than dock labourers who were few in number and who relied largely on the South African trade and the seasonal import business of the Southern Railway Company.

The Southern Railway Company carried more passengers than any other single employer, but the bulk of its passengers travelling to and from

Europe used the Port of Dover, as seen in Chapter 1 (p.22). However, even if continental and Channel Island passengers were only a small percentage of Southampton's total passenger shipping, the Southampton Docks and Marine Department was the Railway Company's largest and most important freight handling depot, and it made a substantial contribution to the employment of dock labour.

* * * *

The 1914-18 war followed a period of upheaval in industrial relations in which port industries round the country had demonstrated in support of demands for improved wages and conditions of employment. The international crisis eventually brought a temporary calm to the surface, but there remained an underlying current of mistrust and dissatisfaction which threatened to erupt into industrial disturbance.

The government's priorities were to increase productivity and stabilise industrial relations. Increased wages helped to minimise disturbances and balance the rising cost of living, but a shortage of labour as men joined the armed services, posed a threat to productivity despite the declaration of reserved occupations in port industries. One of the problems was that skilled and experienced men left for active war service, leaving unskilled and less efficient workers to fill their places. Output actually slowed down temporarily, particularly where manual skills rather than machine minding had to be learned, such as in the docks. Nevertheless, the provision of sufficient men to work in the ports was deemed to be a priority and the necessary skills were eventually acquired.

An efficient supply of merchant seamen was essential to enable transportation of men and supplies. Pre-war passenger shipping had already established a large number of seafarers in Southampton, and while they were fewer than those employed in Liverpool and London at that time, they gave valuable service both in the Royal Navy and the mercantile marine. Merchant seamen had been involved in a national strike and sporadic industrial agitation before the war, but the creation of the National Maritime Board, the joint body set up to regulate and distribute the supply of men, spread its influence of appeasement over the seamen's leader, J. Havelock Wilson, and his previously militant attitude became one of obliging co-operation. His dislike of the Shipping Federation and employing class was superceded by his dislike of the enemy - whether the enemy was an international aggressor, a political opponent, or a rival trade union.

Merchant seamen were subject to naval discipline and this, combined with the isolation of their working lives and the lack of collective union influence, prevented large scale demonstrations of discontent. There was a wartime sense of loyalty to king, country and ships' crew similar to the loyalty found in the Royal Navy. Seamen had a closer personal contact with employers' representatives than their working class colleagues on land because of their daily contact with ships' officers in the common cause of sailing the ship. Disturbances and disobedience by seamen occurred in port rather than at sea, except for isolated incidents.[1] Crews large and small operated according to a strict, unvarying discipline while at sea, and although this applied in peace and war alike, during the war with many merchant ships under the control of the Admiralty and many eventually sailing under the naval protection of convoys, the need for obedience and compliance was strengthened.

Southampton's seafarers included not only the crews on ocean-going steamers, but also the home trade seamen carrying men, munitions and supplies across the Channel, and the tug and ferry crews who undertook additional and often dangerous salvage work. They believed that their hard work and valour would be rewarded over and above wartime wage increases and they anticipated some official recognition of their service after the war in the form of improved conditions. A reduction in the standard hours of work for all classes of seamen was one of the most desirable courses, but union representation on the NMB failed to defeat the Shipping Federation lobby which viewed hours of employment as an international matter requiring agreement and ratification by governments. Indeed, the international competition for post war shipping, where over-capacity of world tonnage was one of the biggest threats to shipping companies, made it difficult to take remedial action to improve seamen's conditions if such action increased costs. The NSFU did not pursue a policy of militant aggression in order to further the cause of its members, but in the circumstances of the interwar years it required very strong opposition to overcome employers' resistance to expensive changes which worsened their competitive position. Unfortunately, the immediate post war boom in shipping did not last long enough to give either the men or the smaller unions an opportunity to seek improvements actively. The strike by tug crews in Southampton and elsewhere in 1919 demonstrated the attitude of the Federation side of the NMB to hours and remuneration. Post war advancement was not forthcoming and Southampton seafarers, few of whom were members of either the NSFU or the Cooks' or Stewards' Union, looked unsuccessfully to the British Seafarers' Union to further their interests.

Land-based workers in ship-building and repair were within the scope of collective action and were more easily influenced by trade unionists, industrial militancy propaganda, and by anti-war extremists. However, increased wage rates, particularly for low paid labourers, and full time, regular employment with overtime and war bonus payments, dispelled potential strife. Bonus schemes and piecework rates were paid to encourage greater speed and efficiency and increase output. Workers had no objection to the increased earnings these schemes brought, but union officials resented any scheme which called for more effort from the men whilst giving greater profits to employers. They also objected to bonus rates being computed separately from time rates so that overtime could be calculated on the standard rate rather than the enhanced rate. Bonus schemes and differentials which were accepted during the war were not regarded then by either side as permanent arrangements. After the war overtime and piecework negotiations resulted in much difficulty and delay to production, particularly among the shipyard crafts where union officials and men were often divided. Later dissensions of this nature were aggravated by inequalities in the distribution of work which reflected the severe economic recession in the industry generally and the inconsistency of available work in a ship repair port like Southampton. For the duration of the war, however, shipyard workers were willing to respect the industrial truce which the unions had agreed. Union leaders in shipbuilding and engineering were eager to safeguard and strengthen their own unions' position. The national executives of these unions were not in general aggressive extremists, but there were militants among the officials. There was also an independent tradition that did not work in favour of multi-union collectivism.

The shortage of skilled labour in shipbuilding and engineering during the war led to the dilution of trades by semi-skilled machine operators and men who had not served trade apprenticeships. Trade union acceptance of dilution on the understanding that the arrangement was temporary did not prevent much dissatisfaction both during and after the war, particularly in engineering. It may have been the use of diluted labour which decided the Southampton marine engineers not to follow the wages and conditions of their own federation, but rather to elect to follow the shipbuilders, despite the anomalies this caused.

The labour shortage in port transport also made its mark on dock employment. During the early war years the problem was one of uneven distribution rather than simply a shortage of men, because surplus labour continued to exist at docks where requirements were low, while demand could not be met at others. It was the need to improve labour distribu-

tion and maximise its utilisation that led to the setting up of the port labour registers which were to have a long-term effect on port transport. The registers provided a means of controlling the supply of labour (although not the total quantity), and also brought about the resumption of interest in decasualising dock labour. It did not do so more effectively, but at least registration encompassed wider scope for action than had been the case before the war.

Man power shortages actually went some way towards changing the attitude of dock labourers to their employment. Firstly, the regular availability of work and consequent regular earnings, which were previously unknown to many, began to change the traditional habit of only seeking work on an irregular basis. The second motive for change was brought about by the creation of a Battalion of mobile dock labourers who could be called upon to handle goods anywhere, on a military footing. The Transport Workers' Battalion (TWB) posed a threat to any docker whose attendance was irregular because he was liable to find himself ousted in his absence and replaced by a Battalion man. The Battalion also weakened the docker's resistance to mobility, at least as far as this was possible, given the enormous variety of cargoes to handle. The war certainly did not bring about sweeping changes in the behaviour of dockworkers, but they gradually acquired a greater willingness to seek more regular work. Unfortunately, the overloaded post-war registers and casual fringe which continued to attach itself to the industry, together with the trade recession, prevented the achievement of that regularity of work which could have solved many of the waterside problems.

The wartime measures which had been taken to provide sufficient labour for increased production had transferred men to areas of demand and trained them in occupations where most needed. Although of benefit to the war effort this added to the difficulties of the transition period in 1919. At the same time as the cutback in war production and resultant reduction of jobs, demobilised servicemen began to return to the civilian employment market. After the disruption of their lives during the war rehabilitation was made even more difficult where there were no jobs to return to or where men believed others had been given their old jobs unfairly. Those men from the TWB who were permitted to remain as civilian dockworkers in 1919 were amongst the causes of anguish to ex-servicemen. The Dockers' Union and some discerning officials of the MOL had forseen such difficulties early in the war and had discussed the problem, but no steps were taken to avert a return to pre-war surplus labour levels in the docks. It was more by chance than by official planning that registration placed some restriction on the numbers.

The out-of-work donation relieved the government of the trauma of an immediate crisis, and also relieved the tension of those who feared a revolution, but industry was left to find its own solutions to the labour problem, and the country was obliged to witness unprecedented workers' militancy during the next few years as a result. Despite the ebb and flow of industrial action as concessions were granted to workers and then clawed back by employers, unstable labour relations continued in the post-war era reaching a peak in the general strike of 1926.

The branch leaders of most of Southampton's shipyard unions were committed to a policy of direct action to achieve their own ends, and were equally willing to support workers in other trades and regions. Furthermore, they were able to carry the majority of local workers along with them. Southampton dock workers, on the other hand, were more reluctant to stop work and refrained from joining the unofficial strike of 1923, whereas the seamen were leaders of industrial action in shipping spheres. Their object, like the shipyard workers', was to improve their wages and conditions, but there is no doubt that they were partially motivated by their opposition to the NSFU.

After 1926 direct action in the port industries was confined to small groups of militant workers. As trade unionism lost its impetus following the general strike membership declined, funds diminished and no large scale national strikes were called. The manner of worker demonstrations changed from all out strikes to embargoes on specific areas of work and procedure. In Southampton the source of shipyard malcontent, preciptated by work shortage, was associated with job demarcation. Neither employers nor union executives had very much control over members who demonstrated in this way and disruptions to output continued after 1926 with much the same frequency as before.

As the rundown from the war economy proceeded, the port industries, including Southampton, were severely beset by job shortages and labour upheavals. Indeed, because a large proportion of the population depended on the port industries and because the disruption to normal trading was prolonged, Southampton seems to have suffered badly. Housing and food were also in short supply at the end of the war and town rents were regarded by a number of the Borough Council (mostly Labour members) as being too high a percentage of average weekly income. There is no doubt that many families were unable to manage without recourse to the Guardians. Families of men employed casually in the shipyards where war work was coming to an end, and in the docks, where the pre-war level of trade was not immediately resumed, were particularly hard hit. As in other towns and industrial areas dole queues and food queues became

familiar sights.

Employers were not overly sympathetic to the workers' difficulties and whilst a number of prominent employers were charitable and generous in their efforts on behalf of institutions which provided for the needs of orphans, the sick and the homeless, they were much less concerned about the welfare of families whose bread winners could not obtain sufficient employment to provide for the needs of their children. Employers defended their right to employ whomsoever they wished and they were not concerned whether ex-servicemen or disbanded TWB men were left unemployed; docks foremen sought out the experienced and the familiar and they were not willing to restrict their selection to union members and registered tallyholders. Ex-servicemen and the minority unions of general workers believed they were discriminated against. Protests from both sections were, however, short-lived, and it was not long before 'unemployed ex-servicemen' became simply 'unemployed'.

Employers were on the defensive, looking for ways to maintain output levels and hours of work, always conscious of the advantages of reducing expenditure. The decision by the SCESEA to investigate the benefits of combination was echoed by the newly formed PEA. However, the latter, like dock employers in other ports, wanted a return to the old order and used the National Association to defend the retention of individual port arrangements against trade union demands for national settlements. Despite this, collective bargaining agreements were made shortly after the war, even if they had certain superimposed local arrangements, as with the docks' national wages agreement.

Fears of the end-of-war flood tide of labour were expressed in the Southampton press and not without cause, as became apparent in the 1921 slump. At this time the Dockers' Union was exerting pressure to remove NUGW members from the docks, and in so doing they, no doubt, unofficially assisted in deciding who should obtain work and who should apply for unemployment benefit. There was also allegedly a lack of interest in the welfare of Southampton dockers by their union officials around this time, but the ill feelings of dockworkers were probably as much complaints about the shortage of work as about neglect by the District Secretary.

There were a number of forward-looking and sometimes radical thinkers in government and industry who were counter-balanced by reactionary leaders. However, life did not revert to pre-war conditions as had been widely anticipated. Among the reasons which prevented this were the economic difficulties created by the re-arrangement of boundaries having wiped out some of the old trading markets, and by Germany and Russia having been excluded from international trade; world currency was also in

disarray; post-war protection policies of some foreign governments and the isolationism of the USA forestalled economic expansion; and the management of international economy was less than adequate to generate a speedy recovery.

On the local front life also changed and, despite Southampton's old guard of shipping company executives, and Conservative MPs and Council members, the old social order was not restored. The number of Labour representatives on the Borough Council increased and eventually Labour MPs were elected in both constituencies.[2] Trade Union membership increased in the town and even if the members were not dynamic in their support, local branch officials brought new zest to their negotiations.

The post war pace of technological developments quickened, particularly in ship-building and engineering, and the diminishing dependence on coal was not only seen in industry but also in shipping. The conversion of liners to oil-fired steam power had far-reaching effects in reducing employment of ships' firemen and coal bunkering labourers, and this alteration in manning levels made a considerable impact on Southampton and Liverpool. Those ports had engaged the greatest number of firemen on the coal-powered liners and when they were declared redundant it was difficult for them to obtain alternative employment.

Industry was no longer dependent on skilled labour which was, of course, to the advantage of the semi-skilled. However, their emancipation aggravated job demarcation and increased tension and agitation. Dilution had largely been carried out in engineering, but jobs in ship-building and repair were also jealously guarded by certain trades. The fact that so many skills were required to co-exist was one of the factors involved, but it was not the only reason for demarcation difficulties. One of the main features of the modern era is the speed of 20th century technological development, and the changing techniques and materials used in shipbuilding and ship-repair had much bearing on the job demarcation situation, often causing the misinterpretation of agreements between unions and management. Employers seemed inclined to support the larger unions in demarcation struggles, or at least, those with the most local members who were likely to cause the greatest disruption to work.

The war-time registration of dock labour changed the procedure for engaging labour, and narrowed the choice of labourers available for half daily selection. In effect, particularly in Southampton, where less than 3,000 registered dockers were involved, it probably made little difference to the men who regularly obtained most work. Since tallies were awarded in Southampton to men chosen by employers and TGWU, these were most likely to be the men called up by the foremen, and no doubt, were also those

called before there was a register. The relationship between foreman and labourers may not have changed greatly despite the external influence of the Port Registration Committee. Men less frequently selected, such as the non-specialist quay workers, even when registered, were those who depended most on unemployment benefit to make up the major portion of their income. At the opposite end of the scale some of the regular dockers were in the fortunate position of being able to supplement already reasonable earnings with unemployment benefit which enabled them to retain their former pattern of part week working from choice.

In the post registration era men without tallies were not in the docks labour market in the same way as dockers before the war, except where there was no register or other means of control and restriction. However, because there was sometimes work available for usually surplus labour, even if it was largely seasonal, the casual fringe continued to call themselves dock labourers and to attend calls. In London and Liverpool these men were numbered by the thousand, and together with other ports' unregistered men and the registered unemployed, they created the surplus pools of labour which were so desirable to employers, but which, at the same time, raised so many problems that the solution to casualism was unattainable between the wars.

Registration was disliked by dockworkers, but nevertheless, it came to be generally accepted by the port transport industry, with the exception of the port of Glasgow. Although the Dockers' Union resisted it initially, in favour of a system which could give greater control to the union, eventually the TGWU took advantage of it to accelerate the accomplishment of the closed shop. Claims of 100 per cent union membership in Southampton made by Dan Hillman cannot be substantiated, but even so, MOL officials found that union-appointed men in the port achieved satisfactory levels of work, indicating not only regular attendance of union members, but also success in obtaining work.[3]

During the inter-war period dockwork in Southampton fluctuated in quantity with the rise and fall of passenger numbers. Of course the mail contract liners were obliged to sail even without sufficient passengers and regardless of losses incurred. At such times filling the holds with cargoes could have made a pleasing difference to the shipping lines, and provided work for dockers, but unfortunately large cargoes were not common on the transatlantic route. The port's dockworkers relied heavily on South African imports to fill the gap.

Southampton itself had a few industries which required imported goods, but the hinterland was not one of the south's busy manufacturing regions. Towns with light engineering or manufacturing facilities for

expanding industries, such as electrical appliances and other consumer durables, were extremely thinly scattered. Import requirements for the locality were, therefore, modest, and exports, not being produced locally, were not sent to the port in large quantities. Southampton was wrongly situated to be competitive for the Midlands shipping trade, and both the southeast and the southwest were well supplied by their own ports. However, Southampton was well placed for transhipment which accounted for a large proportion of its imports.[4]

The International Cold Storage Company was available for the storage and distribution of meat, dairy and other chilled produce at its premises on the docks, but its capacity proved to be much greater than the port's ability to supply it. The company's building programme had been based on anticipated expansion of pre-war levels of freight trade, and its targets were never reached. Some commodities were imported for local use, and other for redistribution; some items came in small quantities but were very valuable and required special security in handling, such as silver, specie and silk. The market garden and other fresh produce which came from French ports as well as the Channel Islands was expertly handled by the men engaged for the job and could be transferred into rail transport and on its way to London within hours of arrival. Southampton was ideally situated for this, the Southern Railway Company trade, and handled in the region of 15 per cent of the nation's imports of potatos and 14 per cent of the tomatoes between the wars.

From the re-start of commercial trade after the first war to the closure of the port in the second war the annual quantity of imports rose slightly, so that it was not far below 1913 by the end of the period. However, the only new line to call at the port specifically for discharging cargo was Elders & Fyffes, which brought its first deliveries of bananas in 1931. This area of port trade was disappointing, but the failure to develop Southampton as a cargo port between the wars is really a reflection of the its considerable growth in passengers. The two trades did not mix easily and, undoubtedly, the shipping companies were keen to concentrate these energies separately.

The depression affected shipping and trade in all British ports and the U.S. economic crisis had a temporary but marked backlash in reducing transatlantic passenger transport. It did not, however, change the character of passenger traffic which continued to decrease in Liverpool as it grew in Southampton. It remained a body of largely American travellers who sailed in western and easterly directions during the same months of the year with the maximum flow in each direction being always recorded within the same period each year. Sir Joseph Broodbank, a London port employer, had written as early as July 1920 that it was "understandable

for a port like Southampton to encourage passengers." He believed that "the loss to Liverpool would be sentimental not pecuniary."[5] Southampton and Liverpool were, to some extent, in competition for the North American passenger trade, but the main competitive spirit seems to have been between the journalists of the two ports. The Southampton Times never missed an opportunity to point out to its readers the advantages to the shipping world of a port like Southampton over Liverpool. Rataliatory comments appeared in the Liverpool local press, but whether or not the northwest mourned its lost passengers, Southampton was thankful for them.

Shipping was the port trade which found employment for the greatest number of workers in Southampton. Some 16,000 were insured in the industry in 1929, against 6,500 shipyard workers and 4,000 dockworkers.[6] Being the largest workforce in the port did not make seamen immune to under-employment. The industry was seriously affected by seasonal fluctuations and there were almost always more seamen looking for work than there were berths on vessels. Liner ports suffered from an almost perpetual surfeit of stewards and firemen.

The number of firemen engaged before the war had outnumbered able and ordinary seamen, but conversion to oil fuel created an increasing number of unemployed firemen and trimmers. This in turn contributed to the decline in youth recruitment. During the days of coal there had been opportunities for rapid increase of wages for new entrants in the stoker's department, but because it took four years to reach the status and wage rate of able seaman, boys were more attracted to the opportunities of the semi-skilled factory worker. In the early 1930s Caradog Jones described seafaring for lads as "a blind-alley occupation,"[7] because they were driven by unemployment to look for shore jobs on reaching adulthood.

Comments made by the Southampton Master Mariners' Club in 1929 (see p.248) in this context referred to the poor training facilities offered to boys. The attitude to training and apprenticeship by trade union officials changed somewhat and, in general, these were neglected areas, so that by the late 1930s the shortage of skilled and experienced workers in a number of port trades emerged as a threat to future efficiency. In the dark days of heavy unemployment trade unions had objected to the employment of youths while their members were out of work and the number of boys permitted in some occupations had been restricted. Unions were rightly concerned about members' welfare, just as management had been concerned about the failure to train new operatives, but there was no collaboration between government, employers and unions to introduce long-term planning on youth recruitment, although the MOL was well aware of shortages in shipbuilding by 1935. On board ship a lad, whether he was a

cadet or a bell boy, required the same amount of valuable sleeping space as an experienced hand, and shipping companies were reluctant to take boys to sea unless they were fully occupied. Boys who were taken to sea were usually given too little tuition or study time, which detracted from the cost effectiveness.

Where passengers sailed there was a demand for stewards, but supply almost always outstripped demand in Southampton, where men already seeking work were increased by migrating stewards from Liverpool and Glasgow. This points to a mobility in seafaring which was less apparent and had a much slimmer chance of success in other industries. There was a reluctance among workers in areas of heavy unemployment, such as Wales and the northeast, to uproot their families and move elsewhere in search of work, or to leave their families and look for work on their own. Their skills were not necessarily appropriate outside their own industry, whether that was shipbuilding, mining or steel, and they were not easily adaptable to the new industries. Seamen, on the other hand, could ply their trade on any ship, and whether they were stewards or soup chefs, they could be as much at home on a liner as in a Hotel. Whatever type of seafaring they aspired to, having secured a ship, they could rest assured that their allotment would be paid to their families. They were not accustomed to spending their lives at home, with the exception of brief spells between voyages, so it was no hardship for them to migrate from one port to another when word went round, as it surely did, that work was anticipated in a certain port with a certain shipping line.

The average age of seafarers in Southampton does not appear to have changed during the period. Between the ages of 30 - 40 and even at an earlier age, there was a tendency to give up the wandering life, and seafaring remained an occupation primarily for young men.

Dockers under the age of 25 were less common than those between 30 and 40. Restrictions on recruitment which, in a sense, were imposed by registration, increased the average age of dockworkers generally. There was, however, only a very slight increase in the average age of Southampton's registered dockworkers. The unregistered fringe of casual labourers who were more frequently unemployed, and those obtaining seasonal work, were probably composed of the younger element. However, also on the fringe were the older men who were not selected by any of the port's employers to receive tallies. There were few developments in mechanization between the wars and dock work was still a physically demanding occupation. Men in their middle years were found to be the most suitable. Southampton's criteria for selection, experience and physical fitness, placed the emphasis on the 30 - 50 age group. Sea-

faring experience provided a useful background for dock work, favoured by foremen, and it was an employment category much sought after by sailors and fireroom attendants. Stewards were inclined to leave the sea at a slightly earlier age, but they seldom looked for employment in the docks.

Regular skilled men in shipbuilding and repair looked upon their work as a life time's occupation. Youths were indentured and trained, and were required to work as journeymen before reaching the level of skilled craftsmen. The impact of the war somewhat lessened the importance of apprenticeships in the eyes of youths who could find employment in semi-skilled engineering, and the effect of the depression detracted from the value formerly placed upon youth recruitment by the skilled men. However, apprenticeship remained the means of entry to the skilled crafts. Having achieved his skilled status the craftsmen then continued in his chosen occupation. His level of ability and conscientiousness, both as regards work and rules and regulations, were of more importance to foremen than his physical strength and age. Most of the shipyard trades could adapt fairly easily to other branches of engineering, construction and woodwork, but redundancy in one industry did not send workers scurrying to another. There was some movement between areas, but much less between regions.

The number of men insured in shipbuilding and repair decreased between the wars, owing to the insufficiency of work, and men no longer declaring themselves to be shipyard workers were seeking, and quite possibly obtaining, work in another branch of their trade. This was the case with Southampton iron and steel workers and patternmakers where there was at least some scope for interchange between the railway workshops at Eastleigh, motor vehicle manufacture and the shipyards. The local construction industry could not absorb the overflow of woodworkers, painters and plumbers during the ship-repair off season, but then some of the shipyard men were house-builders who had left that occupation during the winter overhaul peak in ship-repair. They were able to return to their former jobs during the house-building season, and it is obvious that some dovetailing occurred.

A more judicious interchange of port labour, between engineering and construction to meet fluctuating demands could have maximised Southampton's employment in this sphere. To be of real benefit this interchange needed to eliminate the surplus labour attached to each of the sections of industry which were kept in readiness for the maximum demand of each peak season. Because these peaks did not co-incide in all cases, the surplus of one section was left free to fill the peak period vacancies of another, but even so, it was not a practical large-scale

proposition. Nor is it likely that it could have taken up all the surplus labour in industries with shrinking workloads such as shipbuilding, engineering and port transport. Nevertheless, in a port with the considerable emphasis on seasonality which occurred in Southampton, recruiting different labour for transatlantic and cape shipping, for various and specialist dock requirements, and for shipbuilding, construction and engineering, seems to have made extravagant use of resources and increased the port's total labour force beyond essential requirements.

Each industry sought the maximum return from its labour and required the best and most experienced workers available, as well as preferring those least likely to disrupt output. Whether or not management was concerned about unemployment there was little they could do to prevent workers attaching themselves to an industry in the hope of finding employment, particularly where labour was employed casually.

Percy Ford met with resistance on the subject of dovetailing,[8] and trade unions do not seem to have been keen to divulge the extent to which their members were interchangeable. Philips and Whiteside are of the opinion that the slow progress in mechanization of dock labour did not encourage increased mobility, even within the industry, and that although there was some indication of shrinking specialisation the use of specialist labour continued.[9]

The dovetailing of labour could not be successful without a change of trade union and worker attitude towards demarcation and mobility, or without satisfactory interchange of skills. It was also necessary for employers to manifest their confidence in the principle by providing some assurance that earning levels would not be reduced. Perhaps there was scope for a major reorganisation of employment in Southampton because the same companies employed labour in more than one port industry, and because the SCESEA, with its Standing Committee of Port Labour Employers and its shipping line managers, represented labour across the spectrum of port activities. In the climate of under-employment which existed at this time, however, it would probably have been sufficient, to have actively encouraged or promoted an increase in seasonal dovetailing wherever this was possible.

Seasonality was a strong feature of Southampton's port labour, but an equally important feature was the regular under-employment which was caused by the mid-week peak demand. In the major freight ports of London and Liverpool a similar part-week concentration of labour may have occurred in the individual dock areas, but this is not revealed by the statistics of overall port labour. The individual docks employed more

dockworkers and fewer seamen than Southampton, and the larger quantity of freight in all probability spread the work over a greater part of the week. (It is quite likely that the Thames and Mersey ship-repair men suffered from the labour problems of fast turn round associated with passenger shipping found in Southampton). It was certainly true of Southampton that a greater quantity of cargo through the port could have increased the work period during the week. As it was, the regular arrival and departure of liners produced a constant mid-week demand which was not balanced by the Southern Railway and other shipping lines, and which resulted in a large percentage of the dockers being unable to earn a full week's wages.

The quantity of work obtained by the preference men and shipping company stevedores may have been greater by comparison with the pre-war, and therefore pre-registration, era, because of the restriction on men entitled to apply for it, and consequent restriction on those to whom it was given. The quantity of work available, however, declined from pre-war levels and it took until 1937 to approach closely to the 1913 total freight tonnage. The Southampton Times frequently showed its support for the workers and at the time of the 1924 national dock strike wrote "If there is any port in the kingdom where the lot of these men cries out for betterment, it is Southampton."[10] It was the mid-week concentration to which the paper referred.

The state provision for those not in full employment was amended in 1923 to favour casual workers and it became easier for them to draw benefit, but allegations of unscrupulous use of unemployment benefit by dockers even before that were not unfounded, (nor were such allegations confined to dockworkers). However, there is nothing to suggest that large numbers of dockers were regularly making "easy" money instead of working for it. Those who worked a full week managed to make a satisfactory living, whether they worked five and half days or fewer days with overtime and differentials making up the balance. Some were sure to have been able to supplement reasonably good earnings with unemployment benefit - the system provided for it and human nature responds to such a system - but it should not be assumed that those who were obliged to work "three days on the hook and three days on the book" were all equally well financially served. From the few wage examples examined it can be seen that less than a full week's work usually meant inadequate earnings. Except during the few weeks of the Channel Island produce peak and the peaks in Cape fruit imports, it is unlikely that any but preference men found sufficient employment, except shipping company regulars, who were employed on a similar basis to the preference men.

Shed men and ordinary casuals needed to supplement their income. We know from comments made by the trade union and Ministry of Labour officials that some could not even obtain the requisite number of stamps on their employment books.

A similar situation regarding unemployment benefit applied to ship-repair workers. They too needed to supplement their earnings unless they were among the fortunate workers who were employed regularly or obtained overtime. (Often it was the more fully employed who were also given the overtime). Except where sailings were cancelled liners departed on schedule, whereas repair work on cargo vessels was not under such pressure. More importantly, in a cargo port large vessels did not always arrive and depart on the same days of the week, and did not provide what could be described as a frantic mid-week rush followed by an unpaid holiday.

The casual aspect of work in the shipyards tended to isolate Southampton from the main body of the industry because its problems were different. Southampton men believed that the reconditioning and repair of liners called for skill superior to that normally required on freighter repairs, and for them this was a major issue between the wars. Before the war Southampton's shipyard wage rates had been in line with other shipbuilding centres, some rates being higher and some lower. During the war wages rose rapidly, but the differentials were extended and Southampton fell behind. The port's rates were not adjusted upwards at the end of the war, but the reductions, when applied, were similar all round. The resultant inequalities bred discontent, particularly where Liverpool men obtained higher rates for working on the same liners as Southampton men. In the northeast coast yards, which repaired freighters, men were paid more than in Southampton and the southern men believed the quality of their work demanded more. In fact, there may have been a case for grading work depending upon its type and location in the ship. When work involved parts of a liner occupied by passengers, particularly in the more expensive fare-paying areas, it would not have been wrong to support Southampton men's view that a different level of skill was required from damage repair on freighters. The industrial executives of the SEF who built ships in the iron and steel producing regions regarded Southampton as of little importance to the shipbuilding industry, and they were less concerned with the problems of the district. They had little personal experience of ship-repair and their main commitment was to the reduction of labour costs, or at least to the suppression of wage increases, as a means to lower production costs. There were no investigations into casualism and under-employment

in the shipbuilding industry, and employers were more concerned with the state of the industry and foreign competition. Trade union requests for consideration of Southampton's problems used casualism as the reason behind the need for special attention and arrangements, thereby accepting its existence as inevitable and seeking ways to alleviate its effects, rather than ways to end it. Southampton workers accepted casualism, but they were not prepared to accept that the cause of it, repair work, was inferior to ship construction. Industrial grievances initiated by Southampton's shipyards were all concerned with equality of status and wage rates because insufficient allowance was made for under-employment. The lack of cohesion among trade unions prevented a concerted effort being made on almost all issues, except wage increases, (and decreases), and unfortunately for Southampton, trade union national executives also found more pressing problems affecting a greater number of members in other districts. Even the fundamental change in the industry, the introduction of uniform wage rates, failed to entirely satisfy Southampton ship-repairers.

A change of routine in Southampton shipping during the period, the steady increase in cruising, was directly attributable to the port's reputation and popularity as a passenger port. Cruising attracted a new class of sea-going passengers who paid cheaper fares, gave smaller tips and responded to an experience which had not previously been available to them. It also provided much employment for seamen and pointed the way to the future of Southampton's passenger shipping when the elegance and luxury of sea travel eventually gave way to the speed of air travel.

The introduction and growth of cruising was a gradual process with increased activity around the end of the 1920s. It extended the breadth of the port's shipping, but it did not radically alter its employment between the wars. There is no distinct point at which one could demonstrate that employment opportunities were specifically related to cruising, but there would have been less activity without it. However, the reduction in normal sailings and repairs during the depression was only partly off set by the increase in cruising. Seasonality in shipping was not eased by cruising, and was probably emphasised, despite some winter cruises.

Ship-repairers were fortunate in obtaining work on ship-conversions for cruising, and overall it provided additional repair work. During the busy periods men were often transferred from construction work to repairs, usually because of the need for speed. Ship-repairers were not willing to transfer to construction work and the SCESEA employers declared that repairers objected to working the customary full week on

construction. (Ship-repair was predominantly, but not entirely, part-week employment). It is not possible to offer a conclusive argument on this issue, but if ship-repair was regarded as a liability as far as regular full week earnings were concerned, the overtime and 6d. per day extra which were included in the work, seem to have been incentives to the shipbuilders; and if ship-repairers were genuinely unwilling to transfer to new work, this presupposes that there was new work to which they could be transferred. By the mid 1920s J.I. Thornycroft was the only major shipbuilder left at Woolston, J. Samuel White's construction yards being at East Cowes. The majority of the ship-repairers were employed by Harland & Wolff who did not undertake new work in Southampton. There were some smaller boatyards along the River Itchen, like Camper & Nicholson, but Thornycroft was the only shipbuilding firm to which men might have been transferred, and the occasions when they were short of men, except during disputes, were very few. If employers were correct in saying that ship-repairers objected to this kind of interchange it is not likely that the need for it arose very often.[11]

Neither dock and harbour services nor shipping were as severely affected by the interwar decline as shipbuilding, but owing to the stagnation of trade, shipping was very slow to generate new work for the shipyards. The quantity of laid up shipping was a drag on the industry, and after the post war boom, when even work already in hand was cancelled, demand for new ships remained low. The mid-period economic climate had a particularly detrimental affect on Southampton passengers, but the port's depression was a short one and less severe than many.

Passenger shipping, despite its seasonality kept a large number of seamen employed for at least part of the year, and as many of them came south from Liverpool and Glasgow it is evident that opportunities for employment in Southampton were generally better. Employment conditions for seamen could not be regulated on a port-by-port basis in an industry with overriding international involvements. However, working conditions on board were controlled by shipowners and it was the responsibility of individual shipowners to see that their ships, whether passenger liners or freighters, were fitted out to make the best provision for crews. There is no doubt that there was much room for improvement in Southampton ships and not enough thought was given to crews' needs by the owners. The arguments against alterations to older ships' structure were reasonable, but the consideration given to defective parts and cleanliness in areas used by crews was insufficient, regardless of the age and size of ships.

In the labour market seamen had certain advantages because of their

knowledge and usefulness as riggers, or labourers in dock and shipyard work. The number of former seamen amongst those in responsible positions, both as docks foremen and in ship-repair, offered another advantage, because personal preference still played a large part in labour selection. The incidence of ex-seamen employed in Southampton was one of the port's labour characteristics. The strict discipline of life on board mercantile marine vessels was appreciated by foremen, for whom respect and application to the job in hand were assets in a worker. The inter-war period witnessed a change in the men themselves, described by the port's Shipping Federation Officer, Captain W.V.J. Clarke, at a meeting of the Master Mariners' Club. He referred to the improvement in their education and character during the previous twenty years and commented that where seamen had formerly had a sea chest and a sheath knife they now had a suitcase and a wristwatch.[12]

There is room for speculation upon the behaviour of Southampton seamen if a trade union had been created to successfully challenge the NUS. Part of the men's militancy was directed against rival trade unionists whom, it was felt, were responsible for the shortcomings in conditions and wage rates, and for the failure to improve working hours on board. When there was no longer a collective voice of opposition (after the demise of the AMWU in 1927), no more was heard from Southampton seamen. One wonders if their protests would have continued had the AMWU survived, and been unable to change conditions; or would the protests still have been dissipated by the waves, as seems to have happened? Seamen in the liner ports, particularly Southampton, refrained from joining the NUS, and as they did not constitute an organised threat to labour stability employers did not enforce the terms of the union's PC5 engagement form. Nevertheless, it is significant in the history of seamen's trade unionism that men in the liner ports did not feel there were any benefits to be gained from union membership, and in some of the other ports membership was only maintained by the enforcement of PC5.

The NUS was not alone in attempting to create a closed shop union. The TGWU sought to increase its power and overcome opposition to guaranteed week and registration schemes by enforcing membership as a prerequisite to employment. Employers were not opposed to registration as a means of controlling or regulating the labour supply, but where dock labour reform threatened to impinge upon their right to select men or interfere with their engagement method they were anxious and wary. To them reform meant the possibility of increased costs, and a lessening of their control over the means to avert output reductions caused by

dockers' militancy. They were not keen to see dockers in a closed shop union which might strengthen Bevin's position and place them, the employers, between union and government pressure to accept reform on terms other than their own.

Notwithstanding the progress achieved towards collective bargaining most negotiations affecting dockers in Southampton were decided by the local joint negotiating committee, or one of the other specialist ad hoc joint committees. The questions raised related specifically to Southampton methods of working and it was rare for either side to wish them referred to lengthy arbitration procedures. Where questions could not be resolved immediately to the mutual satisfaction of both sides it was usually agreed that an interim decision should be accepted, pending further discussion by the LJC. In Southampton these measures, using the LJC as the final arbiter, worked well and few queries were brought before the NJCDL. Whether it was because of the good rapport between members of the two committees dealing with port labour, or whether it was due to union apathy and workers' complacency, labour relations were in general good, and the part-week pattern of working was accepted, despite its inherent adversities. (In any case, there were those for whom it was an agreeable method of working).

One of the PEA sub committees covered decisions on pieceworking rates which were subject to periodic review. Piecework was encouraged by the union and high local rates were demanded in order that part-time earnings could be raised to higher levels. Philips and Whiteside make the point that registered dockers did not share a common prosperity and that individual earnings were as varied as before 1914.[13] Piecework rates had a considerable affect on individual variation of earnings. The union, or at least its branch officials, also accepted that it was necessary for members to sometimes refrain from actively seeking work so that they could qualify for unemployment benefit as a means of supplementing income, which actually assisted the continuation of casualism. During most of the period the local press indicated that casual labourers formed the majority of those in receipt of relief, although they did not always specify from which labour category they were drawn.

Shortage of work was not the only reason for low income. Old age and sickness accounted for much poverty, and the amount of relief paid was insufficient for comfort - even by the values of the day social reformers were of the opinion that relief was calculated on inadequate minimum requirements. Philips and Whiteside refer to the very low percentage of registered dock labour recorded as receiving assistance in

Southampton in 1936 (4 - 5%), compared with Liverpool, Middlesborough and Swansea (25 - 33%).[14] The years 1936 and 1937 were by far the best for dock employment in Southampton, being well above the average rate. (See Appendix 11a). It had been suggested by the MOL that the new docks, when opened, could be serviced by the existing registered work force, thus taking up the slack, as they put it, and providing more work for the registered men. The new docks certainly provided the opportunity for increased imports from South Africa, South America and other countries outside Europe, which resulted in better employment levels for dockers during 1935-37.

It is fair to say that employment in Southampton docks was better than in the ports mentioned above, but the improvement in trade and the low percentage of dockers on assistance still did not reach the heart of Southampton's difficulty, namely under-employment, which might have been cured had casualism been eliminated. However, the elimination of casualism required a change of attitude towards mobility. It was essential that workers should be prepared to work in any part of the port and on any commodity, within reason, even if it meant alternating between ocean liners and cross Channel ferries in order to help equalise the distribution of work. It also required employers to adopt a different employment procedure and accept the need for a permanent work force. Despite the many years of discussions, proposals, and counter-proposals, it was not found possible for civil servants, employers and trade unions to put together an acceptable package which could be applied either nationally or locally.

It was unfortunate for dockworkers that economic events in the interwar era prevented major achievements, because the drive for reform could have gathered impetus from the end of the first war, given different circumstances. However, it was not a situation in which one port could take a lead if it meant being at a competitive disadvantage. Overtures of compromise were eventually made in Southampton, but because it was such a tiny percentage of the nation's dockworkers, and because much of its shipping was of a specialist nature, it was an unlikely situation to influence labour in port transport.

Post war world economy was also partly responsible for the decline in shipbuilding. British shipbuilding was similar to the nation's other staple industries in that it was uneconomic in a falling market. It suffered from over capacity and low productivity, and the closing of some shipyards (the only solution attempted by the shipbuilders) was not the remedy to the industry's problems. Nor could productivity be regulated by wage adjustments, but there was no new approach or re-

thinking by management. The new agreement on the avoidance of disputes did no more to prevent demarcation stoppages than the previous agreement and had little effect on productivity. Shipbuilding management belonged to the pre-war era and they were pre-war in their thinking. Although they were quick to blame workers and trade unions for the ills of their industry, unions must accept some of the responsibility for failure since, at the time, the trade union movement did not accept responsibility for making the industry a success. However, while the SEF busied itself closing uneconomic yards and implementing its scrap and build policy, it failed in its fundamental commitment to essential investment. The reparations agreement, world recession and rising costs, together with the growth of the railways and increase in road transport (which affected coastal shipping) were all contributory causes of the decline, while the uncertain trade in freight and passengers, which also slowed down the demand for new ships, helped to undermine the industry. In the new areas of shipping, such as oil tankers, Britain was not only internationally uncompetitive, but its shipbuilders lacked the vision and drive which should have enabled them to secure an adequate share of the market.

Labour problems were an additional hazard which retarded the recovery of the industry, but unfortunately the diversity of trades, which created so much internal strife, were a traditional and necessary part of ship construction. The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives was the envy of some shipyard trade unionists and was held up as an example of proficiency by those who advocated a similar organisation to replace the FEST. The alignment of trades in the NFBTO was, however, slightly more conducive to harmonious working and joint agreements than the range of skilled men and labourers whom the FEST, or its replacement, was called upon to satisfy. The reunion of the two broad groups of workers (the FEST and the Craft Unions) into the Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades, from which the AEU still remained aloof, was very little more effective than its predecessor, and it was only the truce accepted at the outbreak of the second war which enabled it to control certain groups of affiliated workers.

Southampton was much less affected by these difficulties than the major shipbuilding regions, but on the periphery of the problem was the fact that, lacking orders for large ships, the north was in competition for the smaller vessels, which might otherwise have been orders gained by the less influential yards. The decision to withhold Admiralty orders also affected the quantity of shipbuilding work available in Southampton, but its reputation served it well regarding orders from overseas.

The ship-repairers, who were the mainstay of the Southampton shipyards, were an uneasy work force and for much of the period were little better in their relations with employers than men in the large shipbuilding regions. For the same causes as in shipbuilding demarcation was a prime disruption of labour and loss of productivity, but in addition to demarcation disputes there was an air of discontent in the shipyards which was not really noticeable on the docks.

Improvements in Southampton's labour relations and working conditions fell short of potential achievements for the interwar years, even taking into account the poor national economic situation which hindered growth and development for a major part of the time. The approach to labour management in the port industries embodied a parochial separatism rather than an overview of inter-related activities and there was little effort to derive mutual benefit from closer co-operation and inter-action which might have used labour resources differently. Labour showed greater initiative in linking union support between industries, but unfortunately its origin was usually as a defence mechanism rather than as a constructive policy.

The gap between labour and management was generally as wide in Southampton as anywhere. It is true that local shipping executives welcomed the seamen's leader when he expressed his willingness to support their views, and in return for enrolment assistance he maintained the stability of the labour he controlled. There was not, however, any other joint long-term planning between management and unions, nor any local dialogue on policy-making. Neither did the shipyard union leaders approach the SCESEA, cap in hand, ready to discuss compromise.

There was regular dialogue between the PEA and the TGWU concerning matters of daily routine operation, and these discussions were, for the most part, amicable. But on wider issues, which involved the port transport industry as a whole, Southampton was just as reluctant as other ports to take a leading role. Industrial and trade union leaders demonstrated that dialogue was possible between the two sides, but at individual executive level, and neither side had more than limited support. At grass roots their example was not followed. In Southampton men and management came together for the purpose of making or rejecting demands and frequently threats were made, either overtly or by insinuation, before a resolution was attained.

The influence of the MOL upon issues affecting dock labour was resented by the PEA and the circumstances of development within the industry as much as anything brought them towards reconciling their need for cheap labour availability with the union leader's (and MOL official's)

pressure for the curtailment of casual employment. They did not reveal a closer understanding of the deficiencies in the the living standards of casual or part-time workers, and in fact, by the time the PEA decided to negotiate with local union officials on the guaranteed week proposals, dock labour in the port had reached its highest level since the war.

Successive governments failed to take decisive remedial action to assist port and shipping industries to overcome labour problems which put the onus onto the industries themselves, calling for a level of co-operation which had not hitherto been a notable feature of port industries. The large institutions, whether employer or union initiated, took a wider view of their own industry than local employing bodies, but at the same time, often showed insufficient awareness of ports' individual needs.

Southampton was part of the national enterprise and its passenger transport made an unrivalled contribution in this field, not only to the national economy, but also to international prestige. The individuality of Southampton's ship-repair and passenger business created a situation which was not representative of U.K. port industries. In all three industries the quantity of employment was commensurate with the state of passenger trade, and there were very few years when this was really poor. There was, therefore, less overall unemployment, but the port's specialised trade created excessive seasonality and increased the incidence of sustained part-time work, which affected the quality of life of those subjected to it. To have changed the employment system existing in Southampton would, quite likely, have relegated many men to a state of near permanent unemployment, and it could be said that to be under-employed was better than to be unemployed. However, greater collaboration and co-operation between employers, unions and workers could have effectively regulated the port's employment and its conditions to the benefit of all.

1. Factory workers were willing to down tools and leave their work places, or they could be persuaded to do so. Seamen were unable to respond in a similar manner until they reached port. For the safety of ship, crew and passengers (if there were any) strikes did not occur at sea.
2. In the first Labour government, 1929.
3. PRO: LAB 2 1050 ET 3995/1931
4. Miss K.C. Boswell, Material collected while on the staff of the Geography Department at University College, Southampton (1932-35). SRO: D/Mat 15/1
5. Sir Joseph Broodbank, "Today's Problems in Port Administration", Journal of the Institute of Transport, No. 3 Vol. 1 July 1920.
6. A.J. Vinson, op. cit. Table on Distribution of Labour Force, p.90.
7. D. Caradog Jones, op. cit. p.90.
8. P. Ford, Work and Wealth in a Modern Port, p.66
9. G. Phillips and N. Whiteside, Casual Labour: The Unemployment Question and the Port Transport Industry 1880-1970. pp.229-30.
10. Southampton Times, February 16, 1924.
11. This argument was put forward by the SCESEA during the extended negotiations on wages in 1927-28. SEF Minutes, September 28, 1928.
12. Hampshire Advertiser, November 11, 1933.
13. G. Phillips and N. Whiteside, op. cit. pp.211-12
14. G. Phillips and N. Whiteside, op. cit. p. 213

APPENDIX 1a. FOREIGN TRADE SHIPPING IN SELECTED PORTS WITH CARGO AND IN BALLAST, INCLUDING HOME TRADE VESSELS 1910-1913 AND 1921-1938.

YEAR	LONDON		LIVERPOOL		SOUTHAMPTON		HULL		GLASGOW		BRISTOL	
	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons
1910	19,774	24,596,746	8,104	21,041,754	5,781	10,081,981	10,499	8,026,102	3,751	6,919,510	1,682	2,397,759
1911	18,869	24,335,399	8,218	21,834,271	5,698	10,702,356	9,627	7,641,494	3,824	7,291,010	1,740	2,601,998
1912	18,394	24,049,797	8,225	22,604,006	5,543	11,376,904	10,089	8,220,857	3,419	7,109,174	1,617	2,519,590
1913	19,073	25,129,064	8,309	23,263,471	6,039	13,326,252	10,835	9,055,565	3,687	7,904,948	1681	2,662,638
1921	18,360	24,603,051	6,698	18,991,463	4,403	8,927,247	8,214	6,570,618	2,217	5,825,747	1,426	3,025,249
1922	18,678	27,468,618	7,333	21,688,530	4,945	13,329,206	10,310	9,396,894	2,959	7,462,040	1,629	3,594,840
1923	20,132	29,650,425	14,125	24,696,517	6,137	17,359,695	10,138	11,224,018	4,176	8,673,487	2,109	4,095,753
1924	22,786	32,557,466	14,833	25,758,357	6,535	18,347,732	8,300	10,295,403	5,007	9,028,209	2,422	4,455,221
1925	26,436	34,359,029	14,459	26,278,445	6,751	18,537,713	7,452	9,029,765	4,788	9,099,634	2,426	4,383,635
1926	33,785	40,942,951	13,247	27,331,429	6,982	19,321,732	7,493	9,440,484	3,939	8,756,298	2,426	4,459,272
1927	30,853	38,696,626	13,826	26,195,600	7,128	19,505,364	6,975	8,926,689	4,747	8,844,258	2,331	4,358,723
1928	30,642	40,559,572	14,351	26,266,737	7,140	21,189,082	6,432	9,324,184	4,431	9,017,034	2,267	4,251,102
1929	30,277	41,466,972	14,996	27,983,399	7,027	21,860,458	7,258	9,788,802	4,417	9,296,889	2,318	4,630,726
1930	30,593	42,688,802	15,500	27,449,288	6,968	22,694,323	7,108	9,796,072	4,511	9,084,013	2,510	4,679,331
1931	29,132	41,065,727	14,601	24,975,210	6,510	20,843,245	6,732	9,034,862	4,401	8,272,982	2,444	4,592,538
1932	23,921	38,002,239	13,439	24,674,686	5,400	18,308,144	6,901	8,571,036	4,059	7,705,529	2,170	3,983,394
1933	25,836	39,962,739	12,583	26,050,696	5,236	20,810,676	6,854	9,146,851	3,661	7,721,782	2,080	3,979,734
1934	27,933	41,009,976	12,278	26,695,053	5,332	20,566,523	6,755	8,943,186	3,737	8,534,117	2,109	4,294,604
1935	26,685	41,315,760	13,448	26,444,233	5,347	21,436,580	7,061	9,778,170	3,831	8,580,241	2,292	4,712,082
1936	27,559	42,521,777	13,882	27,282,973	5,435	21,659,497	6,802	9,632,307	3,971	9,370,198	2,305	4,811,182
1937	28,275	42,964,235	14,289	27,576,248	5,548	23,623,874	7,538	10,076,128	4,046	9,616,090	2,325	4,874,304
1938	27,198	42,939,052	13,931	28,158,091	5,609	23,097,926	7,190	10,171,198	4,042	9,808,756	2,378	5,255,370

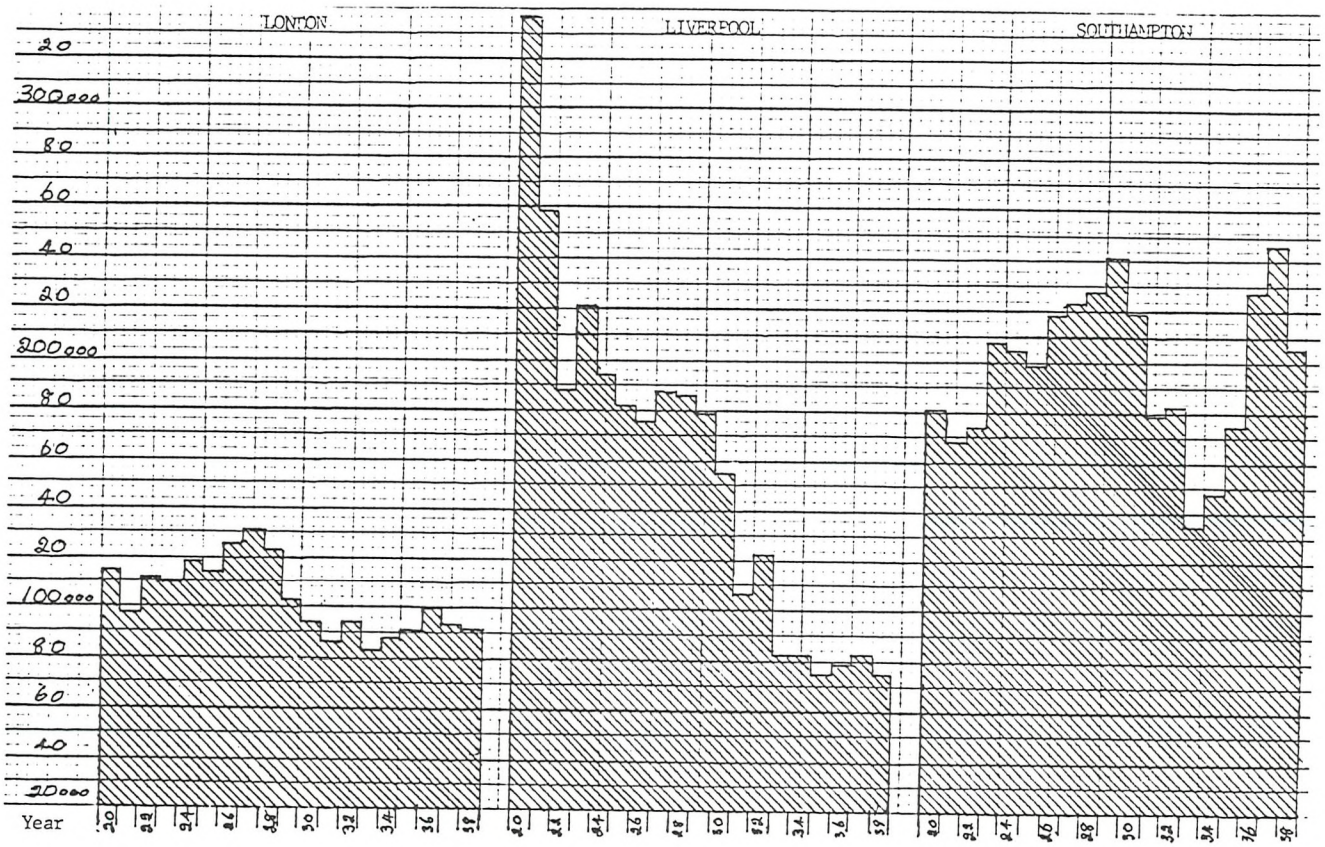
Source: Annual Statements of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K.

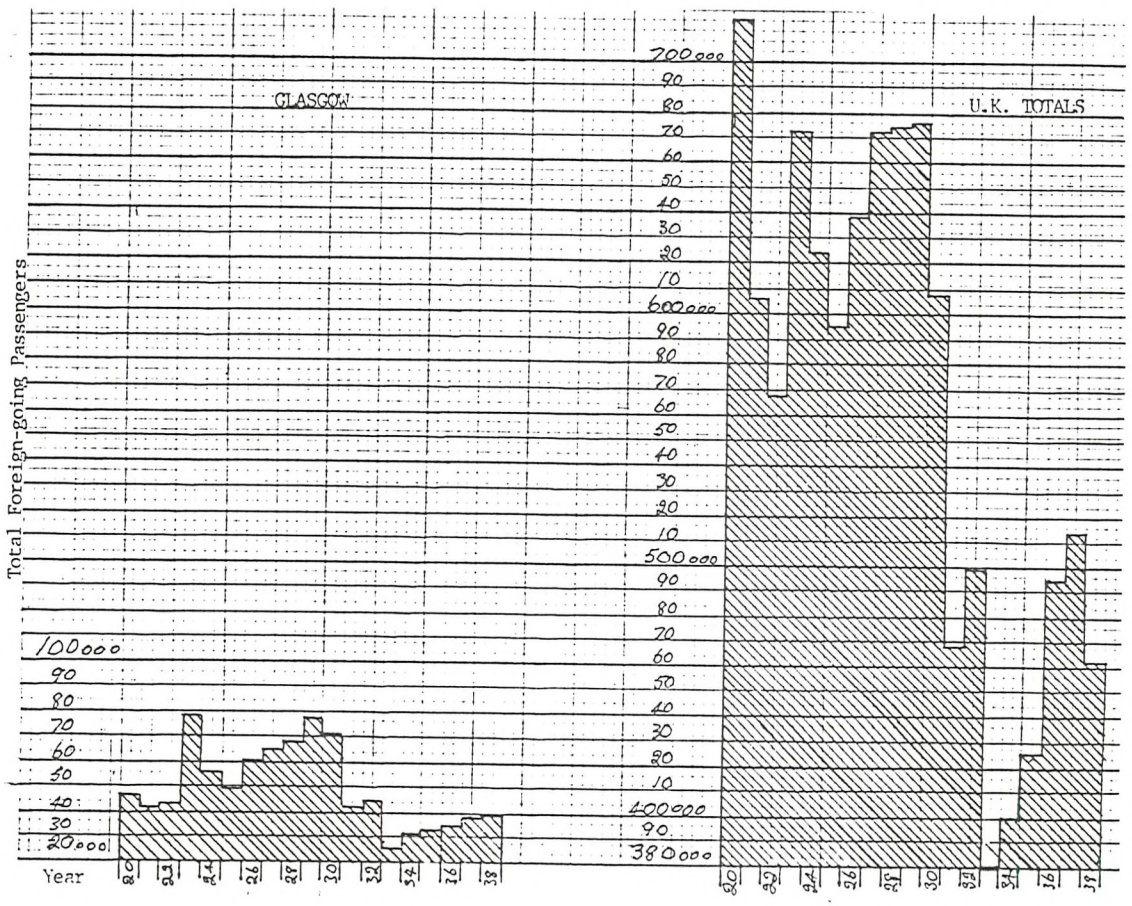
APPENDIX 1b. COASTWISE SHIPPING IN SELECTED PORTS WITH CARGO AND IN BALLAST FOR THE YEARS 1910-1913 AND 1921-1938

YEAR	LONDON		LIVERPOOL		SOUTHAMPTON		HULL		GLASGOW		BRISTOL	
	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons	Vessels	Net Tons
1910	23,615	8,433,426	24,468	4,395,024	11,094	1,481,511	6,270	1,342,476	17,373	3,128,360	9,698	1,188,509
1911	22,549	8,194,640	23,766	4,268,579	10,586	1,413,803	5,941	1,285,098	16,578	2,994,550	9,725	1,166,691
1912	20,186	7,265,731	24,522	4,485,917	10,683	1,456,167	5,630	1,287,161	15,109	2,862,200	9,878	1,123,599
1913	21,370	8,065,755	24,157	4,510,445	10,966	1,658,623	5,714	1,298,665	15,341	2,945,378	9,933	1,213,660
1921	17,798	9,486,732	17,235	5,531,848	16,179	2,049,035	3,338	1,377,214	9,899	2,833,620	12,452	2,087,838
1922	22,295	11,824,521	26,329	7,275,522	18,115	2,499,500	4,024	1,871,808	13,750	3,666,818	13,466	2,453,387
1923	22,321	11,564,503	19,569	5,827,850	19,165	2,390,810	4,675	2,132,576	13,041	3,450,744	12,861	2,490,340
1924	24,171	12,835,383	17,280	5,381,609	18,196	2,154,294	5,368	2,229,710	13,552	3,348,233	13,088	2,378,227
1925	23,583	12,705,946	17,964	5,594,732	20,787	2,300,758	5,165	2,052,641	13,243	3,402,573	12,903	2,275,335
1926	17,371	8,335,222	14,290	4,733,549	20,205	2,211,165	4,373	1,654,596	9,787	2,761,620	10,152	1,832,241
1927	24,360	13,880,129	16,550	5,730,841	22,076	2,778,864	5,068	2,254,937	13,293	3,491,913	13,648	2,413,403
1928	25,052	14,913,109	17,036	5,966,669	24,344	3,066,028	4,967	2,197,397	12,931	3,329,912	13,472	2,365,856
1929	25,543	15,111,383	13,381	6,514,821	23,907	3,213,364	4,975	2,258,221	12,285	3,591,886	12,962	2,396,556
1930	25,672	15,396,796	16,512	6,399,251	24,899	3,201,172	4,973	2,379,833	11,903	3,935,366	12,520	2,393,084
1931	25,619	15,010,329	15,538	6,185,870	24,456	3,356,323	5,026	2,134,517	9,441	2,853,293	12,365	2,465,684
1932	27,288	15,901,647	15,359	6,383,287	24,993	3,422,527	5,736	2,132,689	10,350	2,840,862	12,590	2,249,484
1933	29,931	16,917,265	15,482	6,807,717	25,963	3,376,369	6,272	2,275,376	9,242	2,497,458	12,898	2,380,358
1934	32,124	17,937,666	15,960	6,963,118	26,167	3,418,184	6,299	2,191,350	8,220	2,579,901	13,834	2,482,340
1935	32,490	18,446,390	15,856	6,766,131	26,025	3,549,900	6,402	2,330,825	8,879	2,734,839	13,521	2,383,018
1936	33,573	19,629,533	16,557	6,998,726	27,624	4,058,645	6,589	2,270,114	9,108	3,172,478	14,551	2,508,000
1937	33,802	19,681,523	17,620	7,835,759	27,948	3,923,746	6,619	2,236,177	8,907	2,225,629	14,995	2,581,862
1938	32,471	18,941,504	15,842	7,317,353	26,263	3,845,284	7,280	2,274,292	7,969	3,200,264	15,151	2,530,497

Source: Annual Statements of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K.

APPENDIX 2. ANNUAL TOTALS OF FOREIGN-GOING PASSENGERS IN SELECTED PORTS WITH U.K. TOTAL





APPENDIX 3a. TOTAL PASSENGERS ARRIVING AND EMBARKING AT SELECTED PORTS IN THE U.K. WITH U.K. TOTALS, 1920-1938. (FOREIGN-GOING, BEING PLACES OUT OF EUROPE).

	LONDON			LIVERPOOL			SOUTHAMPTON			GLASGOW			BRISTOL			U.K. TOTAL		
YEAR	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL
1920	41,896	73,498	115,394	133,055	204,868	337,923	72,718	107,370	180,088	13,808	32,289	46,097	1,963	2,491	4,454	283,705	437,879	721,584
1921	35,622	62,722	98,344	98,012	161,132	259,144	64,480	104,464	168,944	12,107	30,068	42,175	2,092	1,823	3,915	227,583	377,507	605,090
1922	41,520	69,868	111,388	68,016	120,691	188,707	71,867	101,590	173,457	10,505	32,244	42,749	1,855	1,848	3,703	224,462	343,624	568,086
1923	40,055	70,868	110,923	61,354	159,881	221,235	72,499	145,920	218,419	12,601	66,833	79,434	1,924	1,947	3,871	210,509	463,285	673,794
1924	46,190	72,966	119,156	71,929	122,201	194,130	85,150	121,497	206,647	21,021	35,960	56,981	2,470	2,353	4,923	253,432	371,306	624,738
1925	42,473	71,642	114,115	70,591	111,918	182,509	76,656	122,703	199,359	17,947	31,565	49,512	2,827	2,727	5,554	241,189	354,923	596,112
1926	45,502	80,689	126,191	60,228	116,672	176,900	76,390	141,635	218,025	18,480	42,132	60,612	2,913	2,831	5,744	237,379	402,438	639,817
1927	52,152	79,372	131,524	65,071	123,801	188,872	77,819	144,999	222,818	21,793	42,419	64,158	3,267	3,298	6,565	259,761	414,119	673,870
1928	53,147	70,661	123,808	70,217	116,083	186,300	86,332	142,542	228,874	23,027	44,404	67,431	3,244	3,147	6,391	278,937	397,247	676,184
1929	51,188	52,801	103,989	66,600	113,116	179,716	90,385	150,866	241,251	23,895	53,382	77,277	2,945	2,895	5,840	277,936	399,403	677,339
1930	52,514	42,413	94,927	65,496	91,493	156,989	92,240	126,827	219,067	30,997	40,126	71,123	2,623	2,522	5,145	290,369	327,792	618,361
1931	50,045	35,813	85,858	54,823	53,858	108,681	86,209	92,796	179,005	25,781	17,662	43,443	2,262	2,303	4,565	255,768	213,057	468,825
1932	52,793	41,910	95,703	63,913	58,819	122,732	91,827	90,853	182,680	29,438	16,090	45,528	1,654	1,747	3,401	276,856	222,184	499,040
1933	45,312	38,629	83,941	41,133	42,819	83,952	64,092	69,975	134,067	12,307	12,595	24,902	2,025	1,971	3,996	201,848	176,992	378,840
1934	44,905	42,904	87,809	39,255	44,628	83,883	67,604	79,504	147,108	17,698	14,224	31,922	2,080	2,144	4,224	205,290	195,754	401,044
1935	48,376	43,491	91,867	34,431	41,094	75,525	75,933	98,518	174,451	17,611	14,502	32,113	1,806	1,662	3,468	216,029	209,270	425,299
1936	53,894	46,591	100,485	34,717	44,822	79,539	102,700	125,415	228,115	19,826	17,047	36,873	1,593	1,758	3,351	250,056	246,796	496,852
1937	48,049	44,956	93,005	35,782	47,417	83,199	109,148	136,315	245,463	20,420	18,599	39,019	2,044	2,187	4,231	252,960	261,829	514,789
1938	45,685	47,289	92,974	29,384	46,058	75,442	87,128	116,424	203,552	20,844	18,599	39,443	2,535	2,037	4,572	221,699	241,049	462,748

Source: Board of Trade Journal.

APPENDIX 3b. TOTAL PASSENGERS ARRIVING AND EMBARKING AT SELECTED PORTS IN THE U.K. WITH U.K. TOTALS,1913, 1920-1938. (TO AND FROM THE CONTINENT).

	DOVER			SOUTHAMPTON			LONDON			HULL			U.K. TOTAL		
	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL	IN	OUT	TOTAL
1913	335,714	317,570	651,284	124,071	95,937	220,008	78,686	58,032	136,718	94,238	44,798	139,036	1,309,874	1,184,412	2,494,286
1920	263,758	278,375	542,133	88,588	95,033	183,621	13,083	15,080	28,163	25,224	29,426	54,650	725,253	738,860	1,464,113
1921	379,055	340,108	719,163	94,389	97,532	191,921	25,485	20,883	46,368	20,148	18,389	38,537	855,343	830,558	1,685,901
1922	430,415	382,213	812,628	101,434	105,041	206,475	21,896	15,196	37,092	17,563	14,563	32,357	916,398	898,182	1,814,580
1923	477,169	420,307	897,476	114,637	107,160	221,797	36,821	22,571	59,392	30,181	13,766	43,947	1,103,016	1,038,154	2,141,170
1924	521,170	462,831	984,001	124,228	118,008	242,236	38,136	32,591	70,727	20,939	14,311	35,250	1,172,951	1,131,363	2,304,314
1925	546,557	490,751	1,037,308	133,688	133,783	267,471	39,887	30,780	70,667	18,727	15,244	33,971	1,257,510	1,229,695	2,487,205
1926	507,963	484,483	992,446	123,642	121,228	244,870	59,327	34,016	93,343	22,585	16,837	39,422	1,300,095	1,251,119	2,551,214
1927	451,097	435,420	886,517	135,504	135,539	271,043	76,796	57,983	134,779	23,242	15,275	38,517	1,386,910	1,307,996	2,694,906
1928	489,842	472,806	962,648	142,292	139,319	281,611	99,483	73,571	173,054	20,235	16,341	36,576	1,516,344	1,454,183	2,970,527
1929	484,088	473,659	957,747	153,815	147,519	301,334	106,624	92,377	199,001	18,744	15,042	33,786	1,501,297	1,444,585	2,945,882
1930	472,040	460,254	932,294	162,112	160,778	322,890	117,399	105,801	223,200	17,037	15,151	32,188	1,527,517	1,484,282	3,011,799
1931	402,209	373,897	776,196	160,064	156,120	316,184	100,507	100,235	200,742	14,922	14,684	29,606	1,376,319	1,335,937	2,712,256
1932	242,750	247,595	490,345	148,642	145,960	294,602	59,796	54,735	114,531	10,857	10,242	21,099	1,011,589	998,491	2,010,080
1933	317,947	310,707	628,654	161,778	152,221	313,999	61,733	61,193	122,926	9,610	8,674	18,284	1,143,583	1,130,836	2,274,419
1934	318,413	313,992	632,405	155,374	146,536	301,810	64,555	62,107	126,662	11,472	11,108	22,580	1,180,390	1,148,173	2,328,563
1935	391,107	384,734	775,841	154,927	145,147	300,074	61,195	61,570	122,765	12,448	11,527	23,975	1,296,082	1,270,035	2,566,117
1936	478,303	494,128	972,431	151,572	145,024	296,596	64,530	58,348	122,878	13,716	13,221	26,937	1,436,831	1,398,237	2,835,068
1937	603,929	632,025	1,235,954	180,195	170,678	350,873	66,163	59,717	125,880	16,517	15,695	32,361	1,859,579	1,828,245	3,687,824
1938	548,125	569,625	1,117,750	179,703	174,674	354,377	62,159	56,808	118,9671	16,776	15,585	32,361	1,859,579	1,828,245	3,687,824

Source: Board of Trade Journal

APPENDIX 4. NUMBER AND TONNAGE OF VESSELS BUILT IN SELECTED DISTRICTS WITH U.K. TOTALS DURING 1910-1913 AND 1920-1938.

	LONDON		LIVERPOOL		SOUTHAMPTON		HULL		NORTHEAST		GLASGOW		U.K. TOTAL	
YEAR	NO.	TONS	NO.	TONS	NO.	TONS	NO.	TONS	NO.	TONS	NO.	TONS	NO.	TONS
1910	82	6,632	27	7,616	16	801	59	12,219	159	251,166	163	168,333	843	518,194
1911	82	5,585	23	12,214	21	1,270	74	15,600	224	381,391	128	301,884	1035	808,079
1912	103	5,885	7	1,138	19	986	65	14,634	189	366,094	175	290,500	975	797,606
1913	96	6,036	7	12,298	13	763	63	13,692	186	417,119	188	323,458	1007	895,386
1920	39	2,241	4	18,331	19	2,259	24	11,744	96	253,186	172	291,059	717	727,673
1921	56	4,217	11	14,957	18	8,388	24	11,226	78	253,090	138	197,424	607	618,764
1922	34	2,016	7	6,387	8	922	16	1,001	75	210,828	75	148,126	426	449,472
1923	49	2,800	7	14,475	5	54	18	10,858	85	140,797	94	94,406	566	325,994
1924	37	1,539	9	10,974	16	1,561	33	3,600	162	302,276	168	276,443	802	736,149
1925	31	1,786	7	11,711	13	1,092	59	14,542	86	191,747	183	262,765	751	571,416
1926	26	1,187	3	19,007	6	242	24	4,549	42	96,182	90	138,446	453	301,069
1927	44	1,688	8	20,710	7	472	21	7,214	133	315,437	156	229,970	666	609,684
1928	51	1,611	11	44,248	14	563	35	3,948	132	309,637	150	304,507	707	736 087
1929	71	4,799	17	31,738	13	873	34	7,849	150	288,519	144	287,813	762	723,938
1930	109	6,157	16	31,792	18	744	45	7,531	77	168,769	117	299,598	755	474,667
1931	51	3,354	7	6,673	8	421	14	1,688	17	48,428	84	76,965	380	180,196
1932	33	2,258	5	2,843	9	79	10	868	18	33,363	36	32,487	281	99,651
1933	65	3,133	7	1,198	12	557	22	2,483	22	21,298	47	27,041	391	74,936
1934	79	5,227	9	9,938	16	259	20	2,211	28	32,492	85	130,475	606	216,575
1935	164	6,466	6	19,195	24	198	26	1,801	39	78,018	87	89,863	737	246,451
1936	139	6,388	6	25,523	23	585	41	4,046	92	180,208	125	156,001	893	461,670
1937	74	4,955	7	18,009	30	978	30	3,573	83	182,506	107	183,635	758	473,285
1938	61	3,046	10	37,516	30	1,517	22	708	58	156,316	115	221,109	594	468,436

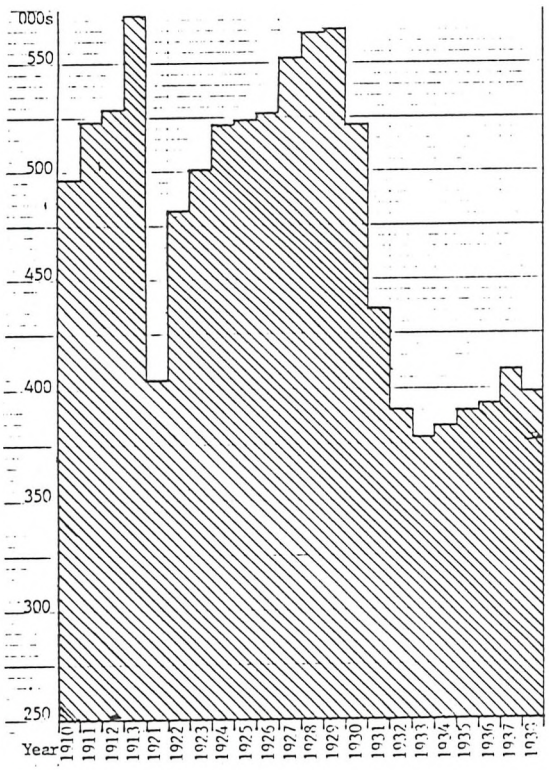
Source: Annual Statements of Shipping and Navigation of the U.K.

APPENDIX 5a. ANNUAL ENGAGEMENTS OF SEAMEN IN SELECTED PORTS WITH U.K. TOTALS.

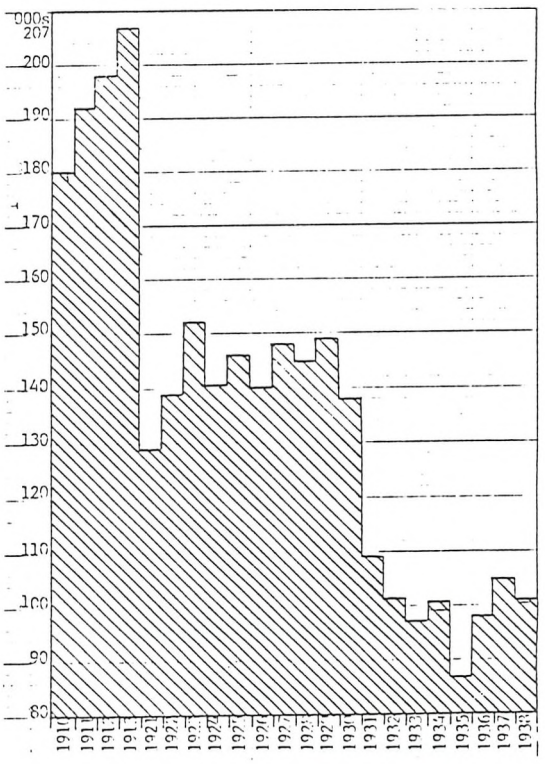
YEAR	L'POOL	LONDON	SO'TON	HULL	GLASGOW	BRISTOL	U.K.
1910	180,317	83,018	45,191	14,462	40,684	11,854	496,350
1911	192,059	91,096	47,407	15,318	48,286	14,470	524,203
1912	198,076	94,931	53,854	-	-	14,335	529,012
1913	207,035	101,417	58,723	-	-	13,537	572,681
1919	142,601	79,297	31,397	12,469	26,622	9,486	-
1920	144,308	95,427	62,113	16,113	27,365	13,012	-
1921	129,395	81,589	76,294	11,937	24,628	10,520	405,341
1922	139,746	85,087	106,985	16,084	26,339	12,199	481,662
1923	152,476	89,851	110,634	17,832	33,735	12,156	501,280
1924	141,480	98,246	106,854	19,553	38,572	11,305	521,757
1925	146,826	94,283	114,743	16,938	36,062	13,077	524,345
1926	140,922	116,331	121,084	17,199	37,475	13,901	526,504
1927	148,145	112,548	116,125	16,148	36,676	12,566	553,738
1928	145,137	121,913	121,569	15,528	37,218	11,698	564,598
1929	149,663	117,820	118,428	15,542	41,944	11,538	565,634
1930	138,728	115,729	111,439	12,280	40,224	10,822	521,173
1931	109,767	96,240	90,461	10,382	27,502	11,374	436,380
1932	101,718	91,152	73,658	9,743	26,838	8,013	391,340
1933	97,637	87,533	72,176	9,355	23,557	7,762	378,549
1934	91,358	94,630	70,322	9,043	27,380	9,083	387,618
1935	87,741	96,786	74,321	8,784	25,904	7,608	389,919
1936	98,043	96,869	61,092	10,099	30,632	8,264	393,737
1937	105,193	102,881	61,950	10,827	35,674	8,574	409,109
1938	100,533	102,156	54,305	11,413	34,388	8,418	398,351

Source: Ministry of Labour Gazette

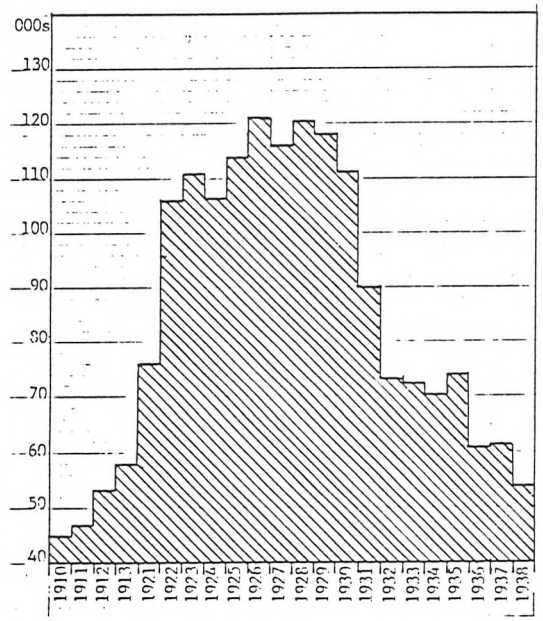
APPENDIX 5b. ANNUAL ENGAGEMENTS OF FOREIGN-GOING SEAMEN IN SELECTED PORTS WITH U.K. TOTAL



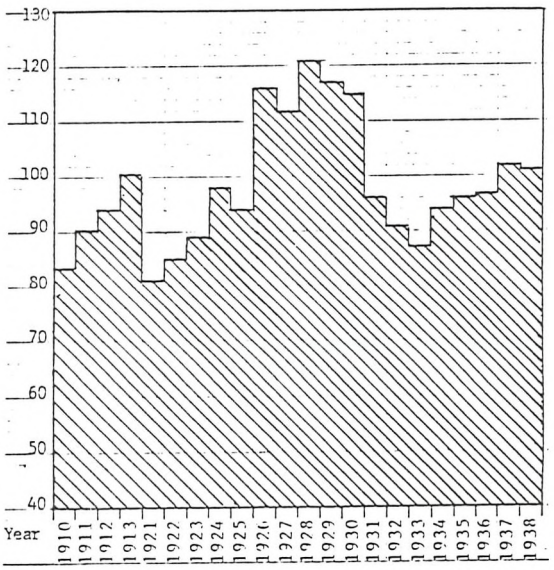
U.K. Totals



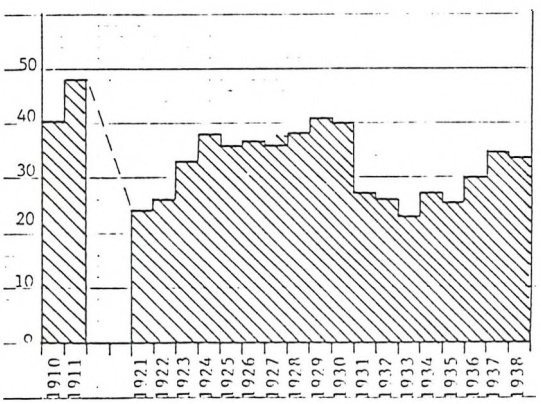
Liverpool



Southampton



London



Glasgow

APPENDIX 6. FIRST INTERIM REPORT OF THE MANNING COMMITTEE OF THE SHIPPING FEDERATION

Position of Accommodation. After part of the ship, with two mess rooms for sailors and firemen and a separate one for petty officers.

Washing Accommodation. Two spaces for sailors and firemen. It was said men preferred buckets for washing clothes. No fresh water to be provided, but heated showers would encourage their use.

Sanitary Arrangements. One W.C. per ten men or less, near washrooms and separated from them by steel partitions. Enamelled pans, removable seats and adequate flushing were recommended. Separate forepart W.C. should also be provided for the use of dock labourers while in port.

Berth Arrangement. An improvement of space was recommended by recessing upper berths.

Internal Surfaces were to be cork cement to prevent condensation, despite being hard to clean.

Floors were to be wood or cheaper composition.

Heating and Ventilation. The National Association of Heating, Ventilation and Domestic Engineering Employers had been asked to assist. They were willing to do so, but there was no information available. The committee recommended central heating by boilers in the two messrooms with the hot water led to sleeping quarters by pipes.

Ventilation. Natural ventilation could be relied upon. Mechanical ventilation provided the advantage of heating and cooling facility, but was liable to break down, which was a disadvantage. It was also expensive.

Lighting. Side scuttles, electric lights and oil lamps.

Cleansing. Committee saw the master as responsible rather than the crew. A 5s. fine for not keeping quarters clean was pointed out as being in the ordinary articles.

Drying Room. Passage 3 ft. wide with a door at either end - thwartships.

Isolation Hospital on foreign-going vessels with 50 men or more, plus effective mosquito protection.

Source: BOT Crew Space. PRO: MT9/2709/M14998/30.

APPENDIX 7. PRINTED RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON A SURVEY OF DECEMBER 1928 BY THE ASSOCIATION OF PORT SANITARY AUTHORITIES.

Separate messroom.
Mosquito protection in crews quarters.
White or light paint in crews quarters.
Metal bunks and sheathing "to be rendered vermin proof."
Showers, washbasins, hot and cold water, with fresh water supply for basins.
Regulations re storage of drinking water were recommended.
Modern galley (construction and equipment) on vessels of 300 registered tons and over.
Rat proof food storage away from sleeping quarters.

Source: BOT Crew Spaces. PRO: MT9/2709/M14998/30.

APPENDIX 8. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY BOARD OF TRADE TECHNICAL ADVISORS IN 1930.

a. i Regular cleaning and painting of quarters.
ii Repairs to be effected.
iii Master to keep record of these periodic overhauls.
b. Metal bunks costing 40s. per bed.
c. Old fashioned trough W.C. without flushing arrangements to be fitted with earthenware or cast iron hopper W.C.s, enamelled inside, with hard wood seats, sanitary tank and flushing arrangements.
d. Wash place with means of fresh water shower preferable to bath.
e. Drying rooms for wet clothes - not to be left in sleeping quarters.
f. Oilskins and dirty clothes [overalls] lockers to be a suitable height above deck.
g. Chain pipes to be replaced by steel unless wood is a substantial thickness and properly caulked.
h. Mess Rooms to be provided instead of eating in sleeping quarters.
i. Heating required in sleeping quarters and mess rooms.
j. Steelwork exposed to open air to be cork cemented and wood linings to be suitably ventilated.
k. Ventilation - draught-giving overhead ventilation should be trunked under deck to diffuse air.
l. Lighting to be provided.

Source: BOT Crew Spaces. PRO: MT9/2759/M4905/30.

APPENDIX 9. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON CREW ACCOMMODATION BY A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE SHIPPING FEDERATION, NATIONAL UNION OF SEAMEN AND OFFICERS' SOCIETY SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF TRADE ON MAY 3, 1939.

1. Inspections - to be made daily by master or officers.
2. Cleaning - ratings to clean mess, washrooms and sleeping quarters every week thoroughly in ships' time. Men to use own time daily to keep sleeping quarters tidy.
3. Paintwork - repainting should be white or bright.
4. Beds,bedding - foreign-going and long voyage ships should carry spare blankets to enable rotation cleaning.
5. Vermin - any sign of bugs or eggs to be reported. Insecticides and disinfectant to be kept on board.
6. Clothes lockers - except on the smallest ships men should have some place provided, even if outside quarters, to avoid clothes being hung on cords.
7. End of voyage - leave accommodation as they would like to find it - otherwise it was not fair to incoming crew.
8. Shore workers - quarters may be made dirty or untidy by shore workers. As far as practicable only crew should be allowed to go in crews quarters.
9. Amenities - encourage men to treat quarters as home. In port keep dynamo going to light and ventilate quarters. Encourage men to improve their quarters with bunk curtains, mirrors, towel rails, etc.

The above recommendations were approved and signed by the secretaries of the National Maritime Board panels.

Source: BOT Crew Spaces. PRO: MT9/2966/M15023/38.

APPENDIX 10. THE MEMBERS OF THE COURT OF ENQUIRY INTO WAGES, RATES AND CONDITIONS OF MEN EMPLOYED IN DOCKS AND WATERSIDE LABOUR.

National Council of Port Labour Employers.

Lord Shaw of Dunfermline (independent chairman).

Sir Joseph Broodbank (PLA).

Frederick Scrutton (Scruttons Ltd., Master Porters, Stevedores and Cargo Superintendents, London).

John Smethurst.

Sir Lionel Fletcher (Commander R.N., Captain, 6th Rifle Battalion the King's Liverpool Regiment).

National Transport Workers Federation.

Harry Gosling (PLA and General Secretary Amalgamated Society of Watermen and Lightermen).

Ben Tillett M.P. (General Secretary Dock,Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union).

Robert Williams (Secretary NIWF).

A. Pugh (NIWF member).

Principal witnesses for the employers:

Sir Alfred Booth (Chairman Cunard S.S. Company and Liverpool Steamship Owners Association).

Lord Devonport (Chairman PLA).

NIWF witnesses:

Trade union leaders and local trade union officials in the docks industry.

APPENDIX 12. SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY PASSENGERS SHOWN AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL PASSENGERS ARRIVING AND EMBARKING AT SOUTHAMPTON.

YEAR	%	YEAR	%
1913	47.73	1928	49.91
1919	62.03	1929	49.57
1920	67.84	1930	46.81
1921	62.98	1931	53.4
1922	50.89	1932	51.65
1923	48.30*	1933	47.52
1924	49.55	1934	49.57
1925	47.76	1935	41.85
1926	51.71	1936	41.79
1927	50.53	1937	43.52

* Approximate.

Source: Calculated from annual passenger totals as provided by the Southern Railway Company and published in the Southampton local press, and the Southern Railway Company Annual Reports. PRO: RAIL 655 59-64.

Appendix 11a. Conversion to numerical values of written evaluations of employment levels for dockworkers in Southampton during the years 1910, 1911, 1913 and 1921-38.

YEAR	1910	1911	1913	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	TOTAL	AV:
JAN	5	3	6	2	2	4	3	6	5	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	8	7	6	81	3·85
FEB	6	4	6	2	3	3	3	5	3	3	6	4	3	3	1	2	3	3	8	7	6	84	4·00
MAR	5	6	3	2	3	3	6	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	1	2	5	6	6	8	6	84	4·00
APL	5	6	5	2	3	4	6	2	3	6	3	4	3	3	2	2	3	5	5	8	5	85	4·04
MAY	6	6	4	2	3	4	6	1	6	6	6	4	6	3	2	2	3	5	6	8	6	95	4·52
JUN	6	6	5	2	4	6	7	8	8	8	8	8	6	6	3	5	6	8	6	8	5	129	6·14
JUL	6	3	6	3	4	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	7	6	8	8	8	7	131	6·23
AUG	5	6	4	2	6	5	6	5	5	7	5	5	6	5	3	7	6	8	8	8	7	119	5·66
SEP	5	5	5	3	5	7	6	6	6	6	6	4	8	5	5	6	6	8	8	7	7	124	5·90
OCT	6	5	5	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	3	5	6	6	8	8	8	6	122	5·80
NOV	3	5	6	4	6	5	6	5	6	6	3	3	3	3	3	5	4	7	8	8	3	99	4·71
DEC	3	5	5	3	5	3	6	4	5	6	6	3	6	3	3	5	4	7	8	7	3	100	4·76
TOTAL	61	60	60	31	50	56	67	58	63	67	62	53	59	46	36	51	55	75	87	92	67		
AV:	5·08	5·00	5·00	2·58	4·16	4·66	5·58	4·83	5·25	5·58	5·16	4·41	4·91	3·83	3·00	4·25	4·58	6·25	7·25	7·66	5·58		

Points Code

8	- Good	4	- Quiet
7	- Fairly Good	3	- Slack/Poor
6	- Fair	2	- Bad
5	- Moderate	1	- Very Bad

Appendix 11b. Conversion to numerical values of written evaluations of employment levels for dockworkers in Hull during the years 1910, 1911, 1913 and 1921-38.

YEAR	1910	1911	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	TOTAL	AV:
JAN	5	5	3	3	6	5	3	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	3	3	2	5	6	87	4·35
FEB	5	5	3	3	6	6	3	5	5	6	4	3	5	5	5	3	2	5	5	6	90	4·50
MAR	5	5	3	3	5	3	2	6	5	5	3	2	3	5	5	3	6	6	5	6	86	4·30
APL	5	5	3	4	6	3	2	3	4	6	4	3	5	5	5	3	5	3	5	6	85	4·25
MAY	6	5	2	6	5	3	2	1	6	6	5	3	5	5	5	4	6	4	5	5	89	4·45
JUN	5	2	2	5	6	5	3	3	6	6	5	4	5	5	3	3	8	5	5	5	91	4·55
JUL	5	6	2	5	6	6	3	3	6	6	5	3	5	5	5	3	8	6	6	5	99	4·95
AUG	5	6	2	5	6	6	2	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	6	8	6	6	5	106	5·30
SEP	5	5	3	6	6	3	2	6	7	6	6	5	4	5	5	3	8	5	6	5	101	5·05
OCT	8	4	2	6	5	3	3	6	3	6	8	5	5	5	5	2	8	5	6	5	100	5·00
NOV	5	5	3	3	6	3	5	5	4	3	7	5	5	5	5	4	8	5	6	5	97	4·85
DEC	5	4	3	3	6	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	6	2	7	5	6	5	95	4·75
TOTAL	64	57	31	52	69	51	35	54	60	66	62	46	57	60	58	39	77	57	66	64		
AV:	5·33	4·75	2·58	4·33	5·75	4·25	2·91	4·50	5·00	5·50	5·16	3·83	4·75	5·00	4·83	3·25	6·41	4·75	5·50	5·33		

Points Code

8 - Good
7 - Fairly Good
6 - Fair
5 - Moderate
4 - Quiet
3 - Slack/Poor
2 - Bad
1 - Very Bad

Appendix 11c. Conversion to numerical values of written evaluations of employment levels for dockworkers in Glasgow during the years 1910, 1911, 1913 and 1921-38.

YEAR	1910	1911	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	TOTAL	AV:
JAN	6	2	2	2	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	3	2	2	5	5	6	5	6	89	4.45
FEB	5	2	2	6	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	2	2	2	5	5	6	5	6	91	4.55
MAR	4	3	2	3	6	5	5	6	5	6	6	6	3	2	2	5	6	6	5	6	92	4.60
APL	5	4	2	4	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	2	3	2	5	6	6	6	6	98	4.90
MAY	5	3	1	6	6	6	6	2	5	6	6	5	2	2	2	6	6	6	6	5	92	4.60
JUN	5	2	2	6	5	6	5	3	6	6	6	6	5	5	3	5	6	6	7	5	108	5.40
JUL	3	6	2	4	6	6	5	3	6	6	6	6	2	5	2	6	6	6	7	5	98	4.90
AUG	5	5	1	4	5	6	5	3	6	6	6	6	2	5	2	5	5	6	6	5	94	4.70
SEP	5	8	2	4	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	3	5	2	6	5	6	6	5	102	5.10
OCT	5	7	2	4	6	6	5	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	8	5	6	6	6	111	5.55
NOV	5	8	3	5	6	6	5	5	6	5	6	5	6	5	5	6	8	6	6	6	118	5.90
DEC	5	6	5	6	6	6	5	5	6	5	6	2	2	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	105	5.25
TOTAL	58	56	26	54	68	69	62	54	68	70	72	64	37	47	34	67	69	72	71	66		
AV:	4.83	4.66	2.16	4.50	5.66	5.75	5.16	5.50	5.66	5.83	6.00	5.33	3.08	3.91	2.83	5.58	5.75	6.00	5.91	5.50		

Points Code

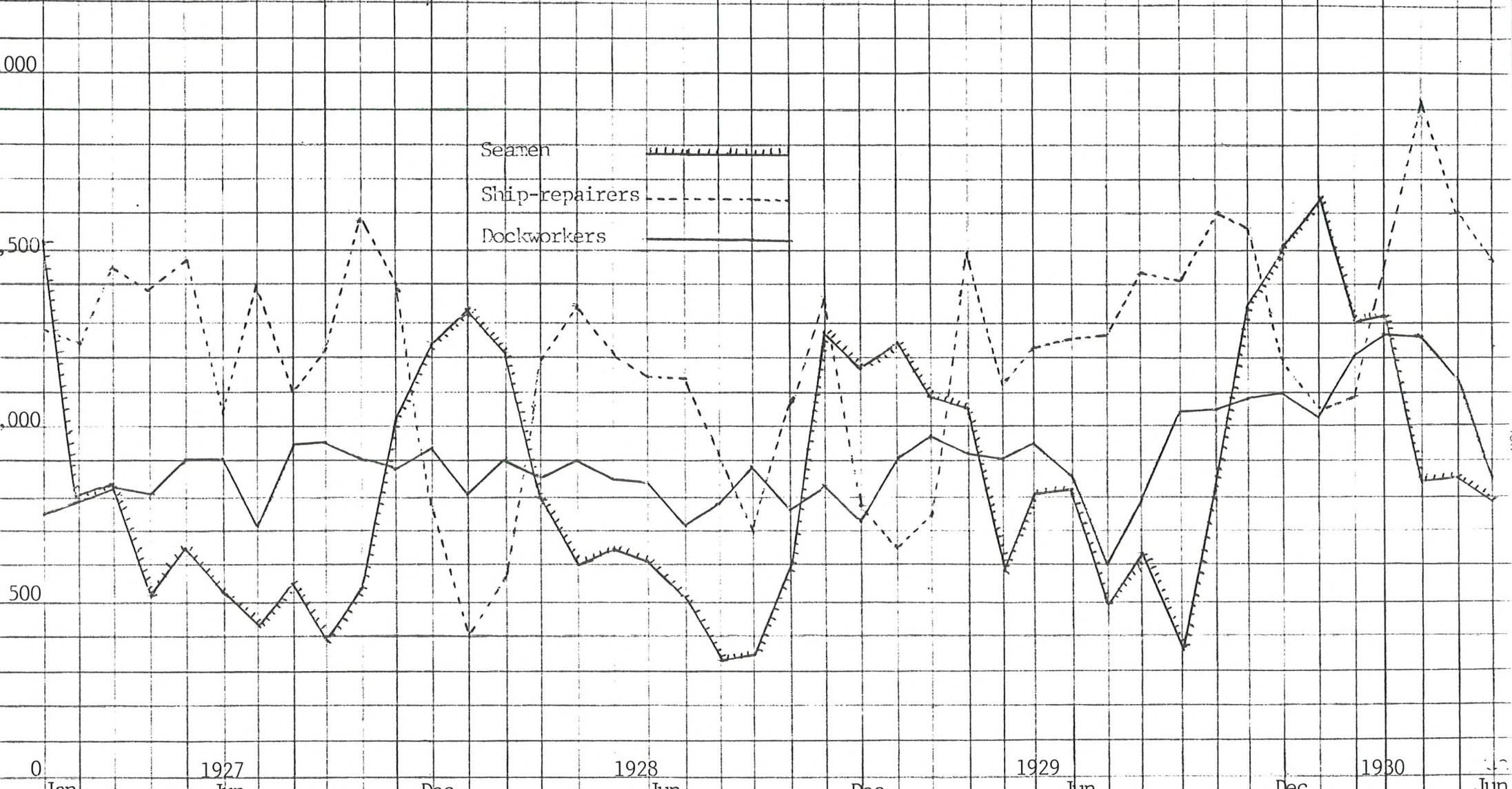
8 - Good
7 - Fairly Good
6 - Fair
5 - Moderate
4 - Quiet
3 - Slack/Poor
2 - Bad
1 - Very Bad

Appendix 11d. Conversion to numerical values of written evaluations of employment levels for dockworkers in Bristol during the years 1910, 1911, 1913 and 1921-38.

YEAR	1910	1911	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	TOTAL	AV:
JAN	5	3	2	2	6	4	8	8	3	3	7	4	3	3	3	2	5	8	7	8	94	4·70
FEB	6	2	2	3	4	3	6	3	6	3	6	2	3	6	4	2	3	8	5	4	81	4·05
MAR	2	3	1	3	3	3	6	3	7	3	6	3	3	3	7	5	4	7	4	4	80	4·00
APL	6	3	1	3	5	5	6	3	6	3	6	3	6	4	3	6	5	7	4	4	89	4·45
MAY	5	4	1	3	3	3	6	3	3	3	5	2	4	3	3	3	4	7	4	4	73	3·65
JUN	8	4	1	6	6	6	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	6	6	3	4	7	4	4	88	4·40
JUL	6	8	3	6	6	7	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	6	3	5	7	4	7	97	4·85
AUG	5	8	2	6	6	7	3	5	5	4	5	2	4	3	7	6	4	7	6	8	103	5·15
SEP	8	8	3	3	6	7	3	5	6	6	6	3	4	6	7	6	6	7	8	7	115	5·75
OCT	7	5	3	3	6	8	3	6	4	6	8	4	8	3	7	3	7	8	8	7	114	5·70
NOV	7	5	3	7	3	6	6	8	8	5	7	4	6	3	6	5	7	8	7	7	118	5·90
DEC	8	8	3	6	3	8	8	8	6	8	8	4	6	3	7	5	7	8	8	7	129	6·45
TOTAL	73	61	25	51	57	67	63	58	61	50	72	37	54	47	66	49	61	89	69	71		
AV:	6·08	5·08	2·08	4·25	4·75	5·58	5·25	4·83	5·08	4·16	6·00	3·08	4·50	3·91	5·50	4·08	5·08	7·41	5·75	5·91		

Points Code

8 - Good
7 - Fairly Good
6 - Fair
5 - Moderate
4 - Quiet
3 - Slack/Poor
2 - Bad
1 - Very Bad



APPENDIX 13. SOUTHAMPTON : UNEMPLOYMENT OF SEAMEN, DOCKERS AND SHIP REPAIRERS (PRO: LAB2/1048/ET4283/9/1930

(Copy of MS. graph prepared by Percy Ford and sent to the MOL).

APPENDIX 14. SEA-GOING OCCUPATIONS

According to the Merchant Shipping Act every member of a ships' crew was regarded as a seamen, with the exception of the Commander and apprentices.

The full list of eighty distinct occupations includes the following:-

Boatswains
Boatswain's Mate
Able Seamen
Ordinary Seamen
Deck Boys
Lamp Trimmers
Baggage Master
Master-at-Arms
Donkeymen
Greasers
Leading Firemen
Trimmers
Carpenters
Electricians
Plumbers
Boilermakers
Fire Brigade Men
Wireless Operators
Ships' Police
Storekeepers
Shop Assistants
Ticket Agents
Conductors
Interpreters

Surgeon
Nurses
Dispensers
Hospital Attendants
Writers
Stenographers
Librarians
Musicians
Bank Clerks
Printers
Gardeners
Bedroom Stewards
Stewardesses
Waiters
Bell Boys
Bakers
Pastry Cooks
Pantrymen
Butchers
Kosher Cooks
Galley Ratings
Ships' Cook (for crew)

Hairdressers
Photographers
Hostess

Ships' Officers

Source: Hampshire Advertiser, August 11, 1928.

APPENDIX 15. ANNUAL TOTALS OF SEAMEN'S ENGAGEMENTS AND CREW LANDED.

YEAR	Number of crew landed.	Foreign-going seamen's engagements.
1910	163,229	45,191
1912	167,556	53,854
1919	144,501	31,397
1920	154,541	62,261
1921	187,767	76,204
1922	187,296	106,985
1923	320,453	110,634
1924	309,926	106,854
1925	335,453	114,743
1926	343,976	121,084
1927	337,142	116,125
1928	400,905	121,569
1929	384,023	118,428
1930	484,869	111,439
1931	309,156	90,461
1932	400,410	73,658
1933	407,376	72,176
1934	409,187	70,523
1935	547,455	74,321
1936	496,590	61,092
1937	460,217	61,950
1938	628,192	54,305

Sources: Crew landed - Southampton Port Sanitary Authority Annual Reports.
Seamen's Engagements - Ministry of Labour Gazette.

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Abbreviations:

LUA - University of Liverpool Archives
MRC - Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick
NMM - National Maritime Museum, Brass Foundry, Woolwich Arsenal, London.
PRO - Public Records Office, Kew, London.
SRO - Southampton Records Office, Civic Centre, Southampton.

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LAB 8 Employment Department

LAB 9 Industrial Relations

MT 9 Marine Department, Correspondence and Papers

MT 25 Ministry of Shipping

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MT 63 Port and Transit Executive Committee

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