

# The International Federation of Ship, Dock, and River Workers.

## WHAT WE WANT, WHY WE WANT IT, AND HOW WE MEAN TO GET IT.

### FELLOW WORKERS—

In the discussions of Labour matters during the past few years it has been the custom to refer to the necessity for a "living wage" for the workers, and generally speaking it is meant to imply that all workmen and women should be able to obtain a sufficiency of life's necessities to maintain them in normal health. To admit the necessity of so much, and to declare that this should be the first charge upon industry, marks a distinct advance upon the industrial morality of a few years ago, when, in theory as well as in practice, it was not considered necessary to pay the worker one farthing more than his services could be obtained for, even though his might not be half sufficient to maintain him in health.

But we must protest against the false morality underlying the "living wage" notion. It virtually declares that the workers should get sufficient to maintain them in normal health, and implies that when they do get that amount, that is all they may morally claim irrespective of what may be the real value of their labour.

We frankly make known to all concerned to understand our attitude in this important matter that we accept and advocate the economics and morality that the only satisfactory reward to the worker is the full value of the work performed by him, minus managerial charges; any other basis means acquiescence in a system that recognises the right of a section to live without work and at somebody else's expense.

Now, with all our boasted advance as a nation, the condition of the larger half of the workers in Great Britain is simply damnable. They have been and are living from hand to mouth on the plainest food, in the most meagre fashion, with furniture consisting of a few chairs, benches and tables, and a wholesale absence of any real comforts. The hypocritical, canting, preaching fraternity have backed up the capitalist class in advising and even commanding the poor wretches to be content with this state of things, and such utter fools have the workers been, in consequence of the lack of any real intelligence in these matters, that for the most part they have quietly plodded away working all hours possible when they had the chance, with the alternative of a spell of out of work and accompanying starvation.

Now we mean to wage a determined warfare against these slavish and miserable conditions. We shall habitually do battle against the causes of such enslavement, holding, as we do, that every person should have an opportunity to work usefully, and should receive for that enough to enable him and his family to live in something like comfort.

It has been and still is the custom in many places to treat dock labourers and sailors and firemen as such inferior creatures that they are not to be counted as being on the same level as most other workmen. It is our duty to change all this, and change it we will! There are difficulties in connection with the shipping trades that are not experienced in many other industries, especially in the case of sailors and firemen, where, in consequence of their work being done



on board ship, with no possible opportunity of calling a meeting, or writing to papers, or sending a deputation to ventilate their grievances, but are hemmed in by laws and regulations, made not by them nor for them but by those who treat them as cattle, for the performance of some of the heaviest and most hazardous toil that ever fell to the lot of man to perform. Dock, wharf and river labourers again are subjected to the evils arising from fluctuations caused not only by the seasonal and unscientific methods of conducting the trade but also accentuated by the seasons and bad weather.

But all such difficulties might be guarded against and in large part eliminated, and we boldly declare in favour of as much centralised control as may prove necessary to enable us to get for sailors and dockers conditions at least as good as those obtained by any other well-organised section of workers. We must get, and we mean to have, better wages and better regulated working hours, and all this can be had through and by means of proper organisation.

**The docker's life shall be made as bright and cheerful as that of any other worker, and where he and the sailor and fireman runs exceptional risk we will see to it that they get exceptional recognition.**

To the rank and file we repeat that we are familiar with all the arguments that the shipowner, dock director or wharfinger can advance, and we can meet them all and they know it. We raise not one word of complaint about the employers organising to oppose us—that they are perfectly welcome to do. The battle will ultimately go to the strong, the astute, and morally right. We are getting our strength added to every day by the growth of the Unions consequent upon our special organising campaigns, the necessary astuteness we are developing, and the Federation Button is an indication of it, already causing the employers to take the trouble and expense of issuing sillily-drafted circulars to combat our effort in spite of their inane protestations that there was absolutely nothing in the agitation other than a little frothy spouting of a few agitators. **We heartily thank them** for this fresh evidence of their serious regard for us, and for the extra special advertisement they are giving the Federation button. In one thing only will we not compete with them, and that is, we disdain to throw such coarse epithets at them as they, in the enjoyment of educational advantages as gentlemen, think it right and proper to throw at us. The vulgar and abusive language that they are indulging in is pitiful to think of, but again, it is their unwilling testimony to the reality of our agitation and the developing strength of our glorious Federation. Through the Federation we can do all things necessary, including bringing pressure to bear upon Municipal bodies, upon Parliament and Governments, and we shall unhesitatingly use the Federation in all these directions.

The order to our men is "Prepare for Action," for there is no knowing at what hour the capitalists of the shipping industries may open fire. Let them. If it's our turn to seek we will not deny them the indulgence. But remember through it all our whole fight is not to fight down capitalists but to raise the standard of the workers, and if the latter be done by peaceful means so much the better, say we. If the employers, by their stubborn refusal to negotiate, compel rougher work then on their heads will rest the responsibility. But argued into contentment with present conditions we can never be, so we advise they need not try it on!

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Issued by the Central Council of the International Federation of  
Ship, Dock, and River Workers.

BRIDGE HOUSE, 181, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET,  
LONDON, E.C.,

Leaflet No.

October, 1896.



3

6

# The International Federation of Ship, Dock & River Workers.

## THE FEDERATION BUTTON.

**T**HE wearing of the Federation Button, indicating as it does paid up membership in the Union and the Federation of Unions, does not appear to be acceptable to some of the Dock Directors and Wharfingers. Among the first to use threats to the men as to what serious consequences would ensue if they dared to wear this Button were the proprietors of Butler's Wharf, a firm who in times past have openly declared their endorsement of Trade Unionism. Now, however, they have shown their animosity by not only threatening the men as to the risk of loss of employment should they wear the Button, but have gone the length of acting as general bill distributors, printing and circulating a stupidly-worded leaflet headed "Skulkers' Button," to which there is neither name of an individual nor of an organisation appended. Are they ashamed of it? Doubtless they are, as well they may be, for it is a wickedly false misrepresentation as to what the Button—meaning the Federation Button—really indicates. In England we have already successfully fought for the right of combination, and we shall not ask permission from Butler's Wharf authorities, Dock Directors, or *Fairplay*, as to whether we may organise or not; we have done it, are now doing it, and intend to continue to do it, and we shall simply please ourselves as to the means we adopt to indicate to our mates the fact that we are members.

**We fear neither shipowner, dock director, or Wharfinger;** and if they, as a combination of employers, in addition to announcing the fact that they are so combined, think well to wear a button, rosette, badge, or chimney-pot hats, or adopt the Piccadilly limp, they are welcome to do so as far as we are concerned; and on our side we repeat we shall adopt precisely what means we choose of telling workmates and others interested what organisations we belong to.

When these employers, with the impudence of their class, want to control the whole of the energy of the men and deliberately refuse to pay more than one-half of the value of a man's labour, themselves exploiting the men of the other half, it is time we spoke out clearly about their hypocritical and dishonourable behaviour; the man that does the roguery is the wharfinger and dock director, who extracts a shilling's worth of work from the men and refuses to pay more than sixpence for it. This is going on in London just now, and in the neighbourhood of Tooley Street and Tower Bridge.

Wharfingers ought to be better employed than to spend time whining about "loss of British trade and impossibility of making profits." It's too late in the day for this, and we see in the trouble they are taking to prevent the Federation Button being worn a recognition on their part of the power of the Federation. We can meet any of them in discussion and are willing to do so, and they know it, but we do not ask them to condescend to meet us. Let them take their own course, it shall not be our fault if we don't settle difficulties by discussion; but meantime we bid the men be fearless, and steadily carry on the work of organisation, and ere long your wages shall be higher and the work better regulated, and the loyal wearing of the Button, which every man in Great Britain has a right to do if he thinks well, will materially help on the organisation and the spirit necessary to enable us to overcome all difficulties.

Issued by the Central Council of the INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF SHIP, DOCK AND RIVER WORKERS.

181, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, E.C.—October, 1896.

LEAFLET NO. 3

DECEMBER 10TH, 1896.



# The Mamburg Dockers' Strike.

## HELP URGENTLY NEEDED!

The situation at Hamburg is one of peculiar importance to this country. The Dockers, smarting under a sense of Low Wages and Truck System, have resorted to Trade Union practice to obtain an improvement in their condition. Engaged in the Shipping Industries, on lines exactly like ourselves in the ports of Great Britain, and feeling the effects of international competition acutely, the workmen, nevertheless, have resolved to insist upon better conditions and are now engaged in a gallant fight against great odds to raise their standard by means approved of and long ago legalised in this country.

Whoever else may condemn the Hamburg men, we in Great Britain must surely applaud and help them. They have shown their capacity to formulate their grievances and to temperately state their case, they have exhibited the courage of brave men, when, finding their reasonable claims ignored they refuse to longer acquiesce in the old conditions.

Mr. G. KELLERMAN, the German Dockers' Union President, has been sent here by the Hamburg Strike Committee to state the exact facts in person, and he tells us that 20,000 men are now on strike, but that some 800 blacklegs from this country are working and a similar number from Germany, still there are no signs whatever of the Hamburg men giving way, they are perfectly self-possessed and self-reliant, saving of course that financial help is called for. £8000 a week are required to maintain the men, their wives, and children, the bulk of this is coming from Germany itself, but it surely is our duty in Britain to help by all means in our power so determined a fight on behalf of the cause of labour.

The International Federation of Ship, Dock and River Workers, hereby earnestly appeals to all the Trade Unionists of Great Britain to promptly render financial assistance to the Hamburg men. We have our own grievances of a sufficiently serious character which must soon receive attention, but as a matter of honour and expediency we are bound to treat the Hamburg fight as our fight too. If the Hamburg men are defeated, without doubt we should suffer evil consequences not only in the Ports, but in the cause of labour generally, conversely, if the Hamburg men win, the labour cause here will gain considerably and it will be the easier for re-adjustments to be made.

If any are concerned to understand what is the attitude of the International Federation toward Strikes, then we openly declare that we are honestly anxious to avoid all Strikes and Lock-outs, but we must make it equally clear that we will not purchase peace by continuous industrial and social slavery. In every instance, without exception, we will always strive to bring about adjustments by peaceful discussion, but if the Capitalist Class refuse to reason, then we are bound in honour and justice to our manhood and those dependent upon us, to resort to those methods of Trade Union action, the efficacy of which has been proved a thousand times. We therefore call upon the Trade Councils of this country to systematise collections being regularly made and remitted direct to this office. We ask that each Trade Union Executive shall promptly consider the question of a Special Vote where this has not already been done, and we appeal to the sympathetic public to help us in this endeavour to establish a true basis of Internationalism and to show that we are above the meanness of National Hatreds, and can gladly render assistance to our German Fellow Workers.

Cheques and P.O's. may be made payable to TOM MANN, and crossed "London and South Western Bank."

*The International  
Federation of Ship, Dock and  
River Workers,  
181, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C*

DECEMBER 16TH, 1896.

Yours in the Cause of Labour,

For the Central Council of the International Federation,

**TOM MANN.**



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# International Federation of Ship, Dock, & River Workers.

## To the Tug Boatmen of the River Thames.

FELLOW WORKERS,

We desire to call your attention to the re-organisation that is now going on in the ranks of all sea-going men, Ship, Dock, and River workers of all sections. Since 1890 many changes for the worse have taken place; some blunders have been made and some of the Unions became very weak. Since the formation of the International Federation six months ago a great change for the better has set in, and we are very anxious that the men on the sea-going tugs and the up-river tugs should share in the improved conditions.

When you were organised before you obtained considerable advances, which have since been lost; your wages have been reduced quite 16 per cent. and your working hours are outrageously long.

We hold that no man ought to be compelled to work such long spells as you do, and be away from home and stuck on a tug for weeks together for such pay as you are now getting. And as the other sections of river workers are not only organising, but intend using their organisation to obtain better conditions, we want to ask you if you will not re-organise also and join us in our next endeavour for an improvement.

It is no use sitting idly by and recalling the failings and misdeeds of others. We must throw off despondency and selfishness and join with our mates to make conditions better.

We are glad to inform you that the Federation at present covers 80 per cent. of the organised port workers and sea-going men of the British Isles, and we are in touch with all the chief ports of Europe and America.

Some of the up-river tugmen we know belong to the Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Land and Marine Union, and we want to strengthen that and every other Union that covers the men in the ports. If the sea-going tugmen don't like any of the existing Unions and wish to form one for themselves, we shall be very willing to help them do so. We know the importance of the tugmen, and desire to be in the closest possible friendly touch with them, that we may mutually benefit by the connection.

If any person, or group of persons so employed, will address a letter to the Chairman, International Federation, 181, Queen Victoria Street, E.C., we will gladly give the matter our best attention.

As an important International Conference of Ship, Dock and River men is to be held at the end of February in London, we should be glad to do something immediately that you may be represented there.

Yours faithfully,

THE CENTRAL COUNCIL,  
International Federation of Ship, Dock, and River Workers.

QUEEN VICTORIA STREET,  
LONDON, E.C.,  
January, 1897.