

**“We had good days and bad days”:
Triumph and tragedy in the oral history
narratives of Liverpool dockers**

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MA History: Politics, Culture and National Identities, 1789 to the Present

Universiteit Leiden

Master thesis submitted for the degree of:

Master of Arts

Submitted 29 August 2019

Supervisor: Dr. B.S. van der Steen

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List of abbreviations

ABC	Antwerp Bulk Carriers Container Line
ACL	American Container Line
BCL	Baltic Shipping Container Line
CANMAR	Canada Maritime Shipping Agency
CAST	Cast Group Container Line
CCL	Continental Container Line
IDC	International Dockworkers' Council
ILWU	International Longshore and Warehouse Union
ITF	International Transport Federation
KMU	May 1 Labor Movement (Kilusang Mayo Uno)
MDHC	Mersey Docks and Harbour Company
MUA	Maritime Union of Australia
NDLS	National Dock Labour Scheme
OOCL	Orient Overseas Container Line
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
WoW	Women of the Waterfront

Introduction

On 25 September 1995, Terry Teague was working at the Royal Seaforth Container Terminal in Liverpool. He received consignments, checked off cargo, and directed containers to ships, as he had done since leaving school at the age of 16 in 1967. The next day, Teague, in addition to around 500 other dockworkers, had been sacked after honouring a picket line established in support of 22 of their colleagues. The 22 dockers, who were also employed by the Merseyside Dock and Harbour Company (MDHC), were told to work overtime just before the end of their shifts. While this late-notice request was not unheard of, the news that their usual overtime arrangements would not apply led the dockers to consult their union representative, which resulted in them being sacked. Just a few months later, Teague was on the quayside in the Port of Montreal, approximately 5,230km from his home. Initially concealed by teams of morning shift workers, he climbed a crane, and unfurled a banner announcing that the Canadian container firm, Cast Container Line (CCL), was employing “scab” labour in Liverpool. He remained there for the rest of the day, while other workers refused to unload a ship from Liverpool. When recounting this experience, Teague said:

It was only when I was climbing up these gantries and was about, what, 60 foot up in the air or whatever, that I said, “what am I doing?”. You’re looking down on a ship in a different country, knowing that we shouldn’t be there. There’s police coming to remove me from the gantries. How are they going to do it? Are they gonna use health and safety methods, or are they just going to drag me out? Maybe that was the only type of fear that we had, because the solidarity among friends, work colleagues and all that gave you great strength.¹

These actions in Montreal represent one of many instances in which the Liverpool dockers, and their supporters across the world, risked their livelihoods in their campaign against the MDHC. This thesis examines narratives of the dispute, such as Teague’s.

The backdrop against which the Liverpool Dock Dispute took place will be presented in the first chapter but, at this point, it is worth noting the reasons why the dispute warrants scrutiny. Firstly, lasting 850 days (28 months), it has been labelled “one of the longest, most bitter and overlooked” movements in British labour history.² In addition to the great financial hardship that the dockers endured, their struggle also had, at times, fatal implications for their health.³ Secondly, the length of the campaign becomes all the more noteworthy given that the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) - and therefore the dockers’ supranational representative, the International Transport

¹ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

² Brian Marren, “The Liverpool Dock Strike, 1995–98: a resurgence of solidarity in the age of globalisation”, *Labor History* 57, no. 4 (2016), 464.

³ Most of the dockers had mortgage payments to keep up with, and many incurred up to £20,000 worth of debt at a time when they should have been planning their retirement. Additionally, the dispute’s length is widely thought to have contributed to a number of dockworkers’ deaths resulting from stress-induced heart conditions. See: Carter et al (2003), 294.

Federation (ITF) - made the controversial decision not to formally support their campaign. Thirdly, as some argue, the absence of union support forced the dockers to wage an innovative and relatively successful international campaign. This generated over five million pounds of financial support, and resulted in industrial activity taking place in 105 ports in some 32 countries.⁴ For this reason, the conflict has been said to represent a “particularly innovative and rare modality of grass-roots based labour internationalism”.⁵ Lastly, the dispute is known for the dockers’ failure to secure their demands, which were the reinstatement of the 500 workers, with more secure contracts, and the return of trade union representation.

Despite a number of valuable contributions, the extent of the secondary literature on the Liverpool Dock Dispute remains relatively modest. Moreover, taken as a whole, it paints a somewhat inconclusive picture of the movement. This thesis seeks to illuminate three particular areas of neglect. Firstly, there is a broad failure by the majority of the literature to consider the perspectives of the Liverpool dockers and their supporters. Therefore, the dispute is yet to be historicised from a more cultural or sociological standpoint. This not only leaves key questions unanswered, but *unasked*. Secondly, there is a lack of agreement around how valuable the dockers’ international campaign was, and why. For example, historian, Peter Turnbull, has argued that the main lesson from the dispute was that solidarity action within the Port of Liverpool would have been “far more effective than limited boycotts and solidarity action in other ports around the world”.⁶ However, Noel Castree emphasised that it was the international, rather than the local, campaign that caused the MDHC’s share prices to have fallen by 20 per cent by July 1997, and contributed to the company losing two of its largest customers, ACL and CANMAR.⁷ The final area of neglect relates to perceptions of the dispute’s legacy. While the Liverpool dockers have made some major claims about the legacy of their dispute, these have so far not been considered by any academic study, as broadly the literature has rarely been able to see past the dockers’ failure to achieve their immediate demands.

The grey areas left by the literature form the basis for the main sub-questions of this thesis, of which there are three. Firstly, what was the emotional impact of the dockers’ union opting not to support the dockers, and what role did emotion and identity play in filling the vacuum left in the wake of this decision? Secondly, how valuable was the dockers’ international campaign perceived to be by those who orchestrated and supported it? Finally, what do the dockers claim to have achieved despite their ultimate failure, and how credible are these claims? This thesis adopts the standpoint that the majority of academic literature on the dispute suffers from taking a primarily “etic” perspective of the dispute (i.e., “the outside looking in”), rather than an “emic” one (i.e., asking “what was going on in

⁴ David Sapsford and Peter Turnbull, “Dockers, Devlin and industrial disputes”, *Industrial Relations Journal* 21, no. 1 (1990), 26-7.

⁵ Noel Castree, “Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism: the Liverpool dock dispute, 1995–1998”, *Economic Geography* 76, no. 3 (2000), 273.

⁶ Jane Kennedy and Michael Lavalette, “Globalisation, trade unionism and solidarity: further reflections on the Liverpool Dock Lockout.” *Labour and Globalisation: Results and Prospects* (2004), 383.

⁷ Castree, “Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism”, 283.

their heads?”).⁸ However, by analysing a corpus of interviews with the Liverpool dockers (and their supporters), this thesis seeks to begin a discourse around these three issues.

Due to the nature of these questions, which require access to the narratives, memories and perceptions of the people who participated in, or observed, the dispute, this thesis primarily makes use of oral history, in addition to a key industry-specific newspaper. Two sets of interviews are referred to, neither of which have been used comprehensively by any academic study. This constitutes the major advantage of this thesis over other, more extensive contributions to the scholarly debate. The first is a set of 30 interviews with Liverpool dockers and their supporters, which were conducted throughout the strike and in its immediate aftermath. They have been preserved in the archive of LabourNet.⁹ Of course, one must remain aware that the LabourNet interviews were not conducted by the author of this thesis, and were transcribed by reporters with a wholly different agenda. The second set consists of six interviews with five Liverpool dockers, which were conducted in 2018/19 specifically for the purposes of this thesis. Additionally, the thesis considers articles in an industry-specific newspaper, the *Dispatcher*, which has been published on a monthly basis by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) since 1942.¹⁰

The benefits and drawbacks of such primary sources have been carefully evaluated. Certainly, oral history has been the subject of fierce debate, and has been criticised because of perceptions relating to the reliability of memory, the interview relationship, or more general relationships between memory and history.¹¹ However, Alessandro Portelli has argued that it is interviews’ intrinsic differences in relation to other types of sources - including the speaker’s subjectivity and the active process of creating meaning - that make them especially useful.¹² According to Portelli, interviews tell us “less about events than about their meaning”, and changes wrought by memory reveal the narrators’ efforts to make sense of the past and set the interview and the narrative in their historical context.¹³ Thus, this thesis will employ interviews as its main source of information but will heed Trevor Lummis’ advice, ensuring “maximum triangulation” with other sources, such as newspaper articles.¹⁴ In a similar way, the sheer contemporaneity of newspaper articles, such as those in the *Dispatcher*, remains of huge value. However, the benefits of articles can be counterbalanced by their

⁸ Marvin Harris, “History and significance of the emic/etic distinction”, *Annual review of anthropology* 5, no. 1 (1976), 329.

⁹ LabourNet is a website that was launched in November 1995 by a freelance journalist to document the dispute, facilitate communication between the Liverpool dockers and partners across the world, and organise events and industrial activity. Carter et al have argued that the Liverpool Dock Dispute was especially notable for the way in which the internet – in particular, LabourNet - was used to mobilise action. See: Carter et al (2003), 290.

¹⁰ A complete index of monthly publications of the ILWU’s newspaper, *The Dispatcher*, is held in the ILWU’s online library.

¹¹ Ronald Grele, “Movement without aim: Methodological and theoretical problems in oral history”, In *The oral history reader*, 52-66. Routledge, 2002, 53.

¹² Alessandro Portelli, “What makes oral history different.” In *Oral history, oral culture, and Italian Americans*, 21-30. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, 63.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Trevor Lummis, “Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence”, *International Journal of Oral History* 2, no. 2 (1981), 273.

imperfections, which often include sensationalism, all the basic weaknesses of human testimony, and the influence of personal biases and partisanship.¹⁵ On balance, though, this collection of interviews and newspaper articles represents a hugely valuable corpus that offers important insights into the Liverpool Dock Dispute.

The approach of this thesis is to add value to the existing academic literature on the dispute. It is structured as follows. The first chapter begins by sketching out the origins of the movement. The remainder of the chapter is concerned with understanding how the union's early decision not to recognise the dispute affected the dockers. It briefly draws on identity theory and tools of cultural analysis to understand the role that identity and emotion played in filling the space left by this decision. The second chapter starts by charting the main components of the international campaign. The main aim of the chapter is to understand how the Liverpool dockers, and two of their largest support groups - the Women of the Waterfront, and other dockers in ports across the world - perceived their international strategy and campaign. The final chapter employs perspectives from the field of cultural memory studies to examine the credibility of the dockers' claims about their own legacy. This structure was selected as it enables each of the sub-questions, listed above, to be tackled in isolation, whilst also in a broadly chronological order.

¹⁵ Joseph Baumgartner, "Newspapers as Historical Sources." *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 9, no. 3 (1981), 256.

1. Emotional labour: The roles of emotion and identity

The seedbed for struggle: Origins of the dispute

This chapter will begin by briefly considering developments in the years prior to the dispute, which witnessed the gradual decline of the UK docking industry, and the Port of Liverpool's strength in relation to it. First, it is important to note Liverpool's historic dependence on oceanic transportation and commerce as its primary economic activity; this remained until after the Second World War, when the decline of Empire and the rise in trade with Europe placed Liverpool in a detrimental position, both geographically and economically.¹⁶ A system of work organisation - known colloquially as the "evil" or the "lump" - was traditionally in force in ports across the United Kingdom.¹⁷ The "evil" required men to congregate at the docks, often in pens, and wait until they were called out to work that day. If their services were not required, they would return home without work or pay. In response to the unrest that these conditions brought about, the National Dock Labour Scheme (NDLS) was introduced by the Labour government under Clement Attlee in 1947, and implemented across most British ports by the 1960s. The legislation ended the casual and insecure nature of port employment, and gave dockers greater union influence in determining basic work conditions.¹⁸ However, in 1989, the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher abolished the NDLS. This brought about the deliberate reintroduction of "casualisation" (a mixture of part-time employment, flexible work patterns, and lower wages)¹⁹; dockers leaving the industry in substantial numbers (the size of the UK dock labour force declined by 50 per cent from 1989-92)²⁰; and the active marginalisation of the TGWU by employers in most British ports. Brian Marren has argued that, in effect, this caused many of the Liverpool dockers to feel as if they had "regressed to an era most thought had been fought off a generation prior".²¹ Finally, all this came on top of the long-term labour-displacing effects of "containerisation", which became a major factor in reducing the UK's dock labour force from around 80,000 in 1947 to just 9,500 in 1989.²²

The final repercussion of this legislative amendment was that it allowed port employers, such as the MDHC, to "unilaterally impose new contracts of employment".²³ To counter union organisation, the MDHC subdivided the Port of Liverpool into six separate operating companies, each with progressively different terms of employment. The significance of this, according to Peter Turnbull,

¹⁶ Marren, "The Liverpool Dock Strike", 466.

¹⁷ Chris Carter, Stewart Clegg, John Hogan, and Martin Kornberger, "The polyphonic spree: the case of the Liverpool dockers", *Industrial Relations Journal* 34, no. 4 (2003), 291.

¹⁸ Castree, "Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism", 277.

¹⁹ Michael Lavalette and Jane Kennedy, "Casual lives? The social effects of work casualization and the lock out on the Liverpool docks", *Critical Social Policy* 16, no. 48 (1996), 97.

²⁰ Peter Turnbull and Victoria Wass, "The Greatest Game no more - Redundant Dockers and the Demise of Dock Work", *Work, Employment and Society* 8, no. 4 (1994), 493.

²¹ Marren, "The Liverpool Dock Strike", 469.

²² Bill Hunter, 1994, *They knew why they fought*, Index Books, 2008, 57.

²³ Peter Turnbull, "Contesting globalization on the waterfront", *Politics & society* 28, no. 3 (2000), 381.

was twofold.²⁴ Firstly, under British employment law, any strike action at one company could not be legally supported by dockers at another company, even if the MDHC was still the beneficial owner. Secondly, it enabled the MDHC to employ more contract workers (with inferior wages and working conditions) and use overtime arrangements to meet operating peaks. From the dockers' perspectives, these developments had a severe and immediate impact not only on their work conditions, but also on their social lives and general health. When asked about the conditions in the run up to the dispute, Micky Tighe, a Liverpool docker, replied, "12 hour shifts, 4 and a half hours in bed, back to do another 12 hours in the gantry, just unbelievable, just asking too much".²⁵ Moreover, Doreen McNally, a leading member of the Women of the Waterfront (WoW) support group, described the social impact of the legislation on families:

When the government ended the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989, it brought any family leisure time to an end. Charlie was no longer there to go for a pint or to the football with his sons. The boys often went 3 or 4 weeks without seeing him; they'd have to ring him up during the week to ask, "are yer dead yet? Send us a few quid so we know you're still alive"!²⁶

It was against this backdrop that 22 dockers employed by a labour agency, Torside, struck work in September 1995 after being asked to work overtime without the usual offer of additional pay. When nearly 500 MDHC dockers at Seaforth Container Terminal refused to cross their picket line, the harbour company simply dismissed the entire workforce. This was the action that sparked the dispute.

The dockers' campaign has been recognised for the self-organised and grass-roots nature of its orchestration.²⁷ Yet it is important to note that this came about not through choice, but necessity, as the dockers' union, the TGWU, elected not to formally recognise their struggle. This led the dockers' main supranational union representative, the International Transport Federation (ITF), to adopt the same stance, as it was not prepared to support labour disputes without the formal backing of their national union. The result of this was that, over two and a half years, the Liverpool dockers were obliged to use, for the most part, their own initiative and resources.²⁸ The union's decision was influenced by the then-recent anti-trade union legislation, and the MDHC's subsequent subdivision of itself.²⁹ The subdivision meant that dockers who had once been colleagues were suddenly not technically working for the same company. Thus, when nearly 500 dockers at Seaforth Container Terminal honoured the picket line of the 22 Torside workers, the MDHC was able to instantly dismiss them (even though it owned both companies, and many of the dockers had recently, and for a long

²⁴ Ibid, 382.

²⁵ Micky Tighe, "Red Light over the Seaforth gantry", interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 20 November 1995, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9511/TIGHE.HTM>

²⁶ Doreen, Mary, Sue and Teresa, "Working up a Storm in a Port", interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/WOW4.HTM>

²⁷ Marren, "The Liverpool Dock Strike", 469.

²⁸ Castree, "Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism", 282.

²⁹ Turnbull, "Contesting globalization on the waterfront", 382.

time, worked alongside each other for the same company). The union judged that it would have been acting illegally if it had lent formal support to the dockers, and took the view that they would be vulnerable to claims in the courts, with the possibility of major fines and the sequestration of their funds.³⁰ The dockers expressed extreme frustration at being denied access to the union hardship funds, to which they and their members had contributed over a number of years.³¹ This is exemplified by Mike Carden as he outlined the dockers' view of the union decision during an interview: "First of all, our position is that this dispute is not illegal or unofficial, and that therefore there are no legal constraints on the TUC or the T&G or the ITF, or anybody else, supporting us".³²

While the literature on the movement does provide detailed information and valuable insights, few articles have based their findings on interviews with the dockers themselves, and many prefer to use other sources. For this reason, the historiography is largely unable to examine the roles of identity and emotion in the dispute. A particularly important question, that has so far gone unanswered, pertains to how the dockers used identity and emotion (consciously or unconsciously) to further their aims. This question represents the focus of this chapter, and is significant because exploring the emotions of protest enables us to develop "a more multifaceted image of political actors, with a broader range of goals and motivations, tastes and styles, and pains and pleasures".³³ At this point, this thesis must acknowledge its own limitations. The "burgeoning literature" on the so-called "identity/movement nexus" highlights the interest in identity- and emotion-related issues in social movements.³⁴ A complete discussion of the literature, or the roles of identity and emotion in the dispute, is thus beyond the scope of this thesis. This chapter merely aspires to serve as a starting point for a much-needed discourse on the role of emotion and identity *specifically* in the Liverpool Dock Dispute. The first section presents an overview of how certain collective identities were constructed and employed to galvanise the dockworking community in Liverpool. The second section is concerned with the role of emotion in forcing or enabling certain actions by dockworkers and their supporters during their campaign. It identifies emotional triggers, and examines the interdependent relationships between emotions.

Unpicking "solidarity": Exploring the dockers' collective identities

Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta have argued that collective identities often form the basis for a shared sense of solidarity among members of a social movement, suggesting bonds of trust, loyalty and

³⁰ Carter et al, "The polyphonic spree", 291.

³¹ Kennedy and Lavalette, "Globalisation, trade unionism and solidarity", 212.

³² Mike Carden and Terry Teague, "Liverpool dockers: the struggle against bosses and labour bureaucracy", interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, 10 October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/MPSS1.HTM>

³³ Jeff Goodwin, M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, *Passionate politics: Emotions and social movements*, University of Chicago Press, 2009, xi.

³⁴ Sheldon Stryker, Timothy Joseph Owens, and Robert W. White, eds, *Self, identity, and social movements*, Vol. 13, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, 23-41.

affection.³⁵ Indeed, in the academic literature, and the sources considered as part of this thesis, “solidarity” is frequently used to describe the aims and outcomes of the Liverpool Dock Dispute. In an interview in October 1997, Liverpool docker, Steve Higginson, described how the dockers were “looking at various ways to develop a broad base to incorporate and encompass some kind of solidarity with the dockers”.³⁶ Additionally, a *Dispatcher* article in February 1997 stated:

With the official union structure refusing to recognize their strike, the rank and file at Merseyside reached out to longshoremen around the world. They discovered many other workers facing similar situations, and tapped a well of solidarity that has helped sustain them through the strike.³⁷

Yet despite the common usage of this word “solidarity” in the literature, its meaning and significance is rarely, if ever, unpicked. This section is concerned with briefly deconstructing the notion of “solidarity” in the Liverpool Dock Dispute to acknowledge some of the main “collective identities”³⁸ that it was comprised of. Snow and McAdam see great value in this type of approach, arguing that collective identity is essential to understanding movement dynamics.³⁹ An analysis of the interviews suggests that gender, class, regional, and political identity constitute four of the most frequently cited collective identities. As such, this section will seek to consider what these identities were rooted in, and the roles they played in the dispute.

In the initial phase of their campaign, the dockers garnered support throughout Merseyside for their sponsored marches, rallies, and fundraising activities. It is perhaps unsurprising that regional identity has a strong presence throughout the sources considered by this thesis. Writing on the dispute, Brian Marren has identified an “‘us against them’ pugnaciousness” that manifested itself in the distinctive local “Scouse” character, which, he argued, was rooted in “Liverpool’s long, painful history of high unemployment [...] and its purveying sense of its own separateness and societal alienation from ‘mainland Britain’”.⁴⁰ He found that this collective sense of identity and memory provided the necessary mental toughness and tenacity for the dockers to marshal on despite overwhelmingly negative odds.⁴¹ Many interviewees with Liverpool dockers in some way reinforce this opinion. Reflecting on the dispute twenty years after it came to an end, Bobby Morton recalled how local acts of kindness boosted the dockers’ morale during hard times:

³⁵ Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, *Passionate politics*, 18.

³⁶ Steve Higginson, “Postal workers and the Liverpool dockers picket line”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/POST.HTM>

³⁷ Greg Dropkin, “*The world stands up for the Liverpool dockers*”, *Dispatcher* 55, no.2, February 1997, 12, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/19970201.pdf>

³⁸ Defined by Jasper and Polletta as: “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution”. The definition continues: “It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity”. See: Jasper and Polletta (2009), 285.

³⁹ Robert Benford and David Snow, “Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment”, *Annual review of sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000), 42.

⁴⁰ Marren, “The Liverpool Dock Strike”, 60.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The community were incredible. I well remember the second Christmas that we were on strike. A big wagon pulled into the car park at the office, and it was full of frozen turkeys that the community had paid for. And every single person - or every family - that was involved in the dispute had a great big turkey for Christmas. And that kind of spirit helped to keep us going on, and on, and on.⁴²

Morton also highlighted the frequency with which members of the local community would insist on paying for the dockers' weekly food shops. However, the dockers' narratives also reveal the limits of regional identity. Mike Carden described the blow that was dealt to the dockers when the Liverpool tugboatmen opted to carry on working throughout the dispute, rather than striking in solidarity with the dockers. He stated, "We had tugboatmen from Liverpool bringing ships in each day to the Port of Liverpool, so that was a big problem for us. That's what workers in other countries couldn't really understand".⁴³ This presents an interesting challenge to Marren's inference that regional identity was crucial to the dockers' resilience. On one hand, it is possible to see how collectively and regionally defined grievances, actions, and identities produced an important "we" feeling for the dockers. Yet on the other, regional identity was clearly not a strong enough factor to lead tugboatmen from Liverpool to support the dockers. This served as a crucial hinge point in the dispute, as the tugboatmen's actions undermined the dockers' cause for over two years by enabling the port to sustain its operations.

It is this chapter's contention that gender identity also played a major role in the dispute, both for men and women. It is worth briefly noting the importance of male gender identity as a motivating factor in this conflict. Two weeks into the movement, Cathy Dwyer, a member of the Women of the Waterfront (WoW) support group, said of the dockers:

They didn't seem able to acknowledge that they were suffering from stress-related illnesses. They saw themselves as responsible for their families - the breadwinners. The more it went on, the worse it got.⁴⁴

From this, it is possible to identify the age-old stereotype, dictating that a man must provide for his family, influencing the actions of the dockers. However, perhaps more interestingly, the interviews also suggest that the conflict witnessed rapid changes in conceptions of female gender identity, and expectations about the roles that women should adopt in disputes in Liverpool. This change can be understood by reading the statements of three WoW members, the tone of which clearly changes over time. Firstly, at the beginning of the dispute, Cathy Dwyer recalled feeling that she could not involve herself in daily picketing: "I felt embarrassed when I first went down, me on a picket line! The first morning I stood a mile across the road, thinking I'd love to go but I dursn't".⁴⁵ She implied that this is because she is a woman. However, an interview with Irene Campbell in the middle of the dispute indicates the changes that had already taken place: "we are now accepted as a mainstay of the picket,

⁴² Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

⁴³ Mike Carden, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 26 February 2019.

⁴⁴ Cathy Dwyer, "Through the pain barrier and into action", interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, March 1996, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9603/PAIN.HTM>

⁴⁵ Cathy Dwyer, "Me on a picket line!", interview by Dockers Charter, *LabourNet*, 21 November 1995, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9511/cathy.htm>

and we all have responsibilities which are fitted in”.⁴⁶ Finally, Sue Mitchell explained how the women came to be a driving force of the campaign, and hinted at the irreversibility of this transformation:

We’re just ordinary working class women. Human beings can only take so much of this pressure. So the women just got organised. And we never ever thought we’d be getting asked for as Women of the Waterfront, because we always thought we were there to support our men - but it just seemed to take off from such a small thing. [...] After 21 years of being just a wife at home, I could never ever go back to being like that.⁴⁷

Thus, we can see here a form of “identity transformation”, whereby an existing identity becomes more salient or pervasive as a result of a conflict or movement.⁴⁸ This considerable transformation also surprised the dockers, a point made clear in an interview with Bobby Morton:

We used to say, “what’s the difference between a terrorist and one of our women in the Women of the Waterfront?” And the answer to that was “you can negotiate with a terrorist!”. We were shocked by the impact that they had. They became incredible, vital.⁴⁹

This supports assertions by Jasper and Polletta that identity is useful for “getting at the cultural effects of social movements”.⁵⁰ This transformation of the roles played by women in the dispute takes on a critical significance when one considers the impact that the Women of the Waterfront had in the dispute.⁵¹ This will be discussed later in the thesis, but for now, it is important to note the impact that gender identity had on the dispute, but also the impact that the dispute had on gender identity.

Many of the testimonies with dockers and their supporters indicate a strong working class consciousness. This is perhaps unsurprising given the nature of the dispute, but an analysis of interviews and newspaper articles presents some notable findings. An excerpt from an interview with WoW member, Doreen McNally, provides a good example of the dockers’ self-perceived working class identity: “I think it’s fair to say that we all know that this isn’t just a fight for the Liverpool dockers, it’s a class struggle, it’s a fight for the whole of the working class nationally”.⁵² Within the interviews, there are many such statements, all of which imply a sense of duty in working collectively to achieve a vision that would benefit not just individuals, but an entire class of citizens. Many uses of what Matthew Hornsey terms “category distinctions” can be identified in the interviews. Hornsey has

⁴⁶ Irene Campbell, “An overwhelming feeling that we must do something”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, March 1996, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9603/FEELING.HTM>

⁴⁷ Collette Melia and Sue Mitchell, “Women of the Waterfront bring struggle to ILWU territory”, interview by Dispatcher reporter, *LabourNet*, May 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9705/WOWUSA.HTM>

⁴⁸ Benford and Snow, “Framing processes and social movements”, 51.

⁴⁹ Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

⁵⁰ Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, “Collective identity and social movements.” *Annual review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001), 284.

⁵¹ The Women of the Waterfront group (WoW) predominantly comprised of the dockworkers’ partners and family members. It became instrumental in gathering financial donations, speaking to potential supporters around the world, and raising awareness of the dispute within the national media. See: Hyman (1999), 159.

⁵² Doreen, Mary, Sue and Teresa, “Working up a Storm in a Port”, interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/WOW4.HTM>

argued that when category distinctions are salient, people perceptually enhance similarities within the group (“we’re all much the same”) and emphasise differences to other groups (“we’re different from them”).⁵³ Resultantly, a notable “us vs. them” narrative emerges in the interviews, which appears to have strengthened the dockers’ sense of resolve. For example, when talking about Bill Morris, the leader of the union, Billy Johnson said, “I believe he’s on £60,000 [salary per year]. He’s not in touch with the working class”.⁵⁴ Yet other interviews suggest that this perceived sense of solidarity among the working class was not strong enough to generate sufficient support from workers across the UK. The impact of this is visible in the sense of disownment that some of the dockers exhibited. At a critical point in the dispute, Mike Carden appeared dismayed at the lack of support from other workers across the country:

Once other workers are in dispute, other workers should realise there’s, like, a bit of a responsibility on them to support workers in struggle, like the dockers did throughout their history. [...] These are people who should be comrades, so it should be automatic.⁵⁵

Carden’s words indicate an expectation that relationships with other groups of workers would be forged. However, it is clear that the reality did not mirror the dockers’ vision and expectations. Thus, on one hand it is possible to argue that the dockers’ self-identification as working class people was helpful in solidifying their collective identity and framing their dispute as a “class struggle”. On the other, it could be argued that working class identity was not strong enough to illicit support from across the United Kingdom. Both of these considerations undoubtedly affected the dispute.

The dockers’ campaign attracted wide-ranging support from political activists in the immediate locality and beyond. An analysis of the interviews strongly suggests that the political views expressed by the dockers fell broadly under the umbrella of the “far-left”, although they were varied to some degree.⁵⁶ Terry Teague perhaps best summed up the dockers’ political identity and the overall political scene in Liverpool at the time:

We were political, there’s no two ways about that. The dockers were very political, either through the Socialist movement, or there was a very, very strong Communist element on the docks. And within

⁵³ Matthew Hornsey, “Social identity theory and self-categorization theory: A historical review”, *Social and personality psychology compass* 2, no. 1 (2008), 206.

⁵⁴ Mick Kilcullen, Billy Johnson, Jimmy Hagan, Eddie Ledden, Pat Bennett, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 17 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/kilculgp.htm>

⁵⁵ Mike Carden, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 29 November 2018.

⁵⁶ Luke March defined the “far-left” as “those who define themselves as to the left of, and not merely on the left of, social democracy”. He explained two main subtypes with this definition: first, “radical left parties, which want ‘root and branch’ systemic change of capitalism”, and second, “extreme left parties who, in contrast, have far greater hostility to liberal democracy, usually denounce all compromise with ‘bourgeois’ political forces, including social democracy, emphasize extra-parliamentary struggle and define ‘anti-capitalism’ far more strictly”. March divided the far left into four major subgroups: communists, democratic socialists, populist socialists and social populists. See: March (2009), 2.

Liverpool, we also had the Militant tendency. Again, they started to come down to your place of work, and we'd organise meetings after work, normally in the pubs. So everything was very political.⁵⁷

Moreover, the rhetoric of the dockers and their supporters was often anti-capitalist and anti-establishment in nature. As he spoke in 1997 of his disappointment at the lack of union support for the dockers, Mike Carden exclaimed:

In the past they [the trade union officials] at least spoke the language of class struggle and provided a sense of "us" and "them". Modern unions and the Labour Party now speak the language of the market; the language of the capitalist!⁵⁸

The dockers' interviews imply that political identity was a key determinant of a wide range of factors in the dispute, particularly their support and affiliations. It is clear from LabourNet interviews that they viewed the election of a Labour government in 1997 as an important opportunity to gain government backing, but they soon expressed profound disappointment in the perceived lack of support and limited legislative changes enacted by the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Bobby Morton described being "devastated" at the Labour government "turning a deaf ear" to the dockers' appeal for support⁵⁹; Mick Kilcullen angrily stated that "the Labour Party are Tories"⁶⁰; and Doreen McNally described feeling "insulted by Labour and Tony Blair".⁶¹ The dockers thus increasingly embraced ties with a host of unlikely political allies, including environmental activists such as Greenpeace, and other far-left social movements, such as the Zapatistas and Reclaim the Streets.⁶² Benford and Snow have argued that political identity can serve as a "motivational frame" and "call to arms", potentially motivating members to engage in collective action, and enabling the construction of vocabularies of motive.⁶³ This trend is evident in numerous statements by the dockers and their supporters. Sue Mitchell, a leading member of the WoW support group, said, "I definitely felt there was a common political aim there. People are starting to get together to form bigger groups in order to fight over common issues, and on this basis to forget some of their differences".⁶⁴ Thus, the dockers' oral narratives provide detailed insights into the importance of their political identity. Not only did it generate support to fill the gap left by the lack of governmental and union support, but it also bound the dockers together as a group, giving them a collective sense of justice, purpose and action.

⁵⁷ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

⁵⁸ Mike Carden and Terry Teague, "Liverpool dockers: the struggle against bosses and labour bureaucracy", interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, 10 October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/MPSS1.HTM>

⁵⁹ Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

⁶⁰ Mick Kilcullen, Billy Johnson, Jimmy Hagan, Eddie Ledden, Pat Bennett, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 17 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/kilculgp.htm>

⁶¹ Doreen, Mary, Sue and Teresa, "Working up a Storm in a Port", interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/WOW4.HTM>

⁶² Carter et al, "The polyphonic spree", 282.

⁶³ Benford and Snow, "Framing processes and social movements", 617.

⁶⁴ Doreen, Mary, Sue and Teresa, "Working up a Storm in a Port", interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/WOW4.HTM>

Fear, anger, pride and hope

On the ten-month anniversary of the day the workers were dismissed, two dockers from Liverpool, Tony Nelson and Bobby Morton, wrote to the *Dispatcher* newspaper. They thanked US longshoreman for their continued support during their campaign, which they described as an “emotional roller-coaster”:

We have come so far and developed so much in that period, riding an emotional roller-coaster, reaching incredible highs and depressing lows in our quest for re-instatement. One of these lows occurred last week when ACL after a five week absence decided to return to our port.⁶⁵

The role of emotions in sustaining the Liverpool Dock Dispute has, to date, gone wholly unexplored by the literature on the dispute. According to Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, four emotions are particularly relevant to the politics of social movements because they are more instinctive, cognitive and constructed.⁶⁶ These emotions are: fear (e.g., as a result of morally questionable practices), anger (e.g., of perceived encroachment on traditional rights), pride (e.g., of collective or refurbished identities), and hope (e.g., of imagining a new and better society and participating in a movement towards it).⁶⁷ Therefore, the second section of this chapter will examine the roles that these emotions played in forcing, enabling or inhibiting certain actions by dockworkers and their supporters. It also seeks to understand what triggered these emotions, and, where possible, examine the relationships between them.⁶⁸

In an interview on 2 February 1998, Jimmy Campbell intimated that, by being in dispute and placing their livelihoods at risk, the dockers felt a strong sense of fear: “they were frightened of their jobs and everything. Petrified. They were worried about their fridge, their telephone, their holidays”.⁶⁹ Fear is a common theme throughout many of the dockers’ narratives, and it seems there were many triggers for it. Terry Teague described the fearfulness that came about because of the dockers’ perceived isolation just a few weeks into the campaign:

There was so much fear within the workers in this country, thinking, “we’re not going to get support”. It was difficult to get support because union leaders would always hit us with the anti-trade union legislation. [...] We felt so isolated.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Tony Nelson and Bobby Morton, “*Liverpool Dockers Dig In*”, *Dispatcher* 54, no.7, September 1996, 6, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/19960901.pdf>

⁶⁶ Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, *Passionate politics*, 13.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ However, the latter objective can represent a particular challenge due to the nebulous and interconnected nature of emotions, which often differ by individual. See: Callahan and McCollum (2002), 9.

⁶⁹ Jimmy Campbell and Tony Seaman, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 2 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/campseas.htm>

⁷⁰ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

Yet by analysing these narratives as a group, it also becomes possible to see how the dockers began to channel fear, enabling them to use it more positively. A number of statements reveal that the emotion played a significant role in forcing or allowing the dockers to operate (and conceive of themselves) as a more cohesive bloc. Liverpool docker, Geoff Liddy, said: “No one had to like everybody else, but they’ve got to realise that we’re all in this same lifeboat”.⁷¹ In a similar way, Bobby Morton emphasised how regular, weekly meetings created a sense of physical togetherness, which also played a role in assuaging their feeling of fear:

The day that I was dismissed, the day when I got the letter, was the only time I felt the fear. And then when we met, and we were all together and decided to go on strike, the fear disappeared. [...] After the initial shock, we never felt fear again.⁷²

Both of these statements represent examples of how fear was utilised or overcome by the dockers. Indeed, Elisabeth Wood has argued that the successful management of fear can lead to the development of greater agency; this helps to create “insurgent cultures based on solidarity and equality”.⁷³ Within the dockers’ narratives, there are many indicators of this type of agency and insurgent culture. Reflecting on the dispute twenty years after it ended, Kevin Robinson, a Liverpool docker, stated: “No, we didn’t have titles. We became like Spartacus”.⁷⁴ Taken as a whole, these recollections add colour to Jack Barbalet’s finding that “fear leads to an actor’s realisation of where their interests lie, and points in the direction of what might be done to achieve them”.⁷⁵ Dockers’ narratives of the Liverpool dispute shed light not only on how fear was triggered, but also how it was used to galvanise workers, and ultimately create new cultures that were more conducive to labour conflict.

Many of the dockers also displayed a simmering sense of indignation in their interviews, which appears to have been influenced, at least in part, by a keen sense of morality and injustice. Few interviews illustrate this better than one with Terry Teague, in which he said:

There’s a whole range of dark forces at work here. There is the corruption and betrayal of the trade union and labour movement, which stretches back beyond this century. Time and again workers have been betrayed. [...] The people that claim to represent us, from the bureaucrats in the trade unions to the Labour Party, do not reflect the views of the vast majority of the people, they need to be challenged.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Geoff Liddy, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 11 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/liddy.htm>

⁷² Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

⁷³ Elisabeth Wood, “The Emotional Benefits of Insurgency in El Salvador”, in *Passionate politics: Emotions and social movements*, 2001, 279.

⁷⁴ Kevin Robinson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 2 March 2019.

⁷⁵ Jack Barbalet, *Emotion, social theory, and social structure: A macro-sociological approach*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 149.

⁷⁶ Mike Carden and Terry Teague, “Liverpool dockers: the struggle against bosses and labour bureaucracy”, interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, 10 October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/MPSS1.HTM>

In this type of statement, of which there are many, it becomes possible to identify what Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta term “injustice frames”, which are ways of viewing a situation that express indignation or outrage over a perceived injustice, and which identify the blameworthy people responsible.⁷⁷ Nepsted and Smith have asserted that injustice frames are common in social movements, as they enable protestors to more coherently channel their moral outrage at a particular target.⁷⁸ In the case of the Liverpool dockers, anger arguably centred on three targets - the MDHC, the union, and government - which were cast as objects of aversion, against which action could take place. The rhetoric in a letter from Mick Kilcullen to the *Dispatcher* in August 1996 is particularly helpful for understanding how anger led to action. He stated:

One thing I can promise all longshoremen, the Liverpool dockers will not let them down. We will not be bought off. We are not going to let any scabby bastards take our jobs without a fight. With your assistance we can get our victory, and then our victory will be your victory too.⁷⁹

This is interesting as Gamson has stated “of all the emotions, injustice is most closely associated with the righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul”.⁸⁰ Perhaps it was this sense of injustice and anger that enabled, for example, Terry Teague to fly to Canada, trespass, and illegally climb a crane, knowing that he would most likely be arrested by police.

In 2018, Kevin Robinson reflected on his pride in participating in collective action as a Liverpool docker: “It’s a badge of honour to say ‘I am a docker, I was a docker, and I came from a docking family’. We fought for people”.⁸¹ He also proudly described his perceived role as the guardian of his job for the next generation, citing it as a reason why he would never accept a severance payment, no matter how generous:

Now, before the dispute started, I could have finished and I could have got £85,000 if I took the severance. But no, as I keep saying today “it’s not my job to sell, I’m just minding the job for the next young person that comes along”. So therefore, you can offer me what you like, but the fact remains is it’s the job that’s more important to me.⁸²

In fact, in many interviews, Liverpool dockers justify their actions by explaining the sense of duty they felt in upholding the reputation of a prestigious lineage of Liverpool dockers. Indeed, it is well known that the city of Liverpool had earned itself a well-renowned reputation for trade union militancy and

⁷⁷ Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, *Passionate politics*, 8.

⁷⁸ Nepstad, Erickson, and Smith, “The social structure of moral outrage in recruitment to the US Central America peace movement”, In *Passionate politics: Emotions and social movements* (2001), 173.

⁷⁹ Mick Kilcullen, “Confessions of a Sacked Docker”, *Dispatcher* 54, no.6, July/August 1996, 10, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/19960901.pdf>

⁸⁰ William Gamson, *Talking politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 32.

⁸¹ Kevin Robinson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 2 March 2019.

⁸² Ibid.

radical Leftist politics.⁸³ Furthermore, it was not only dockers from Liverpool who recognised the proud history associated with their port, as a *Dispatcher* article written during the dispute suggests:

The Liverpool longshoremen have a record second to none when it comes to solidarity actions. They've stopped ships from Chile in protest against the military dictatorship's reign of terror; boycotted uranium cargo from then-colonial Namibia; and supported critical strikes in Britain, like the miners and autoworkers.⁸⁴

Narratives such as these support the assertion by Britt and Heise that shared feelings, such as pride, motivate participation in social movements.⁸⁵ Moreover, Flam, Helena and King have stated that pride is one of the emotions most directly connected to moral sensibilities, and thus represents an "especially pervasive motivator of action".⁸⁶ It is therefore important that the role of pride as a motivator of action in the Liverpool Dock Dispute is not underestimated. The narratives of Liverpool dockers reveal how collective pride was able to counteract fear and uncertainty, becoming an important factor in the dockers' decision to picket and campaign, rather than finding a new job or accepting redundancy packages.

The interviews reveal a substantial variation in the degree to which the dockers recalled feeling hopeful during the dispute. Clearly inspired by a group of dockworkers who had recently achieved success in a dispute in the United States, Jimmy Campbell refused to believe that victory was impossible:

Well we were listening to a fella called Bowers, and he said tugboats in New York won one [a labour dispute] after 5 years, so there's no such word as "can't". They said they couldn't climb Mount Everest, they've climbed it right left and centre. It's not a word, "can't".⁸⁷

Similarly, Bobby Morton stated that, throughout the campaign, "we always had hope, we always had dignity".⁸⁸ However, other narratives contrast with these more optimistic outlooks, and suggest that the dockers' hopefulness ebbed and flowed on a daily or weekly basis according to relatively minor victories or failures. Liverpool docker, Kevin Bilsborrow, recalled such a victory:

This student, Mike, an SWP member at Manchester university, handed me a loud hailer on the steps of the university and said, "start speaking!". After that he took me into this huge canteen. I spoke standing on a chair at one end of the room, then in the middle and then at the other end. Several students appeared

⁸³ Marren, "The Liverpool Dock Strike", 465.

⁸⁴ Brian Whiles-Heape, "International solidarity bolsters Liverpool dock strike", *Dispatcher* 56, no.3, March 1996, 3, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/19960318.pdf>

⁸⁵ Lory Britt and David Heise, "From shame to pride in identity politics", *Self, identity, and social movements* 13 (2000), 252.

⁸⁶ Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, *Passionate politics*, 10.

⁸⁷ Jimmy Campbell and Tony Seasman, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 2 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/campseas.htm>

⁸⁸ Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

from nowhere and started taking the buckets round. That student started our first support group and raised £10,000 for our strike in the first month. It showed what was possible.⁸⁹

This is perhaps why, when asked about how hopeful he felt during the campaign, Mike Carden caveated his response - “we honestly thought we could win” - with “we had good days and bad days”.⁹⁰ However, in addition to indicating how far the dockers recalled feeling hopeful, the interviews enable a consideration of the equally important question of the role that hope played in the dispute. This is important because hope and optimism have, after all, been proven to be more conducive to coping with difficult situations.⁹¹ Polletta and Armenta have suggested that, during protest, people have to believe that there are opportunities for success, and chances that their insurgency will be effective; this enables a “cognitive liberation” that is required to achieve hope.⁹² Indeed, many interviews, such as Terry Teague’s, suggest that a sort of “blind hope” was the only option left to many of the dockers:

We always had to believe we would win and at some point we would be back on them docks, we’d be back doing the jobs that, in my case, we’d been doing for 25 years, and that would be enough to sustain me and sustain the family.⁹³

Narratives such as these indicate that hope was, to a greater or lesser extent, an important factor in enabling the dockworkers to cope (i.e., with the length of their struggle), and believe in the importance of their own campaign.

“Our own workers let us down”

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that by considering the roles played by identity and emotion in the dispute, it is possible to shed light on the creation of motivation and targets for protest. The narratives of Liverpool dockers enable us to understand how they were able to transform their anxieties and fears into moral indignation and outrage, which often resulted in an intense “fighting spirit”. By framing their problems as the result of “the abolition of legislation by the Thatcher government” or “shameful union leaders”, the dockers enabled themselves to express a moral judgment (i.e., “we are being abused by morally corrupt union leaders, greedy business people, and politicians who do not care about us”). This, in turn, caused identities to be developed, and emotions to shift from those that are not normally seen as useful in labour movements (e.g., fear) to ones that can be mobilised (e.g., outrage). This chapter also aimed to demonstrate that the incorporation of identity theory into analyses of the dispute can enable a deeper exploration of the collective identities

⁸⁹ Kevin Bilsborrow and Billy Jenkins, “Yorkshire, Scotland, then it was off around the world”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, March 1996, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9603/WORLD.HTM>

⁹⁰ Mike Carden, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 26 February 2019.

⁹¹ Chang and Shawna, “The Influence of Hope on Appraisals, Coping, and Dysphoria: A Test of Hope Theory”, *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 20, no. 2 (2001), 117-29.

⁹² Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, *Passionate politics*, 305.

⁹³ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

lying beneath the notion of “solidarity”. This is important, as “solidarity” ostensibly formed the basis for the dockers’ recruitment and collective action. Even a brief analysis of the roles played by gender, class, political and regional identity showed that loyalty to a “collective identity” encouraged dockers and their supporters to participate, even if the cost-benefit calculations at the level of the individual did not favour participation. From this, it becomes easier to understand how, in September 1995, Terry Teague was performing his usual clerical duties (as he had been doing for nearly 30 years), yet in October, he found himself dangling from a crane in Canada, risking his life and livelihood as part of an intense struggle against the MDHC. However, oral narratives also illustrate that these collective identities had their limits. Surely, examples like these evidence the need for increased scholarly focus on the roles played by emotion and identity in the Liverpool Dock Dispute.

After five weeks of intense local and national campaigning - forging connections with support groups, seeking financial assistance, and sending delegates across the country - the momentum of the dockers’ movement began to wane.⁹⁴ The dockers received only a small amount of informal support from their own trade union and, as a result, very little assistance from the government and other groups of workers.⁹⁵ This meant that ships continued to enter and leave the port, leaving many dockers, such as Jimmy Hagan, bitterly disappointed: “Our own workers let us down. Our own workers. Fellas working in the grain, working wherever. They let us down. If they would have all come out this port would have just stopped”.⁹⁶ Additionally, reflecting on the relatively modest culmination of their efforts in the early stages of their campaign, Mike Carden expressed fatigue and disappointment:

We invited the representatives of a whole range of industrial, governmental and council workers, but very few turned up! This is a symptom of the reality we are facing; we’ve tried to build physical support locally on a number of different occasions and so far it has failed! If anyone has got a magic formula then let us know immediately!⁹⁷

Out of this malaise, and in direct response to their faltering national campaign, the dockers began to enact what has been described as “a more quotidian, bottom-up internationalism in which ordinary workers and union members were able to forge connections organically, sensitively, and tactically”.⁹⁸ Bobby Morton explained the rationale behind this “international turn”:

We were left on our own. The union decided not to support us because it was an “unofficial dispute” and then after six weeks, we decided to go international. [...] That was the start of some of our successes. And

⁹⁴ Carter et al, “The polyphonic spree”, 292.

⁹⁵ Jane Wills, “Taking on the CosmoCorps? Experiments in transnational labor organization”, *Economic Geography* 74, no. 2 (1998), 119.

⁹⁶ Mick Kilcullen, Billy Johnson, Jimmy Hagan, Eddie Ledden, Pat Bennett, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 17 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/kilculgp.htm>

⁹⁷ Mike Carden and Terry Teague, “Liverpool dockers: the struggle against bosses and labour bureaucracy”, interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, 10 October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/MPSS1.HTM>

⁹⁸ Castree, “Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism”, 173.

we broadened it out globally. Not just America, we went to Australia, India, Brazil. You name it, wherever there was a port, we went there.⁹⁹

Adopting the slogan of “The world is our picket line!”, the dockers set about staging an international campaign designed to bypass the traditional characteristics of official trade unionism. This will be the subject of focus in the next chapter.

⁹⁹ Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

2. “The world is our picket line!”: Perceptions of the international campaign

Industrial activity, international days of action, and the Blockade of Neptune Jade

In an article in May 1996, *Dispatcher* reporter, Steve Zeltzer, described the actions of two Liverpool dockers in the Port of Los Angeles:

Dozens of ILWU longshoremen here April 20 walked off the OOCL’s *Japan*, a ship which was attempting to unload scab cargo from the Port of Liverpool. Bobby Morton and Tony Nelson, two striking dockers from the Port of Liverpool, manned the picket line. They’ve been on a speaking tour of the Pacific Coast of the U.S. and Canada to build support for their strike and raise funds for the families.¹⁰⁰

The actions described in this article are typical of the strategies employed by the Liverpool dockers as part of an international campaign that began within the first few months of the dispute, and lasted over two years.¹⁰¹ Delegations of Liverpool dockers and supporters were dispatched across the globe to exert pressure on shipping lines that used the Port of Liverpool, spread information about the dispute, and raise funds.¹⁰² The interviews with dockers and their supporters are helpful for understanding their motivation and objectives in greater detail. Liverpool docker, Terry Teague, stated:

There was a fear that we would never get support from workers in this country. [...] So we had to look at other ways of trying to hit the company that had sacked us and bring them back to the negotiating table. The only way we could see was to map out where all their trade goes from Liverpool to all the different ports around the world, and then try and make contact with those ports. [...] And where we couldn’t get physical support within the UK, maybe we could get it in other countries where their labour laws may not be as hard or strict as what we were facing in the UK.¹⁰³

Delegations were sent to ports in Canada, where the shipping lines CAST, CANMAR and BCL were based; to Sydney in Australia, where ABC Lines operated; and to the east coast of America, where the biggest shipping line using Liverpool, American Container Line (ACL), operated.¹⁰⁴ By December 1995, the Liverpool Dockers had called for a five-day international rank and file conference, which was staged in February 1996.¹⁰⁵ 53 delegates from over 15 countries attended, and passed 24 resolutions, with the main aim of “enacting international solidarity actions” against the Port of Liverpool.¹⁰⁶ A second conference was held in August to monitor the international campaign. As a result, on 20 January 1997, dockers and other workers in 27 countries took part in the first

¹⁰⁰ Steve Zeltzer, “L.A. longshoremen refuse to unload scab cargo from Liverpool”, *Dispatcher* 54, no.4, May 1996, 9, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/19960523.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Kennedy and Lavalette, “Globalisation, trade unionism and solidarity”, 216.

¹⁰² Castree, “Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism”, 283.

¹⁰³ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

¹⁰⁴ Kennedy and Lavalette, “Globalisation, trade unionism and solidarity”, 217.

¹⁰⁵ The link between dockworkers in different countries was not a wholly new phenomenon. During the 1970s and 1980s, conferences of European dockers were held in Birmingham, Barcelona, Tenerife and Antwerp.

¹⁰⁶ Carter et al, “The polyphonic spree”, 292.

international week of action, which included work stoppages, meetings and demonstrations. This was followed by a second international day of action on 8 September 1997, culminating in shipping on the West Coast of the US coming to a standstill. The final large-scale action of the Liverpool dockers was the Blockade of *Neptune Jade*, a ship that had been loaded in Thamesport (a subsidiary of the MDHC), and was bound for San Francisco. The Liverpool dockers stopped the ship from being unloaded by organising highly effective picket lines in San Francisco, Oakland, Vancouver, Yokohama, and Kobe. This proved so costly to the owners of the *Neptune Jade* that the ship eventually had to be sold in Hong Kong, along with its cargo.

Taken as a whole, the scholarly discourse provides a somewhat nebulous picture of the value of this international campaign. This is not to say that the literature does not contain a wealth of information about the dispute's international dimension, but rather that there is a lack of agreement on how valuable it was perceived to be, and why. Multiple studies view the international campaign to have been of considerable value. Kennedy and Lavalette have acknowledged that financial donations made by non-British dockers, in addition to the general hope that the international campaign brought, were immensely valuable in enabling the dockers and their supporters to sustain their campaign for over two years.¹⁰⁷ They added that the international aspect of the dispute allowed them to gain support and solidarity, and build a militant campaign against the MDHC, whilst maintaining their relationship with the TGWU by adhering to British industrial relations law.¹⁰⁸ Brian Marren has also highlighted that the Liverpool Dock Dispute proved that international solidarity is attainable, "even in a world dominated by multinational corporate monopolies and powerful cartels in an era of increasing globalised capital".¹⁰⁹ Equally, however, a number of scholars have argued that international action was prioritised too highly over the local campaign. Bill Turnbull stated that the main lesson from the dispute was that solidarity action within the Port of Liverpool would have been "far more effective than limited boycotts or solidarity action in other ports around the world".¹¹⁰ Additionally, Ronald Munck has suggested that the international solidarity efforts were "basically a diversion from generating more effective local and national solidarity".¹¹¹

It is the position of this thesis that many of these arguments either do not sufficiently consider the views of those who were involved in the dispute, or imply that the dockers and their supporters shared one common perception of how much value the international campaign added to their struggle. This chapter aims to examine perceptions of the international campaign in more detail by focusing on opinions within three sub-groups of dockers and their supporters. These groups are: the international dockers who visited Liverpool and took part in the campaign; the dockers' largest support group, the Women of the Waterfront (WoW); and the Liverpool dockers themselves.

¹⁰⁷ Kennedy and Lavalette, "Globalisation, trade unionism and solidarity", 215.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Marren, "The Liverpool Dock Strike", 478.

¹¹⁰ Turnbull, "Contesting globalization on the waterfront", 383.

¹¹¹ Ronaldo Munck, "Globalization, labor and the 'Polanyi problem'", *Labor History* 45, no. 3 (2004), 264.

International dockworkers: “This is not just a liberal gesture of support”

An examination of interviews and newspaper articles reveals a clear perception by much of the international dockworking community that the problems experienced by the Liverpool dockers were not unique to them. Rather, they were viewed as global challenges, which required an internationally coordinated response. This affected how international dockers valued the Liverpool campaign. Mike Williams, the Wellington Branch Secretary of the Seafarers’ Union in New Zealand, said:

Privatisation and casualisation are world-wide issues. In Wellington when we were picketing a ship, 27 of our members were arrested and strip-searched. The employers put a casual labour force on board after our picket was broken. So it’s a global problem, and workers internationally must join forces to fight our common enemies.¹¹²

An interview with Akinobu Itoh, a member of the *Zenkoku Kowan* (the National Council of Dockworkers’ Unions of Japan), serves as another good example. Itoh explained his concern at the recent decision by the Japanese Ministry of Transport to deregulate the docking industry. He feared the possibility of Japanese developments directly mirroring those that had already taken place in the UK, such as the privatisation of port authorities, the abolition of protective legislation for workers, and the more general consequences of containerisation. His statement, “the Liverpool situation will be our future in Japan. So we fight to oppose deregulation”, reveals the extent to which he valued the Liverpool dockers’ campaign, and his reasons for doing so.¹¹³ Jack Heyman, from San Francisco, also visited Liverpool on behalf of the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU).¹¹⁴ He stated that the solidarity that had been expressed was “not just a liberal gesture of support”, adding that international dockers were “beginning to realise that the struggle here in Liverpool is one we can identify with”.¹¹⁵ Together, these interviews suggest that international dockers believed that the failure of the international campaign would have consequences around the world, and would therefore serve as a key determinant of their own futures.

Owing to the fact that these dockers saw their own futures as dependent on the outcome of the international campaign, it is perhaps unsurprising that they saw internationalism as an urgent - perhaps even the only - answer to addressing deteriorating working conditions in ports across the world. Kenny Karlsson, a Swedish docker and Vice Chairman of *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (the Swedish Dockworkers Union) stated, “our only chance is international organisation and I think it is possible. It must be”.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Mike Williams, “Mike Williams interview”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 27 September 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9709/WILLIAMS.HTM>

¹¹³ Akinobu Itoh, “Why we’ll stop all ports on 12 March”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 27 February 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9702/ITOINVW.HTM>

¹¹⁴ See: van der Linden (2008).

¹¹⁵ Jack Heyman, “Interview with Jack Heyman”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 11 January 1996, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9601/JACK.HTM>

¹¹⁶ Kenny Karlsson, “Our only chance is international organisation”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, September 1996, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9609/KARLSSON.HTM>

Analysts such as Turnbull and Saundry have adopted a similar line of reasoning, arguing that the Liverpool dispute represented clusters of workers developing “new repertoires to counter the globalisation of capital”.¹¹⁷ Arild Hamre ran the Karl Marx Café in Bergen. He began generating solidarity in Norway after Liverpool footballer, Robbie Fowler, displayed the dockers’ t-shirt in front of millions of viewers during a game against his football team, Brann. In his interview, Hamre’s language was urgent, and he attached a great deal of importance to the dockers’ campaign:

The solidarity work around the world has just started. It will get stronger and stronger, as the conflict continues more and more people will wake up and see what’s really going on. If we don’t put a stop to it, there will be more of this sort of conflict in Europe. That’s why it’s important to win this.¹¹⁸

It would appear from these interviews that many international dockers also placed significant symbolic and practical value in the Liverpool dockers’ international activities. This was rooted in their belief that these activities represented one of their only hopes to create a movement that would have a global effect on working conditions in ports across the world.

Yet there were other, more specific reasons why the Liverpool dockers’ international campaign mattered to international dockers. An interview with Ray Lopez, an industrial organiser in the Philippines Seafarers’ Organising Ministry, which later became the militant “May 1 Federation” (KMU), demonstrates this well. Lopez revealed that a key reason why he had travelled to Liverpool was to gain a better understanding of the problem of Filipino seafarers being brought into Liverpool as strike-breakers. He described that his main aim was to “educate them in respecting the rights of dock workers’ and their industrial activities”.¹¹⁹ He also clearly stated the importance of achieving international solidarity in this respect, and advocated “going back to the slogan of the IWW, An Injury to One is an Injury to All”.¹²⁰ The following statement provides a summary of his line of thinking:

It is therefore in the interest of English workers to support the struggle of Filipino and other third world workers, to attain just wages and working conditions so that your bosses will not be tempted to export your job or to import foreign workers to take your job right in your backyard.¹²¹

From Lopez’s interview, it becomes clear that international dockers also valued the international campaign because it was seen as a way to develop some sort of cross-border organisation with the potential of mitigating the use of strikebreakers. This sentiment was echoed by others in the international community. When writing of the importance of the Liverpool dockers’ campaign in the *Dispatcher* in January 1998, Steve Stallone stated: “This is the international workers’ struggle. Like the Liverpool dockers, our picket lines are always under attack and we can all be fired and replaced by

¹¹⁷ Turnbull, “Contesting globalization on the waterfront”, 369.

¹¹⁸ Arild Hamre, “Norway”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, June 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9706/NORWAY.HTM>

¹¹⁹ Ray Lopez, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, June 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9706/FILIPINE.HTM>

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

scabs - unless solidarity holds”.¹²² Yet Ray Lopez identified a wider importance in the dockers’ international campaign, arguing that “the whole world is looking at this as a make or break struggle for the entire workers’ movement”.¹²³ This is reminiscent of trends identified by Leon Fink, who describes how a new worldwide reach for cheap labour threatened wage and living standards in the maritime industry after World War I, which, in turn, triggered the “rising assertiveness” of workers in interrupting this through transnational organisation.¹²⁴

However, the interviews also indicate that members of the international community harboured doubts about the international campaign’s potential for success. When asked if he thought there was a possibility of permanent international rank and file organisation, Jack Heyman replied, “well I not only see it as a possibility but a necessity. [...] I’m afraid that unionised dock forces around the world will be decimated”.¹²⁵ In spite of this, he clearly held reservations about the strategic orientation of the campaign. Despite acknowledging the Liverpool dockers’ success in temporarily stopping ships across the West Coast of the United States, he ultimately admitted, “unfortunately, Liverpool ships don’t come to the West Coast”.¹²⁶ Further to this, the doubts that were expressed by members of the international dockworking community were not limited to the campaign’s strategy. Jorgen Arbo worked in the Royal Danish Porcelain Factory, and was a board member of the General Workers’ Union in Copenhagen, which organised Danish dockworkers. Despite explaining that he had collected “approximately £60,000 from over 100 unions and nearly 50 workplaces” to support the Liverpool campaign, Arbo voiced his concern about the Liverpool dockers’ lack of financial resources, and their inability to bring the union and government into negotiations:

Coming to Liverpool, I’m surprised to see that all the dockers still believe in their victory despite being out for 21 months. There seem to be two main problems: lack of money, and how to get the new government and the union leaders involved to make a solution. After the Labour victory and the Socialist victory in France, all the social democrats talk about a “left swing”, but they don’t do much to make it happen in reality.¹²⁷

Arbo’s interview is not the only one suggesting that the international campaign was undermined by the lack of support from the TGWU. Swedish docker, Kenny Karlsson, said, “management tell us we

¹²² Steve Stallone, “We all live in Liverpool”, *Dispatcher* 56, no.1, January 1998, 2, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/19980101.pdf>

¹²³ Ray Lopez, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, June 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9706/FILIPINE.HTM>

¹²⁴ Leon Fink, *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 1-22

¹²⁵ Jack Heyman, “Interview with Jack Heyman”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 11 January 1996, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9601/JACK.HTM>

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Jorgen Arbo, “Denmark”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, June 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9706/DENMARK.HTM>

can't help Liverpool, and they ask 'why should we act when no one else is?'"'.¹²⁸ Additionally, although the New Zealand docker, Mike Williams, supported the Liverpool cause, he conceded that the TGWU's decision had led to the supranational representative, the ITF, to also not support the dockers. He claimed that this had fundamentally weakened the position of the Liverpool dockers: "I condemn their [the ITF's] current failure to come out in support of Liverpool. The ITF must return to its commitment. Walking away weakens the position, and they just can't do that".¹²⁹ From this, it can be discerned that while the international dockers supported the Liverpool dockers' ideology and values, and the strategic importance of their campaign, many of them displayed a grim awareness of the campaign's inherent flaws.

Women of the Waterfront: "From the washing line, to the picket line, to the world platform"

The Women of the Waterfront (WoW) support group was formed in the second week of the strike, and its members spent more than two years taking an "active role in all aspects of the struggle", including arranging marches, fundraising, picketing, and participating in national and international conferences.¹³⁰ According to Monica Clua Losada, there was a core group of at least 40 women who met weekly, with up to 60 involved in various activities.¹³¹ Marren has associated this relatively high level of involvement with the idea that many of the women were from the dockland community, meaning they had "vivid recollections from their youths of the degradations their fathers and brothers suffered under the old system of casual labour".¹³² He argued that this "collective memory" of infrequent pay packets and poor working conditions was integral to such a large number of women taking active roles in the dispute. While the attention paid by the literature to the WoW's actions is relatively limited, it is generally accepted that their involvement provided the dispute with a "much-needed new lease of life".¹³³ Castree has posited that the women were highly successful at garnering international solidarity.¹³⁴ They were also clearly very successful in raising large sums of financial support for the Liverpool dockers' cause. One example is particularly interesting; the Women of the Waterfront were awarded the controversial (and somewhat ironic) Human Rights Prize of £30,000 from Colonel Gaddafi in September 1997. To put this into perspective, Nelson Mandela received the prize in 1989, and Fidel Castro was awarded the prize in 1998.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ Kenny Karlsson, "Our only chance is international organisation", interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, September 1996, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9609/KARLSSON.HTM>

¹²⁹ Mike Williams, "Mike Williams interview", interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 27 September 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9709/WILLIAMS.HTM>

¹³⁰ Marren, "The Liverpool Dock Strike", 475.

¹³¹ Monica Clua Losada, "Solidarity, Global Restructuring and Deregulation: The Liverpool Dockers' Dispute 1995-98", PhD diss., University of York, 2010, 153.

¹³² Marren, "The Liverpool Dock Strike", 474.

¹³³ Clua Losada, "Solidarity, Global Restructuring and Deregulation", 152.

¹³⁴ Castree, "Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism", 289-90.

¹³⁵ "The Gadhafi Prize For Human Rights: In its Final Year?", NPR, accessed 3 July, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2011/03/01/134173323/the-gaddafi-prize-for-human-rights-in-its->

Whereas the previous section of this chapter showed that some international dockers harboured doubts about the campaign's value, interviews with WoW members are almost universally positive. There are a number of possible explanations for this. Firstly, there are fewer interviews with WoW members. It is therefore plausible that the women felt a pressure to speak optimistically on the rare occasions that they were invited to interviews with LabourNet reporters. Secondly, we saw in Chapter One that the dispute witnessed the women become a "mainstay" of a labour dispute in Liverpool for the first time; as a newly induced group of supporters, the women may have succumbed to an expectation that they would bring a positive and optimistic influence. Thirdly, the WoW members may have assumed that they did not have the practical and strategic experience - or simply had not yet earned the right - to appraise the campaign critically. Fourthly, since the Women of the Waterfront group was contributing so heavily to the campaign, and was increasingly seen as a vital component of the dockers' struggle, it is possible that the women were not regularly exposed to indicators of the campaign's wider weaknesses.

Having acknowledged this, it is important to note that LabourNet interviews with WoW members suggest that they viewed the international campaign to be of vital practical and political importance. In one interview, WoW members were asked to imagine the dispute without international support. Sue Mitchell's answer is particularly notable:

We feel lucky to be speaking here, seeing the people who're supporting us. Without the people, without the longshoremen, all the working people supporting us, we would not be able to stay in the fight against the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.¹³⁶

Quotes such as this illustrate the practical value that WoW members attached to their international campaign and the support they received. This again supports the findings of Castree, who has argued that the international campaign not only enabled the dockers to mount international pressure on shipping companies, but that it also "maintained the dockers' stance in the face of considerable financial hardship".¹³⁷ Indeed, a quote by "Mary" (no surname included) from an interview in December 1996, relays the sheer sense of gratitude that WoW members felt towards international communities of dockworkers: "People there are so generous in their giving, and so generous in the way they are trying to help us, and genuine in their offers of help, it's unbelievable".¹³⁸ Yet the international campaign was also seen to have political significance by WoW members; Sue Mitchell

final-year?t=1560427010954&t=1562154921698; "Prize Brief", Al-Gaddafi International Prize for Human rights, accessed 3 July, 2019, <http://www.gaddafiprize.org/WhoEn.htm>

¹³⁶ Collette Melia and Sue Mitchell, "Women of the Waterfront bring struggle to ILWU territory", interview by Dispatcher reporter, *LabourNet*, May 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9705/WOWUSA.HTM>

¹³⁷ Castree, "Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism", 280.

¹³⁸ Val, Irene, Cathy, Rose and Mary, Kathleen, "Women of the Waterfront Interview", interview by Greg Dropkin, 5 December 1996, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9612/5DECWOW.HTM>

suggested that, for advocates of socialism, the dispute and its international repercussions were “like the phoenix rising once again out of the ashes”.¹³⁹

In addition to this, there is evidence to suggest that WoW members perceived the campaign to have taken on a moral, emotional, and symbolic significance. When discussing a visit to a San Francisco conference on behalf of the WoW, Colette Melia described very clearly the emotional support she received when meeting dockers from different countries:

It was unbelievable because everybody seemed to embrace each other. Everybody had been suffering exactly the same things and everybody was so united. [...] Everybody seemed to stick together, [...] everybody had been suffering exactly the same things.¹⁴⁰

Sue Mitchell added to this, saying, “the experience is always so uplifting” and “the solidarity you experience makes you feel great and makes you know that it is all worthwhile”.¹⁴¹ Yet Mitchell also implied that the campaign instilled a sense of meaning into the women’s daily activities as part of their support action. She said, “I don’t think we’ve ever come away from an event, rally or meeting feeling like it was pointless”.¹⁴² It is clear that the international campaign improved WoW members’ morale, and, in doing so, fostered a sense of shared international identity and community. Doreen McNally suggested that the reason why the dispute had grown so strong was that “whether national or international, everyone can identify with the struggle”.¹⁴³ This seems to be reminiscent of the type of “global working-class consciousness” that Marren suggests was experimented with during the Liverpool dockers’ international campaign.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, it appears from the interviews with WoW members that the international campaign equipped the dockers and their supporters with a valuable sense of energy, and relieved them from the daily anxieties of the emotional stress, financial debt, and increasing levels of poverty.

There are many interviews suggesting that the WoW support group became a highly important component of the dockers’ international campaign in its own right. In May 1997, Sue Mitchell again reflected on the impact of the WoW, stating:

And we organized and went so far, further than any of us thought we’d go - we always say “from the washing line to the picket line to the world platform”. We feel lucky to be speaking here, seeing the people who’re supporting us.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Doreen, Mary, Sue and Teresa, “Working up a Storm in a Port”, interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/WOW4.HTM>

¹³⁹ Marren, “The Liverpool Dock Strike”, 477-8.

¹⁴⁰ Collette Melia and Sue Mitchell, “Women of the Waterfront bring struggle to ILWU territory”, interview by Dispatcher reporter, *LabourNet*, May 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9705/WOWUSA.HTM>

¹⁴¹ Doreen, Mary, Sue and Teresa, “Working up a Storm in a Port”, interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/WOW4.HTM>

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Marren, “The Liverpool Dock Strike”, 477-8.

¹⁴⁵ Collette Melia and Sue Mitchell, “Women of the Waterfront bring struggle to ILWU territory”, interview by Dispatcher reporter, *LabourNet*, May 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9705/WOWUSA.HTM>

However, it was not only the WoW members themselves who believed their work was important. Interviews with international dockers, such as Ray Lopez, demonstrate how WoW members spurred groups of dockers into action. Lopez explained how, while attending a talk at the New World Resources Centre, one of the WoW's presentations made him feel "guilt" on behalf of his countrymen who were "selling the fruits of struggle" by serving as strike-breakers in Liverpool.¹⁴⁶ He recalled subsequently promising the WoW members that he "would do everything to publicise their struggle in the States and in the Philippines through churches and KMU publications".¹⁴⁷ Another interview, with Doreen McNally, contains an anecdote that succinctly conveys the impact that WoW members were having on the international stage in countries all over the world during the dispute. She recounted:

On one occasion in Paris we were to speak at a meeting attended by trade unionists from all over France. When Sue and I walked in everyone was standing up cheering and clapping, there were 1800 people in all! I said to Sue "oh there must be somebody here of importance". So we turned to our friend John-Pierre and asked "who's here?", and he replied "you and Sue of course". We came home that day with £30,000 in donations and a commitment to practical support!¹⁴⁸

Doreen's anecdote strongly reinforces Clua Losada's suggestion that the Women of the Waterfront became "highly articulate public speakers" and quickly established themselves as a crucial organisation for the maintenance of the international campaign, and the dispute in general.¹⁴⁹

Reflecting on the Waterfront - Liverpool Dockers on their international campaign

An analysis of interviews with Liverpool dockers reveals that - much like their international counterparts - they held a diverse set of opinions on their international campaign. However, the reasons why dockers valued (or did not value) the campaign appear to have differed considerably. On one hand, two letters from Liverpool dockers to the *Dispatcher* in 1996 indicate the emotional importance of international support, and suggest that they greatly valued their international campaign. Firstly, in a letter to the August 1996 edition of the *Dispatcher*, Mick Kilcullen wrote about the importance of visits by international dockers to the morale of the dockers:

Each time Jack Heyman (ILWU member) visits Liverpool, he brings some of your badges. They are highly sought after on the picket line: they are a symbol of hope, and any docker wearing one seems to walk the line with a spring in his step.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Ray Lopez, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, June 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9706/FILIPINE.HTM>

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Doreen, Mary, Sue and Teresa, "Working up a Storm in a Port", interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/WOW4.HTM>

¹⁴⁹ Clua Losada, "Solidarity, Global Restructuring and Deregulation", 155.

¹⁵⁰ Mick Kilcullen, "Confessions of a Sacked Docker", *Dispatcher* 54, no.6, July/August 1996, 10, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/19960901.pdf>

Another letter from Bobby Morton and Terry Teague, entitled “Thanks from Liverpool”, also expressed gratitude, and set out the dockers’ vision for the campaign:

It is difficult to convey to the people at home the volume of goodwill, hospitality and support given to us by our new-found friends. On behalf of the 500 families involved and on our own behalf personally, we wish to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your assistance. As great trees grow from little acorns we hope that our brief initial association will blossom into an international Solidarity Movement affording protection to longshoremen and their families all over the world when in times of trouble.¹⁵¹

Both of these excerpts support the assertion by Lavalette and Kennedy that the international campaign provided various “major boosts” to the dispute.¹⁵² Moreover, Kevin Robinson recalled that the international support was “very refreshing” after being “ostracised” by the union, and stated that backing from countries such as Australia and America “kept morale going”.¹⁵³

Unsurprisingly, much like the Women of the Waterfront, the Liverpool dockers also valued the financial contributions and practical benefits that their campaign brought from across the world. Brian Dooley said, “the donations were great, and that kept us from being starved into submission”.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Terry Teague recalled that “the international movement was the thing that, sort of, sustained us all the way through”.¹⁵⁵ In fact, many of the interviews do suggest that the campaign brought huge financial support. Bobby Morton recalled travelling back from the US with \$250,000 in financial donations:

The International Longshore Warehouse Union - in the west coast of America - every single worker had 10 pounds a month deducted from their pay, which was sent over to Liverpool to sustain us, and I remember coming back one time - because the security wasn’t as great as it is now - and I had a holdall with 250,000 American dollars - in used notes - and one of the immigration people when I was coming out of the airport said, “can I look in the bag?”. When I showed him, he said to me, “what did you do, did you rob a bank?” And I explained the situation - we’d been on strike - and this guy basically threw ten dollars into my bag. So the international campaign inspired us to go further, and further, and further.¹⁵⁶

Despite this, the Liverpool dockers did not view the international campaign purely as a financial resource. Rather, they also saw it as a critical component of their economic campaign against the MDHC. In an interview in 2018, for example, Kevin Robinson spoke about its importance in disrupting various shipping lines. He stated that when the ACL got diverted from Liverpool down to Southampton, “that gave our people a big boost”.¹⁵⁷ He also described how the Port of Liverpool

¹⁵¹ Tony Nelson and Bobby Morton, “Thanks from Liverpool”, *Dispatcher* 54, no.4, May 1996, 11, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/19960523.pdf>

¹⁵² Kennedy and Lavalette, “Globalisation, trade unionism and solidarity”, 217.

¹⁵³ Kevin Robinson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 2 March 2019.

¹⁵⁴ Brian Dooley, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 9 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/dooley.htm>.

¹⁵⁵ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

¹⁵⁶ Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

¹⁵⁷ Kevin Robinson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 2 March 2019.

subsequently encouraged ACL to bring the ship back to Liverpool by waiving all fees and mooring costs. To him, this reputational damage and loss of revenue for the MDHC represented a major success. This is consistent with the findings of Wills, who viewed the international campaign as valuable because it enabled the dockers to create new allies and thereby “forge international relationships to undermine their employer”.¹⁵⁸

As some interviews have indicated, the Liverpool dockers also perceived their international campaign as valuable because of its potential to create an international movement of dockworkers that could be capable of addressing global issues. In an interview after an international conference in Montreal, Terry Teague said, “what became clear was that the ‘globalisation’ of changes to working practise, such as casualisation and deregulation, had hit nearly all the major ports”.¹⁵⁹ Brian Dooley provides another good example of this while discussing the challenges affecting dockers worldwide:

I think also the docks industry throughout the world is under attack, and they’re definitely out to break the power of the unions in all the ports, because we’ve shown in the past the strength that we had.

Dockworkers realised that it was us now and it was them next.¹⁶⁰

These quotes provide an important insight into other reasons why Liverpool dockers valued the international campaign. Many displayed an awareness of being part of a transnational community of dockers, which they felt to be of crucial importance to their international struggle. Mike Carden spoke at length about the importance of this “connection” with other international dockers:

And then there is the camaraderie with dockers, you know. A docker in Liverpool is very much the same as a docker in France. It’s the same architecture, the same machinery, the same ships, the same whatever. So there is that connection. And the same history by the way. The same history. If you follow the history of dockers in France, in Germany, in Italy, all the major disputes took place, generally, at the same time, and around the same issues.¹⁶¹

It would appear from these interviews that at least some of the dockers viewed their international campaign as important - not just to themselves, but to a perceived wider “attack” on international dockworkers as a whole.

Yet despite these considerations, not all Liverpool dockers appear to have valued the international campaign so highly. Others focus on the failure of the campaign to effectively damage MDHC’s trade. As part of a mini-series of interviews called “Reflecting on the Waterfront”, Geoff Liddy said:

¹⁵⁸ Wills, “Taking on the CosmoCorps?”, 117.

¹⁵⁹ Mike Carden and Terry Teague, “Liverpool dockers: the struggle against bosses and labour bureaucracy”, interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, 10 October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/MPSS1.HTM>

¹⁶⁰ Brian Dooley, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 9 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/dooley.htm>.

¹⁶¹ Mike Carden, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 26 February 2019.

When you mentioned the international campaign, my first thought was exactly that, we worked so hard for the international action and we did get results. Ok, some of the results were in the wrong places. Unfortunately, we couldn't hit the Liverpool trade. If we'd had the same support off Montreal, Australia, that we got off the Swedes, [...] it could have been so different.¹⁶²

Similarly, despite appearing to place considerable importance in the campaign, Terry Teague conceded that it failed to get key unions involved in the struggle. He stated, “sadly, the German union, the OTV, and the Dutch union, the FMB, had decisions imposed from above by unrepresentative leaders who have greater links with their Government and its financial policies than their own workers”.¹⁶³ Twenty years later, Tony Nelson pictured how different events could have been if the current leaders of the TGWU and ITF - Len McClusky and Paddy Crumlin respectively - had been in charge during the dispute:

If Len McClusky and Paddy Crumlin had been around in 1995, there would have been a different outcome, because Lenny's a docker and Paddy was a seafarer in one of the dockers' unions. So they would have seen the whole thing differently, and it would have been a different outcome. The leadership of the two unions at the time - the TGWU and the ITF - were not sympathetic anyway to our dispute. Paddy and Lenny would have sorted this out. That's life, life's about timing. Where you are, and who's in charge, we were just unlucky. We had John Major as Prime Minister and Tony Blair as Prime Minister. You get unlucky in life.¹⁶⁴

Statements such as these support arguments by Turnbull and Saundry that the Liverpool dockers' international campaign was ultimately “unable to exploit the immobility of capital or appreciably slow the pulse of international trade”.¹⁶⁵ In the same interview as that quoted above, Geoff Liddy also explained that “an awful lot of effort” went into the international campaign. He questioned whether heavy investment in the international campaign was the most efficient use of the Liverpool dockers' resources. This is a common and perhaps well-placed criticism; Liddy's thoughts resonate with those forwarded by Jane Wills, who asserted that the “history of efforts to foster labour internationalism” suggests that “sustained solidarity among workers is difficult to achieve”.¹⁶⁶

The end of the dispute: “We will now go away”

The second chapter of this thesis sought to add clarity and detail to the debate around how valuable the international campaign was perceived to be by the dockers and their supporters, and why. The decision to do this was rooted in two contentions: firstly, when discussing the value of the international

¹⁶² Geoff Liddy, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 11 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/liddy.htm>

¹⁶³ Mike Carden and Terry Teague, “Liverpool dockers: the struggle against bosses and labour bureaucracy”, interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, 10 October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/MPSS1.HTM>

¹⁶⁴ Tony Nelson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 June 2019.

¹⁶⁵ Turnbull, “Contesting globalization on the waterfront”, 369-70.

¹⁶⁶ Wills, “Taking on the CosmoCorps?”, 119.

campaign, scholars have rarely considered the opinions of the Liverpool dockers and their supporters themselves. Secondly, the academic literature has, to date, not considered the possibility that various groups could have valued the international campaign differently. Such an approach produced some highly notable results. Firstly, international workers supported and valued the campaign because they felt that its outcome would dramatically impact their own futures. This view was born out of a conviction that the campaign represented an urgent solution to the global issues of containerisation, casualisation, and increasingly internationally coordinated dock companies. It is worth noting that this view was shared by Liverpool dockers and the Women of the Waterfront. Interestingly, the campaign was also valued by international dockworkers because they felt it could enable the construction of a global network that could be used to coordinate responses to their employers' use of strike-breakers. However, the interviews equally revealed the lack of confidence of some international dockers in the campaign's overall ability to sufficiently damage the MDHC's economic interests, provide enough financial support to dockers' families, and fill the vacuum left by the TGWU after it opted not to formally recognise the dispute. Secondly, unlike the dockers in Liverpool and overseas, members of the Women of the Waterfront were universally positive when speaking about the dispute. The chapter touched upon a number of explanations for this. Nevertheless, interviews with WoW members suggest that, during the dispute, they began to conceive of their own activities as vital to sustaining the international campaign, which they valued highly for a number of practical and emotional reasons. Finally, while some Liverpool dockers expressed disappointment at the campaign (often relating to its perceived failure to raise awareness of the dispute, or interrupt international trade), others valued it highly. Notably, some interviews imply that the international campaign was valued because it came to represent the only credible option left to the dockers. Taken as a whole, these findings are significant when compared with the scholarly discourse; the differing views within each sub-group contradict assumptions that all dockers and supporters valued the international campaign to the same extent, and for the same reasons.

Ultimately, despite building considerable international solidarity across the world, the MDHC was able to prevail. By January 1998, the Liverpool dockers' international campaign had come to a halt. One month later, Brian Dooley reflected on the state of the international campaign:

Well I think after all those events took place, there was nothing happening. Everything we'd flung at the dock company, the international support, the days of action, you know the international one day strikes and all these pickets hitting them in various places, and yet everything we seemed to do just had no effect, they were just able to sit back there and take it all on the chin. And we'd look, and we'd see ships still coming in, and it seemed to be a period where the gantries were more and more down than they were up, and I think basically that was when the rot started setting in.

This demonstrates that at least some of the dockers had become disillusioned with the international campaign due to its perceived failure to damage the commercial interests of the MDHC. Yet the dockers had more serious concerns, which contributed to their decision to call an end to their dispute

on 28 January 1998. Bobby Morton described how the stresses and strains of the dispute had begun to catch up with the dockers' health:

Some of our people started to die from stress-related illnesses. In one particular year we lost 5 people, and I remember coming back from the funeral of one of the people. And we came back to the office, very, very sad having been to the funeral. When we got to the office, someone said, "while you were away, so-and-so died of a heart attack". The shop stewards had a meeting, and the will of the men was to carry on, but the shop stewards felt "if our people are dying and it's stress related through two and a half years off work, then we cannot be responsible for this", and we made the decision then to call the dispute off. We couldn't live our lives due to the dispute. Erm... and we kept our dignity throughout, right to the very end, and signalled to the union, "tell our employer that we're finished, we will now go away".

As Morton explains, the stress-related deaths of six Liverpool dockers served as one - but not the only - powerful reason why the dockers brought their dispute to a close. Consequently, they were ultimately unsuccessful in achieving their main objective of securing the reinstatement of the 500 workers, with more secure contracts, and the return of trade union representation. This has led to many to interpret the dispute was an abject failure. However, an important question that remains is whether the interviews with dockers and their supporters shed light on these traditional conceptions. This will be the focus of the final chapter.

3. Legacies of the Liverpool Dock Dispute: Memory and mentalities

“Our campaign, despite not getting our jobs back, was a profound success”

In January 1998, after a gruelling struggle lasting well over two years, the dockers from Seaforth Container Terminal accepted a redundancy package of £28,000 per person. Many of the Torside employees received nothing from the MDHC, although approximately £500,000 was raised for them and some were rehired on casual contracts.¹⁶⁷ In contrast, the MDHC’s operations continued relatively uninterrupted as the company posted record pre-tax profits of £47.6 million in 1998.¹⁶⁸ It continued to experience considerable growth until being acquired by Peel Holdings in 2005.¹⁶⁹ Following the end of the dispute, the MDHC and subsequently Peel Ports continued to use the services of Drake’s, the company that had supplied contracted workers (often termed “scabs” or “strike-breakers” by the dockers) throughout the dispute. In 2018, Bobby Morton exemplified the emotional toll that this outcome took on those involved:

I felt terribly isolated, and I had nowhere to go. It was a feeling of desolation, isolation. I had mental health problems because of it. [...] It was what we’d now call Post-Traumatic Depression, hit me. I had no future and no future for my family.¹⁷⁰

As this also suggests, many of the dockers were approaching the end of their careers, which made their failure to achieve reinstatement a serious cause for concern. Reflecting on his prospects of finding employment after the dispute, Eddie Ledden, a Liverpool docker, said:

I don’t think any of us will ever work again. I hope I’m wrong, but I can’t see it personally. It’s a daunting thing to think about, what am I going to do? Because I’m 48 now and “retrain”, retrain for what? I mean there’s kids coming out of universities with degrees who can’t get jobs.¹⁷¹

This disconsolation becomes easier to understand when one considers unemployment rates in Liverpool at this time. The Riverside constituency, located alongside the Liverpool docks, had an unemployment rate of 16.6 per cent in 1998, the second highest in Britain.¹⁷²

Taking the above into consideration, one can begin to understand why many scholars have depicted the dispute as a defeat that abjectly failed to leave a meaningful legacy in its wake. Ronaldo Munck asserted that despite the energy that went into the international campaign, “the returns were

¹⁶⁷ Castree, “Geographic scale and grass-roots internationalism”, 272.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Mary Brooks and Kevin Cullinane, *Devolution, port governance and port performance*, vol. 17, Elsevier, 2006, 73.

¹⁷⁰ Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

¹⁷¹ Mick Kilcullen, Billy Johnson, Jimmy Hagan, Eddie Ledden, Pat Bennett, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 17 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/kilculgp.htm>

¹⁷² Research Paper 98/67, Statistics Resource Unit, accessed 3 July 2019, *Unemployment by Constituency*, Alison Penman and Jane Hough. London: House of Commons Library, 17 June 1998, <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP98-67/RP98-67.pdf>

limited”.¹⁷³ Turnbull and Saundry adopted a more severe stance, suggesting that the “eventual capitulation of the Liverpool dockers demonstrated that international solidarity can count for naught”.¹⁷⁴ However, others have presented new perspectives, finding that despite the outcome of the dispute, it took on a critical significance in other ways. One such theory asserts that the Liverpool dockers successfully crafted a set of discursive frameworks and international networks, which became essential to future labour conflicts around the world. Jane Wills, for example, has posited that the dockers were successful in developing cross-border solidarity “in ways that were unthinkable in the immediate past”, serving as a lesson to the international docking community ever since.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, Carter et al noted that this “solidarity” equipped them with an “enduring global reach that the specific agency of the dockers would not otherwise have been able to effect”.¹⁷⁶

As this chapter will illustrate, the dockers and their supporters have themselves continually made claims relating to the positive legacy of their dispute. In an interview in 2019, Terry Teague stated:

Towards the end of the dispute, you could already see a lasting legacy. You know, it wasn’t just a question of finishing the dispute, you could never do that, because you’d built up such links and such solidarity that at some point you had to put them to good use. If we couldn’t use it to bring success to the Liverpool dockers, then let’s see if we can pass that legacy on to other workers who might find themselves in dispute, or in struggle. And you know, from my point of view, you could see that our campaign, despite not getting our jobs back, was a profound success.¹⁷⁷

The dockers have made various assertions, including that they transferred strategies to members of subsequent port labour conflicts, such as to the “Wharfies” during the successful 1998 Australian Waterfront Dispute; the Liverpool dispute was integral to the birth of the International Dockworkers’ Council, which is said to have had far-reaching effects in labour conflict across the world; and the conflict equipped some of the dockers’ leaders with the necessary skills and experience to “re-organise” the Liverpool docks many years after the dispute ended, thus bringing about the improved work conditions that are visible in the port today. The purpose of this chapter will be to take a critical look at these major claims. Here, the concern lies as much in how the dockers and their supporters have made sense of their past and themselves through narration, as in the historical events themselves. Three particular questions will therefore be central to this critique. Firstly, to what extent is there evidence to support the claims made by the dockers and their supporters regarding the dispute’s legacy? Secondly, what tends to disappear, remain, and re-emerge in their narratives? Thirdly, *why* might they have filtered their accounts, either consciously or unconsciously? Due to the nature of these

¹⁷³ Munck, “Globalization, labor, and the ‘Polanyi problem’”, 221.

¹⁷⁴ Turnbull, “Contesting globalization on the waterfront”, 369.

¹⁷⁵ Wills, “Taking on the CosmoCorps?”, 117.

¹⁷⁶ Carter et al, “The polyphonic spree”, 302.

¹⁷⁷ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

questions, this chapter will draw upon the historiography around cultural (or, more contentiously, “collective”) memory studies.

Since Maurice Halbwach’s seminal conception of *mémoire collective* (collective memory) in the first half of the twentieth century, modern memory studies have flourished. Two prominent examples include, but are by no means limited to, Pierre Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), and Jan and Aleida Assmann’s *kulturelles Gedächtnis* (cultural memory).¹⁷⁸ Broadly, such scholars are concerned by how societies remember their past, how they represent it, and how they lie about it.¹⁷⁹ Particularly since the 1980s, historians have increasingly considered the idea that perhaps more important than historical events themselves are the ways in which they are commemorated and imagined. On one level, which is particularly relevant to approaches using oral history, cultural memory studies underscore the fact that no memory is solely individual, but rather is always inherently shaped by collective contexts.¹⁸⁰ Many interesting studies have applied these theoretical elements to historical events. Lucy Robinson found that, as the memoirs of Falklands veterans became more popular and wider read, the soldiers became increasingly identified through that past, and told their readers what they thought they wanted to hear. Similarly, Yuval Noah Harari’s study of the autobiographical writings of Renaissance soldiers illustrated that common soldiers felt the need to “dress up their memories in more respectable guises”.¹⁸¹ Crucially, however, the links between memory and mentality in the Liverpool Dock Dispute have never been examined; this chapter will begin this much-needed discussion, which has the potential to help us raise new questions and make new connections.

A “Flickering Flame”? The 1998 Australian Waterfront Conflict

In a 2005 *Dispatcher* article on the 10th anniversary of the Liverpool dockers’ sacking, Steve Stallone wrote of the Liverpool dispute: “Like a ripple in the water, it reawakened workers’ awareness of the importance of international solidarity and became the model for other solidarity actions that followed”.¹⁸² The claim that the Liverpool Dock Dispute changed the course of industrial relations in ports across the world, despite ultimately ending in failure, re-emerges many times in interviews and articles in which the dispute’s legacy is discussed. One of the examples most frequently cited by interviewees and reporters is the influence that the Liverpool campaign had on the outcome of the 1998 Australian Waterfront Conflict. The dispute itself resulted from a contention between a large

¹⁷⁸ Jens Brockmeier, “Remembering and forgetting: Narrative as cultural memory”, *Culture & Psychology* 8, no. 1 (2002), 23

¹⁷⁹ Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara Young, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin, New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2008, 77.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸¹ Yuval Noah Harari, *Renaissance military memoirs: war, history, and identity, 1450-1600*. Vol. 18. Boydell Press, 2004, 294.

¹⁸² Steve Stallone, “How international labor solidarity works – the Neptune Jade action”, *Dispatcher* 63, no.9, October 2005, 3-11, <https://www.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/oct05.pdf>

shipping company that was keen to benefit from concessions by the recently elected Howard government to overhaul the country's waterfronts, and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), which was determined to preserve its control of port labour.¹⁸³ In April 1998, the shipping company, Patrick Corporation, sacked 1,400 workers, nearly all of whom were members of the MUA.¹⁸⁴ Following this, the dockers were replaced by contract workers and soldiers, triggering a wave of mass picketing and lengthy legal proceedings. Importantly, unlike the Liverpool dockers, the "Wharfies" were successful in their battle, as the High Court ultimately ruled that the Patrick Corporation had deliberately altered its corporate structure with the sole intent of dismissing its unionised workers. The dispute in Australia therefore represents an appropriate case study with which to examine the dockers' first major claim regarding their dispute's legacy. However, there are a number of other reasons for this. First, it began less than a year after the Liverpool dispute finished, and there are clear similarities between the two disputes¹⁸⁵; second, it has already been the focus a study by Peter Turnbull, which serves as a useful reference point; and, finally, the Australian Waterfront Dispute has come to be known as a "historic" moment in Australia's labour history.¹⁸⁶

Geoff Liddy and Frank Carberry were interviewed in 1998 as part of the series of interviews called "Reflecting on the Waterfront", just after their dispute came to a close. When asked whether they had achieved anything despite the overall outcome, Liddy described how the Liverpool dockers were using their expertise to support the Wharfies, and referred to the Liverpool dispute as a "Flickering Flame" that could be passed on to other groups of port workers:

We've heard since we called off the dispute that the Australian dockers are under attack. And of course we sent delegates out there and raised awareness about Thatcherite policies and so they're fighting, and apparently the union leaders are fighting with them, and that's good. [...] You know they say "The Flickering Flame". We've now got to pass it on to somebody else, not just dockers. We can use the dispute and the reasons for the dispute not being won, to convince other workers that it's worth fighting.¹⁸⁷

Additionally, in response to the same question, Carberry spoke of the "marvellous" international connections that had been cultivated during the Liverpool dispute, and stated that they had been "useful" for the Wharfies.¹⁸⁸ The answers of both Liddy and Carberry contradict the notion that the

¹⁸³ John Selsky, John Spicer, and Julian Teicher, "Totally Un-Australian!: Discursive and Institutional Interplay in the Melbourne Port Dispute of 1997-98", *Journal of Management Studies* 40, no. 7 (2003), 1730.

¹⁸⁴ Braham Dabscheck, "The Waterfront Dispute: Of Vendetta and the Australian Way", *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 9, no. 2 (1998), 157.

¹⁸⁵ There were a number of similarities between the disputes in Liverpool and Australia: both workforces had declined in the years preceding the dispute; both employers had steadily reduced work conditions in preparation for change, and prepared overseas labour to arrive; and both sets of workers demanded support in response to mass privatisation and casualisation policies. See: Kennedy and Lavalette (2004), 221-3.

¹⁸⁶ Chris Mcconville, "The Australian Waterfront Dispute 1998", *Politics & Society* 28, no. 3 (2000), 393.

¹⁸⁷ Geoff Liddy, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 11 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/liddy.htm>

¹⁸⁸ Frank Carberry, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 17 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/carberry.htm>

dispute was, by 1998, a “dead loss”. Rather, their interviews reveal a belief - or, at least, a narrative - that the dispute was still very much alive and well, in the sense that it was living on to have a significant effect on future labour conflicts. Interestingly, Kevin Robinson, in an interview in 2018, also strongly inferred that the strategies pioneered by the Liverpool dockers became a critical factor in the success of the Australian dispute:

As soon as our strike finished, about three months later there was a big strike in Australia with the Patricks. [...] Most of the tactics that we used in our dispute, they used in their dispute. They developed community picket lines, they got the women involved, they started singing and dancing and all this type of thing. And they won the dispute. Now obviously, you know, they always say, “it was what you did that we picked up and implemented. And we reckon that’s what made it happen for us”.¹⁸⁹

Considering that Robinson’s interview took place nearly twenty years after Liddy and Carberry’s, the similarity of their claims is striking. This represents one of many narratives regarding the legacy of the dispute that appear not just to have prevailed, but strengthened, over time.

Such narratives are also recounted by international dockers. Many Australian dockworkers and union members have spoken of the importance of the Liverpool dispute to the Wharfies’ campaign. Jim Donovan, who was himself a “Wharfie”, but also Deputy Secretary of the New South Wales Branch of the MUA, drew parallels between the two disputes, and described the inspirational and symbolic effect that the Liverpool dispute had on his campaign in Australia:

In 1996, when I attended the first international dockers conference in Liverpool, you had a Tory government in Britain and we had a Labour government in Australia. Now the positions are reversed, and we are facing a similar set of industrial laws to those designed in Britain under Thatcher. The fight in Liverpool inspires us to carry on our own struggle in Australia.¹⁹⁰

Similarly, in 2005, ILWU President, James Spinosa, noted that the failure of the Liverpool dockers had the effect of generating learning about solidarity, and preparing the international dockworking community to mobilise faster to support the Wharfies:

Their [the Liverpool dockers’] loss exposed things all of us in the international dockers movement learned from and must continue to learn from, things about solidarity in action, and about its strategic, coordinated and timely use. [...] We were not surprised when in 1998 Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Patrick’s Stevedoring moved against the Maritime Union of Australia. This time, the international dockers movement mobilized quickly and with multiple actions.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Kevin Robinson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 2 March 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Jim Donovan, “Jim Donovan interview”, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 27 September 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9709/DONOVAN.HTM>

¹⁹¹ James Spinosa, “*President’s report: Remembering the past to better the future*”, *Dispatcher* 63, no.9, October 2005, 2, <https://www.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/oct05.pdf>

It is clear, then, that narratives attaching significance to the Liverpool dispute (despite its ultimate failure) are not just presented by dockers from Liverpool, but also by dockers from countries as far away as Australia and the United States.

Through his work on the interpretative, explanatory, and narrative potential of the notion of memory, Alon Confino has written of the temptation for historians to interpret memory and narratives in a superficial or facile manner, or, even worse, to take them as given.¹⁹² It is therefore essential that the contexts in which these interviews and articles took place are acknowledged, and the dockers' use of evidence and narrative is questioned. Firstly, it is important to note that both Donovan and Spinoso's organisations donated heavily to the Liverpool dockers during their campaign (the ILWU of America donated at least \$100,000 alone).¹⁹³ Bearing this in mind, it may not have been in their interests to admit that such large sums of their members' money had been donated in vein to a dispute that entirely failed to achieve its outcomes. If anything, it would arguably have been more in their interests to cultivate the narrative that their members had contributed to an invaluable and historic, albeit unsuccessful, labour conflict. Much in the same way, the claims by the Liverpool dockers - Carberry, Robinson and Liddy - do not always stand up particularly well to cross-examination, and their assertions that the Liverpool campaign contributed to the victory of the Australian conflict often lack detail and evidence. While there may be some truth to their assertion that the international networks created during the Liverpool campaign were useful to the Wharfies, it is also feasible that they had forgotten that the docking industry is international by nature, and the notion of capitalising on existing international networks would have been a natural action for any group of dockworkers to take in a conflict with their employer. The statements by Liddy and Spinoso, which suggest that the Liverpool dispute led to pivotal strategic and tactical learning for the Wharfies, could also be questioned. Peter Turnbull has written on the relationship between the two disputes. He has convincingly argued that it was the *intrinsic differences* between the Australian and Liverpool disputes that led to the Wharfies' success.¹⁹⁴ Firstly, he found that whereas the Liverpool dockers were forced to work in isolation due to a lack of support from their union, the MUA in Australia actively "took up the legal challenge and made the sackings a dispute about the rights of all Australian workers to freedom of association".¹⁹⁵ Secondly, he argued that the MUA opted to make use of international solidarity only at certain "strategic points" during the dispute, and thus chose to maintain pressure on the Patrick Corporation through local and physical campaigning.¹⁹⁶ Most importantly, however, he found little evidence that the Australian dockers had based these major elements of their campaign on learning taken from the Liverpool dispute.

¹⁹² Confino, Alon. "Memory and the History of Mentalities", *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* 8 (2008), 83.

¹⁹³ Marren, "The Liverpool Dock Strike", 473.

¹⁹⁴ Turnbull, "Contesting globalization on the waterfront", 383.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

It is the position of this chapter that rather than shedding light on a chain of events, the dockers' narratives may instead tell us more about *how* and *why* they imagine events in their past. In the modern study of memory and mentalities, the focus tends to be on "people's active engagement in the effort to make sense of what they are doing and experiencing, rather than the outcomes, such as defeat or victory".¹⁹⁷ Although a slight simplification, the accounts presented by the dockers often follow the narrative of "we lost, but we won in other ways". Moreover, by and large, the dockers spend less time dwelling on their immediate failures than describing the positive developments that have come about as a result of their dispute. With this in mind, it becomes possible to see a phenomenon, referred to by Aleida Assmann as "meaning production", in their accounts and narratives.¹⁹⁸ Assmann has argued that humans participate in "extended horizons of meaning production" when they are recalling, iterating, criticising or discussing the remote or recent past.¹⁹⁹ Often this process does not happen consciously. Therefore, it is perhaps useful to consider the idea that the accounts of the Liverpool dockers are just as much about constructing meaning in their lives, by justifying both their individual and collective actions and sacrifices, as they are about accurately retelling events.

In fact, collective memory and identity should also be borne in mind when analysing narratives about this element of the dispute's legacy. Jens Brockmeier has found that shared memories of a similarly experienced past bind individuals together into a cultural community, with the overarching function of guaranteeing a "cultural sense of belonging".²⁰⁰ Furthermore, Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka have stated that our membership in a variety of contexts of cultural participation (e.g., families, professions and political parties), which are built upon shared values and conceptions, means that we remember according to social frames that emphasise different aspects of our experienced reality.²⁰¹ Thus, it is possible to conceive that aspects that fit the dockers' collective frame of memory (i.e., "our dispute influenced the success of other disputes") are remembered, while aspects that do not (i.e., "we participated in a conflict for over two years with virtually no gain") are forgotten. This is perhaps why certain narratives - such as the one posited by Liddy, Carberry and Robinson - may have strengthened over time, while other, less memorable ones have fallen out of use. Therefore, it is possible that narratives about the relationships between the Liverpool and Australian disputes should not be viewed as objective accounts. Instead, they reveal the influence of subjectivity and emotion on memory, the dockers' strong preference not to be individually or collectively associated with failure, and the complexity of the relationship between individual and collective narratives.

¹⁹⁷ Peter Gabriel McCaffery and Ben Marsden, *The Cultural History Reader*, Routledge, 2014, xxii.

¹⁹⁸ Aleida, Assmann. "Canon and Archive", *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin and New York (NY), Walter de Gruyter (2008), 97.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Jens Brockmeier, "Remembering and forgetting", 23.

²⁰¹ Jan Assmann, and John Czaplicka, "Collective memory and cultural identity", *New German Critique* 65 (1995), 127.

International Dockworkers' Council (IDC)

Another claim that consistently reappears across interviews and newspaper articles is the suggestion that the International Dockworkers' Council (IDC) emerged from the Liverpool Dock Dispute. Furthermore, the IDC's formation is often depicted as an important and enduring piece of the dispute's legacy by many dockworkers. Their claims centre on the idea that the informal international networks, which were developed by the Liverpool dockers to aid their campaign, were formalised into the IDC in response to the ITF's lack of effectiveness during the Liverpool dispute. The IDC was formed in 2000 and is an international non-profit association made up of 92 organisations from 41 countries, with over 140,000 affiliated members.²⁰² Its stated mission is to "uphold labor standards that will improve the economic and social well-being of port workers around the world".²⁰³ Dixon, Danaher and Kail have described it as a "a more militant counterpart" to the established International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).²⁰⁴ However, Tipples and Martin have gone one step further, stating that it should be seen as a "rival organisation" of the ITF, which tends to "occupy the more radical ground".²⁰⁵

The Liverpool dockers' claims relating to the IDC are broadly threefold. As an interview with Terry Teague exemplifies, their first contention is that the IDC was formed as a direct result of the Liverpool dispute taking place. While describing the "historic" nature of the dispute during an interview in 2019, Teague explained that the Liverpool dockers' international connections were essentially formalised through the formation of the IDC:

It was historic what we'd built, so maybe the biggest surprise was the strength we'd built up with the international movement of dock workers, and even today, that's now formed itself into the International Dockworkers' Council, the IDC, which is recognised all over the world.²⁰⁶

This is a statement that is made by several dockers spoken to in preparation for this thesis. Their second claim relates to the greater effectiveness of the IDC in comparison with the more established ITF, which was founded in London in 1886.²⁰⁷ In addition to describing the dispute as a "catalyst" for the formation of the IDC, Tony Nelson is one of numerous dockers who appear to hold the work of the IDC in high regard. He said:

²⁰² "What is the IDC?", IDC Dockworkers, accessed 3 July 2019, <http://www.idcdockworkers.org/en/presentation/what-is-the-idc>

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Marc Dixon, William Danaher, and Ben Kail, "Allies, targets, and the effectiveness of coalition protest: A comparative analysis of labor unrest in the US south", *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (2013), 342.

²⁰⁵ Rupert Tipples and Sandra Martin, "Getting Produce from the New Zealand Paddock to the European Plate - reducing Supply Chain Vulnerability through the Management of Employment Relations Critical Control Points", *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations* 31, no. 1 (2006): 67.

²⁰⁶ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

²⁰⁷ Tipples and Martin, "Getting Produce from the New Zealand Paddock to the European Plate", 67.

The IDC have helped the Swedish dockers recently, Genoa refused to handle Israeli ships last week in an IDC port, so you know, they continue to be important. They're very successful in what they do. Plus they're in South America, Africa. There are over 130,000 members now. That comes from a meeting of 12 of us in Tenerife in 2000. The people who attended that meeting knew what had to be done.²⁰⁸

The final argument made by the dockers relates to the perceived organisational and ideological differences between the IDC and the IDF, and the reasons why the IDC is more effective than the ITF. A recent episode of the Australian-produced *Maritime Workers Podcast* contained a noteworthy discussion between two Liverpool Dockers, Tony Nelson and John Lynch, and the Secretary of the Sydney Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia, Paul McAleer. During the discussion, McAleer highlighted the IDC's greater assertiveness and power, stating that its membership base consists of "the toughest and most extreme dockers' unions in the world", adding, "we're very proud of that".²⁰⁹ In addition to these perceived ideological strengths, Bobby Morton outlined the organisational differences between the two organisations:

It's a brotherhood, and where we need to support one another, we will do it. And the beauty of the IDC is that it's not a trade union, so if any country gets involved with an action by the IDC, it wouldn't be possible to sue them in the way that our unions could have been sued. The IDC could not be sued because it does not exist as a trade union.²¹⁰

Here, Morton infers that, due to not being classified as a trade union, the IDC is able to avoid some of legislation that was seen to have limited the TGWU (and subsequently the ITF) during the Liverpool dispute.

Again, it is important to weigh up these claims. On one hand, as we saw in previous chapters, many dockers around the world harboured considerable resentment of the ITF for its decision not to support the Liverpool dockers. Thus, it is highly plausible that this bred sufficient appetite within the international dockworking community to support the formation of an alternative organisation, designed to succeed in areas where the ITF was perceived to have failed. Indeed, Nathan Lillie has found that "the IDC emerged out of the informal transnational network of union officials and rank-and-file activists that had been developed throughout the Liverpool dispute".²¹¹ Yet it must be noted that Lillie's discussion does not contain further detail, and his is the only academic study that acknowledges this connection. There is also limited evidence to support the dockers' second assertion that the IDC has become a more effective organisation than the ITF. Two examples stand out. The first concerns the way in which the IDC supported a legal proceeding involving the "Charleston Five",

²⁰⁸ Tony Nelson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 June 2019.

²⁰⁹ Shane Reside, Paul McAleer, Tony Nelson and John Lynch, "Liverpool Dockers Visit Australia", April 11 2019, in *Radio Stingray – Maritime Workers' Podcast*, produced by Maritime Union of Australia Sydney Branch, podcast, MP3, <https://omny.fm/shows/radio-stingray-maritime-workers-podcast/liverpool-dockers>

²¹⁰ Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

²¹¹ Nathan Lillie, *A Global Union for Global Workers: Collective Bargaining and Regulatory Politics in Maritime Shipping*, New York: Routledge, 2010, 86.

made up of five dockworkers from South Carolina who were fighting conspiracy charges after industrial action at their port. Ultimately, the IDC put enough political, economic, and legal pressure on the state that the charges were dropped to minor misdemeanours with minimal fines.²¹² The second concerns a campaign in which the IDC “led protests against industry and government efforts to weaken dockworker unions within the European Community”.²¹³ A *Dispatcher* article outlined the result of the IDC’s campaign:

The effort was successful, following protests involving 10,000 workers in 150 ports around the world that included 36-hour strikes in Portugal, France, Greece, Cyprus, and Sweden. Dockers in Belgium, Holland, and Finland also struck for two hours to show their support for the [IDC’s] global campaign.²¹⁴

On the other hand, it is readily apparent that not all dockers are convinced of the IDC’s effectiveness. For example, Tony Nelson described the Liverpool Dock Dispute as the “catalyst” for the formation of the IDC, yet he also conceded in a different interview that the ITF and IDC often clash, thereby limiting each other’s effectiveness:

With the social media, their relationship isn’t too good at the moment. [...] It’s hot and cold to be honest; there are ports who are in the ITF and the IDC. We’ve got a meeting in Liverpool in August where we’re trying to bring the two sides together. We’ve tried this before but there are just people who don’t want that to happen. Because we’ve fought the battle, and we know what can happen when organisations are split.²¹⁵

In light of the above, it is possible to assert that although there is some evidence to support the dockers’ claims, they still very much remain open to question.

Inconsistencies between narratives about the dispute’s legacy reveal elements of the working of memory itself. This is why memory has been said to represent a “site of struggle over meaning and truth” upon which claims are made that are not acceptable to everybody.²¹⁶ For this reason, we may be better off viewing the dockers’ narratives as an embodiment of a statement made by Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone that memory is “always narrative, always representation, always construction”.²¹⁷ Moreover, Jürgen Straub has written that people tend to transform a given occurrence into a phenomenon, which is worth being memorised, and is therefore communicable.²¹⁸ Their communicability enables them to be learned, practiced, and internalised. Part of this process, which is visible in the reemerging narratives of the dockers when talking about their dispute’s legacy, consists of

²¹² Steve Stallone, “Charlston Five victory celebration”, *Dispatcher* 60, no.3, March 2002, 8, <http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/20020301.pdf>

²¹³ Marcy Rein, “Dockworkers around the world meet in Long Beach”, *Dispatcher* 65, no.8, September 2007, 8, http://archive.ilwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/sept07_dispatcher_all-low-res2.pdf

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Tony Nelson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 June 2019.

²¹⁶ Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, *Contested pasts: The politics of memory*, Routledge, 2003, 7.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 2.

²¹⁸ Jürgen Straub, “Psychology, narrative, and cultural memory: Past and present”, *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* 8 (2008), 221.

narrative re-arrangement, and the integration of events into generally intelligible stories. Straub found that, often, these narratives take the form of “ready-made stories and schematic plots” (e.g., romance, tragedy, or comedy).²¹⁹ With this in mind, it is possible to view the dockers’ claims regarding the IDC as elements of a typical story of “rise and fall”, with their campaign and internationalism representing their “rise”, their ultimate failure to achieve their demands as their “fall”, and their (perhaps exaggerated) claims relating to the dispute’s legacy serving as the climactic “denouement”.

Re-organising the Port of Liverpool

As earlier chapters have illustrated, the Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU) cited legal constraints as its justification for not formally recognising the dockers’ campaign. This led to reputational damage for the union, and a severely strained relationship with its members in Liverpool. During the conflict, the dockers contributed a host of scathing reviews concerning the ways in which the “union bureaucrats”²²⁰ had handled the dispute, levelling particular criticism at the union’s “treachery”²²¹ and “dereliction of duty”²²². This makes it easier to understand why union membership in Liverpool fell after the dispute ended, dramatically reducing the presence of the TGWU on the docks.²²³ This would likely have been problematic for the remaining dockworkers in the port, many of whom were forced to accept unstable, contracted work with Drake’s and Blue Arrow. The dockers’ lack of union membership may have left them without support in legal disputes, or a body to collectively bargain on their behalves. This serves as useful context to the final major claim made by the dockers about their dispute’s legacy: namely, that in recent years, a small number of ex-Liverpool dockers have played an important role in re-organising the dock’s labour force, leading to increased union membership, and a string of improvements to working conditions in the port. The dockers said to have brought about these changes - Tony Nelson, Terry Teague and Bobby Morton - all held senior organisational positions during the Liverpool dispute, and have subsequently been appointed to official trade union positions in their retirement.²²⁴

The first component of the dockers’ claim is that Teague and Nelson (and to a lesser extent, Morton) have played a key role in educating and organising the new generation of port employees in Liverpool. In the April 2019 edition of the *Maritime Workers’ Podcast*, Teague described the remit

²¹⁹ Ibid, 222.

²²⁰ Brian Dooley, interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, 9 February 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9807/dooley.htm>.

²²¹ Mike Carden and Terry Teague, “Liverpool dockers: the struggle against bosses and labour bureaucracy”, interview by Peter Kennedy, *LabourNet*, 10 October 1997, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9710/MPSS1.HTM>

²²² Terry Teague, “The T&GWU General Secretary’s View, and Ours”, Interview by Greg Dropkin, *LabourNet*, January 1998, transcript, <http://www.labournet.net/docks2/9801/TERRY.HTM>

²²³ Paul Smith, *Unionization and union leadership*, Routledge, 2013, 181.

²²⁴ Soon after the dispute ended, Morton secured a role as Regional Officer at the TGWU, later becoming the National Docks Officer for Unite the Union. Additionally, over ten years later in 2011, the General Secretary of Unite, Len McClusky, appointed Teague and Nelson as Regional Officers to work part-time at the Liverpool docks.

that the union leader, Len McCluskey, had given to him and Teague: “Our remit was to get rid of Drake’s, our remit was to try and get the workers within the port authority, our remit was to get conveners. It was about rebuilding the union using bricks and mortar”.²²⁵ In an interview just six months later, Nelson again described their role as being about organisational restructuring, but also emphasised the importance of fostering internationalism in the port:

We’ve talked to the younger generation of dockers about internationalism, how important it is. And the companies know that. Our strength is that we’ve got friends all around the world. The dispute has educated all of us. We knew already, we knew already. But it’s like thinking something and then finding out it’s true. It’s also about structuring ... there are now five shop stewards in the port who people can turn to.²²⁶

According to Kevin Robinson, Teague and Nelson’s work has also involved introducing current Liverpool dockworkers to their international contacts, and facilitating their attendance at industry conferences. For example, at the time of his interview with the author of this thesis, Robinson explained that Nelson was taking the new senior convener of the Liverpool dockers, John Lynch, to an international conference in Australia:

As we speak, there’s a conference going on in Perth, which normally I’d be at, I’d get invited over. But there’s two lads, which is a breakthrough. You’ve got Tony Nelson out there and John Lynch. John Lynch is the convener at Seaforth now. So yeah, Tony’s out there helping him to cut his teeth.²²⁷

By “cutting his teeth” Robinson refers to Lynch’s learning of the basic skills needed to utilise international networks in his wider responsibilities to organise port employees in Liverpool. There is a strong inference that Nelson is important to this process.

The dockers’ accounts also dictate that the work of Nelson, Teague and Morton has been highly effective. During an interview in 2018, Mike Carden reflected on the involvement of Nelson and Teague in developments in the Port of Liverpool since 2011: “What an irony. Tony and Terry have ended up now organising the workers in the port, things have changed dramatically there”.²²⁸ The irony that Carden is referring to is, of course, rooted in the fact that Nelson and Teague have come to hold positions in a union, which, in Teague’s words, “betrayed” them during their dispute. Nelson, Teague and Morton have also made a number of claims about the results of their work. Nelson stated that Liverpool is now “one of the best organised ports in the country”,²²⁹ and Teague described their success in helping the dockers to secure direct employment, with a host of improved work benefits:

²²⁵ Shane Reside, Paul McAleer, Tony Nelson and John Lynch, “Liverpool Dockers Visit Australia”, April 11 2019, in *Radio Stingray – Maritime Workers’ Podcast*, produced by Maritime Union of Australia Sydney Branch, podcast, MP3, <https://omny.fm/shows/radio-stingray-maritime-workers-podcast/liverpool-dockers>

²²⁶ Tony Nelson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 June 2019.

²²⁷ Kevin Robinson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 2 March 2019.

²²⁸ Mike Carden, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 29 November 2018.

²²⁹ Tony Nelson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 June 2019.

We got rid of Drake's and Blue Arrow. That was the biggest success we had. Most companies around the world are trying to get the workers into agencies. We went the opposite way. We got the agencies to get the dockers employed by a single port employer, Peel Ports. To get workers employed by the port authority is a massive, massive victory. [...] We've now got pensions, we've got holiday pay, got sick pay, better rate of pay. I'm not saying we've got there entirely, but the conditions have improved greatly since we've been there.²³⁰

It is worth noting that Morton also emphasised the role that Teague and Nelson had played in changing conditions in the port. He stated, "the credit should go to Terry Teague and Tony Nelson. They went into the docks, they met people, they convinced them. And then people started to join the union again".²³¹ However, Morton also described at length the importance of his own work, which, he stated, led to the termination of the main Blue Arrow contract, and the direct employment of over 400 dockworkers with "fantastic terms and conditions".²³² According to him, this achievement came about as a result of his prolonged negotiations on a one-to-one basis with the CEO of Peel Ports. Strikingly, however, Morton's involvement is only referenced by one other source consulted by this thesis, which itself does not mention any negotiations of this nature. Furthermore, his account contrasts with those of Nelson and Teague, who did not credit him at all. Regardless, the dockers all broadly assert that the port is now better off as a result of contributions by Teague, Nelson and Morton. For example, Kevin Robinson stated that, because of their work, "the port of Liverpool has never been as busy as it is now".²³³

Finally, this recurring narrative also strongly implies that the ex-dockers' success in re-organising the port is rooted in their *direct experience* of the Liverpool Dock Dispute, which has equipped them with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to enact change. Teague ascribed their success, and the respect they received from current port employees, to their involvement in the Liverpool dispute:

We were shop stewards as teenagers. We know every brick on the docks, and we know how to organise anyway. So we just basically used the old style, and it worked. We had the respect of the men, the support of the men, the confidence of the men, which, you know, I don't think we would have had if it weren't for our dock dispute.²³⁴

Additionally, when asked how they had been able to bring about positive developments, when so many others had previously failed, Kevin Robinson stated: "It's about saying 'no I've been here, I've got the t-shirt'. The employer doesn't like it, but the men on the shop floor, or on quayside, do".²³⁵

Crucially, current Liverpool docker, John Lynch, attested to this narrative in his letter to the January

²³⁰ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

²³¹ Bobby Morton, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 12 February 2019.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Kevin Robinson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 2 March 2019.

²³⁴ Terry Teague, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 11 February 2019.

²³⁵ Kevin Robinson, in discussion with the author, audio and transcript, 2 March 2019.

2019 edition of the *Queensland Branch News*, a monthly newsletter of the Queensland Branch of the MUA. In the letter, Lynch acknowledged the work of Morton, Teague and Nelson in brokering new contracts for all Liverpool dockworkers:

I am pleased to inform you that my company Blue Arrow have lost the contract. And that the port authority are going to take the contract in house. And all current 328 dock workers will be taken across and work directly for the port authority Peel Ports. This is a massive achievement and can only help all workers at the port of Liverpool. This couldn't of been achieved with out the help and tremendous work that Terry Teague, Tony Nelson and Bobby Morton have done along with the members and the support from the IDC. Terry Teague, Tony Nelson and Bobby Morton were the original Liverpool Dockers that was sacked in 1995. And have been key and instrumental figures that have supported and helped to achieve this deal. It means that we will no longer be working for a agency. And working directly for the port authority.²³⁶

Lynch's letter also unequivocally reinforces the link between Teague, Nelson and Morton's experience of the Liverpool dock dispute, and their ability to become "instrumental" to generating change in the port.

There is arguably a stronger evidence base for these claims than those examined earlier in this chapter, concerning the Wharfies' dispute and the IDC. Indeed, in December 2016, Blue Arrow and Drake's lost their contracts, meaning all Liverpool dock workers are now employed directly by Peel Ports on more secure, less casual contracts. More recently, in November 2018, the dockers secured a "historic pay deal", resulting in a 10 per cent pay increase over three years, and the introduction of Christmas bonuses.²³⁷ The deal also represented an improvement to the dockers' work-life balance due to the introduction of a "five days on, three off" shift pattern, which includes the option to volunteer for extra shifts with overtime rates. From January 2019, all workers in the port have received an extra day's holiday, and all those working night shifts receive overtime pay. Finally, the deal has led to the dockworkers receiving life assurance, sickness benefit, and a generous pension scheme matching the individual's contribution up to 10 per cent. Crucially, Teague and Nelson are quoted in a number of local newspaper articles outlining these developments, in which they are described as "union committee negotiating members". This strengthens the credibility of their claims about their involvement in recent developments in the port. Improvements to the stability of the port's workforce, and the arrival of more shipping companies, perhaps constitute major factors in Peel Ports' recent decision to invest over £650 million into the port, including a £300 million "Liverpool2" terminal,

²³⁶ John Lynch, "Port of Liverpool Win", *MUA Queensland Branch Newsletter*, no. 113, January 2018, 3. <https://d3n8a8pro7vbm.cloudfront.net/muanational/pages/7799/attachments/original/1515728531/MUAQLD-BN113-12012018.pdf?1515728531%20>

²³⁷ Tim Lezard, "Win! Unite secures historic pay package for Liverpool dockworkers", *Unite the Union*, accessed 3 July 2019, <http://www.union-news.co.uk/win-unite-secures-historic-pay-package-for-liverpool-dockworkers/>

which has doubled the Liverpool's container handling capacity.²³⁸ However, it is clear that there are other possible reasons for these plans. Other investments include training and development programmes for people who are local to the area, including the introduction of apprenticeship schemes.²³⁹ The notion that Teague, Nelson and Morton have all contributed in some way to the dockers' contract changes, which in turn has improved workforce stability (perhaps itself an important precondition for significant investment in the port) is, at the very least, plausible.

Although there may be some factual correctness in the dockers' final claim regarding the legacy of their dispute, there remain other possible explanations for its recurrence. Sociologists, such as Linda Williams and Victoria Banyard, might instead urge us to consider these claims in light of the scholarly dialogue on the relationship between trauma and memory, which examines cognitive mechanisms for memory forgetting and fabricating after traumatic events.²⁴⁰ Studies such as these often focus on groups such as war veterans; for example, Alison Parr's study of oral history and traumatised war veterans underlined the link between "retelling" and "recovery", finding that telling stories of traumatic events served as a therapeutic way to externalise their experiences.²⁴¹ Additionally, in her work with Falkland's veterans, Lucy Robinson highlighted the link between, trauma, content, and narratives. She stated, "Trauma informs content, and the content informs the way that the conflict is remembered and understood, and this, in turn, re-informs narratives".²⁴² It is possible then, that we can see similar mechanisms at work in the dockers' drive to set the record straight, and reiterate the multifaceted nature of their dispute's legacy. For example, the thesis has already acknowledged that Morton experienced post-traumatic stress disorder following the Liverpool dispute. It has also been unable to substantiate his claim that he played a pivotal role in negotiating new working conditions. Thus, rather than accepting claims such as Morton's as given, it is arguably more helpful to view them as potential "individualised cathartic accounts of closure", which can illustrate the historical intersection between life discourse and life history.²⁴³

Where possible, this chapter has sought to acknowledge any compelling evidence supporting the dockers' claims regarding the legacy of their dispute. Their final claim, that a small group of ex-dockers have contributed to improved union organisation and working conditions in the port is perhaps the most credible. However, even elements of this narrative appear to be, at least to some degree, constructed. More widely, their narratives tend to lack detail, and often overlook other possible explanations for the achievements that they have taken credit for. Yet it is these *specific*

²³⁸ "Peel Ports' Mark Whitworth praised for leading north west investment programme", Peel Ports Group, accessed 3 July 2019, <https://www.peelports.com/news/2016/peel-ports-mark-whitworth-praised-for-leading-north-west-investment-programme>

²³⁹ Paddy Shennan, "Liverpool docks dispute 20 years on: Part One - How dockers paid with their jobs for refusing to cross a picket line", *Liverpool Echo*, 20 September 2015, <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/liverpool-docks-dispute-20-years-10077766>

²⁴⁰ Linda Williams and Victoria Banyard, *Trauma and memory*, Sage, 1998, xi.

²⁴¹ Alison Parr, "Breaking the silence: traumatised war veterans and oral history", *Oral History* (2007), 68.

²⁴² Robinson, *Soldiers' stories of the Falklands War*, 573.

²⁴³ *Ibid*, 577.

inconsistencies and contradictions within the dockers' narratives that can be so intriguing. They enable an examination of why narrative rearrangement may take place, ranging from the human drive to create meaning in past actions and sacrifices, the need to memorialise fallen colleagues, our preoccupation with our own identity at an individual and collective level, and our cognitive mechanisms for processing trauma. Moreover, we must remember that these narratives are, in essence, responses to the individual and communal question of "what have you achieved?". Let us not forget: at least six dockers are commonly believed to have died during the conflict due to stress-related conditions. Additionally, some workers defaulted on their mortgages, and many families lived well below the poverty line for many years after the dispute. With this in mind, one can begin to understand how and why narratives of the dispute may have been filtered until they somehow reinforce the notion that, despite the ultimate failure of their dispute, the dockers and their families suffered - or even died - for *something*.

Conclusion

For the first time, this thesis has comprehensively examined the oral history narratives of dockworkers to shed light on traditional conceptions of the Liverpool Dock Dispute. Yet its findings arguably enable a series of broader conclusions about the usefulness of oral history, and the importance of concepts such as emotion, identity, and memory to the field of industrial relations more widely. Such findings are not only relevant to the Liverpool Dock Dispute, but also apply to studies of virtually any other labour conflict unfolding in docks, factories, fields, mines, airports, workshops, offices, or hospitals across the world.

The dockers' interviews demonstrate the capacity of oral history to unlock a kaleidoscopic array of narratives, which can serve to elevate the level of historical enquiry into industrial relations. As Hodgkin and Radstone have rousingly argued, interviews are capable of "soliciting the voices of those who have been silent and ignored throughout the centuries: the poor and powerless, workers and women, who have seldom had speaking parts in the historical drama".²⁴⁴ Oral history has the advantage of being more inclusive; by increasing the number of voices in the arena of historical analysis, the historian is more likely to discover new patterns and contradictions. With this in mind, by broadly failing to utilise oral history, much of the existing historiography on the Liverpool dispute has missed the opportunity to access and scrutinise the triumphs and tragedies of daily life (as opposed to "pivotal events"), which are capable of providing a counter-narrative to existing conclusions and assumptions. For example, it is not an oversimplification to state that, when analysing the value of the international campaign in the Liverpool dispute, scholars have almost invariably positioned their findings somewhere on a scale ranging from "it was not valuable at all" to "it was extremely valuable". Yet by considering a corpus of interviews with the dockers themselves, the second chapter of this thesis demonstrated that these scholars missed the point, overlooking the fundamental and simple idea that the campaign meant different things to various groups and individuals. This demonstrates how oral history can switch our focus from somewhat shallow questions (e.g., "how valuable was the international campaign?") to more intriguing questions (e.g., "why was the campaign valued differently by different groups?"). As we know, new questions such as these have the potential to unlock new answers.

This thesis has also sought to demonstrate how the accounts of those who have experienced labour conflicts can serve as conduits to people's inner worlds. These worlds - made up of people's thoughts, feelings, conflicts and biases - enable us to apply concepts relating to identity and emotion, which can also be integral to mounting challenges against long-held conceptions within scholarly discourses. In the first chapter, the traditional notion that regional identity was essential to strengthening the dockers' movement was dispelled by the revelation that, in fact, tugboat employees in Liverpool undermined the dockers by bringing ships in and out of the port throughout the entirety of

²⁴⁴ Hodgkin and Radstone, *Contested pasts*, 7.

the dispute. Additionally, by examining the accounts of Women of the Waterfront members, it became readily apparent that the dispute led to profound and irreversible transformations in gender roles, which, in turn, positively affected the course of the dispute. How could either of these discoveries have been made without a thorough consideration of the accounts of the dockers and their supporters, or the concept of collective identity? In much the same way, an investigation of emotional dynamics in labour disputes can also tell us much about transformations in agency and culture. Emotional analysis is arguably at its most interesting when it establishes connections between feelings and actions. Terry Teague's transformation from quiet, administrative dockworker to crane-climbing, trespassing, flag-wielding campaigner may have been very difficult to understand were it not for his accounts revealing his acute sense of moral injustice, and intense feelings of pride and rage. Such an approach is therefore capable of helping historians to see those involved in labour conflicts for what they really are - human decision makers in struggle - rather than neutral historical forces.

Yet the thesis also underlined certain inconsistencies and contradictions lying within the dockers' narratives. The final chapter found that they have naturally re-imagined, or perhaps even lied about, their pasts. Their accounts therefore illustrate the many different modes in which past events can be remembered. The Liverpool Dock Dispute can be remembered as a part of political history ("the seminal dispute that fundamentally changed labour relations around the world"), as a traumatic event ("the dispute that led to the poverty of my family, and the stress-related deaths of my colleagues"), as part of family history ("the dispute in which we fought to preserve our jobs, which belonged to our fathers and uncles, for our sons and daughters"), or as a focus of bitterness and contempt ("the dispute in which we risked everything and were betrayed by our own politicians, employers and trade union"). Too often, labour historians equate workers' "experiences" with "truth", or, even worse, omit the accounts of workers from their studies entirely. The memories and mentalities of Liverpool dockers show that workers may not be guarantors of "truth" purely because they *experienced* the conflict; rather, the narratives that they choose to communicate their "memories" indicate what they believe to be the best *representation* of truth. This is precisely why they are so valuable. If more labour historians can move away from the reductive notion that memory represents the simple and objective retelling of personal experience, and maintain an awareness that memories are alive and malleable (thereby reflecting the present as much as the past), then it becomes possible to use memory as an explanatory tool. Such considerations have the potential to lead to more sensitive and personal analyses not just of the Liverpool Dock Dispute, but across the field of industrial relations more widely.

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