

TRADE UNION NEWS 1992

P.O. Box 128. Hull.
Tel/Fax (0482) 492388

JULY

Second series

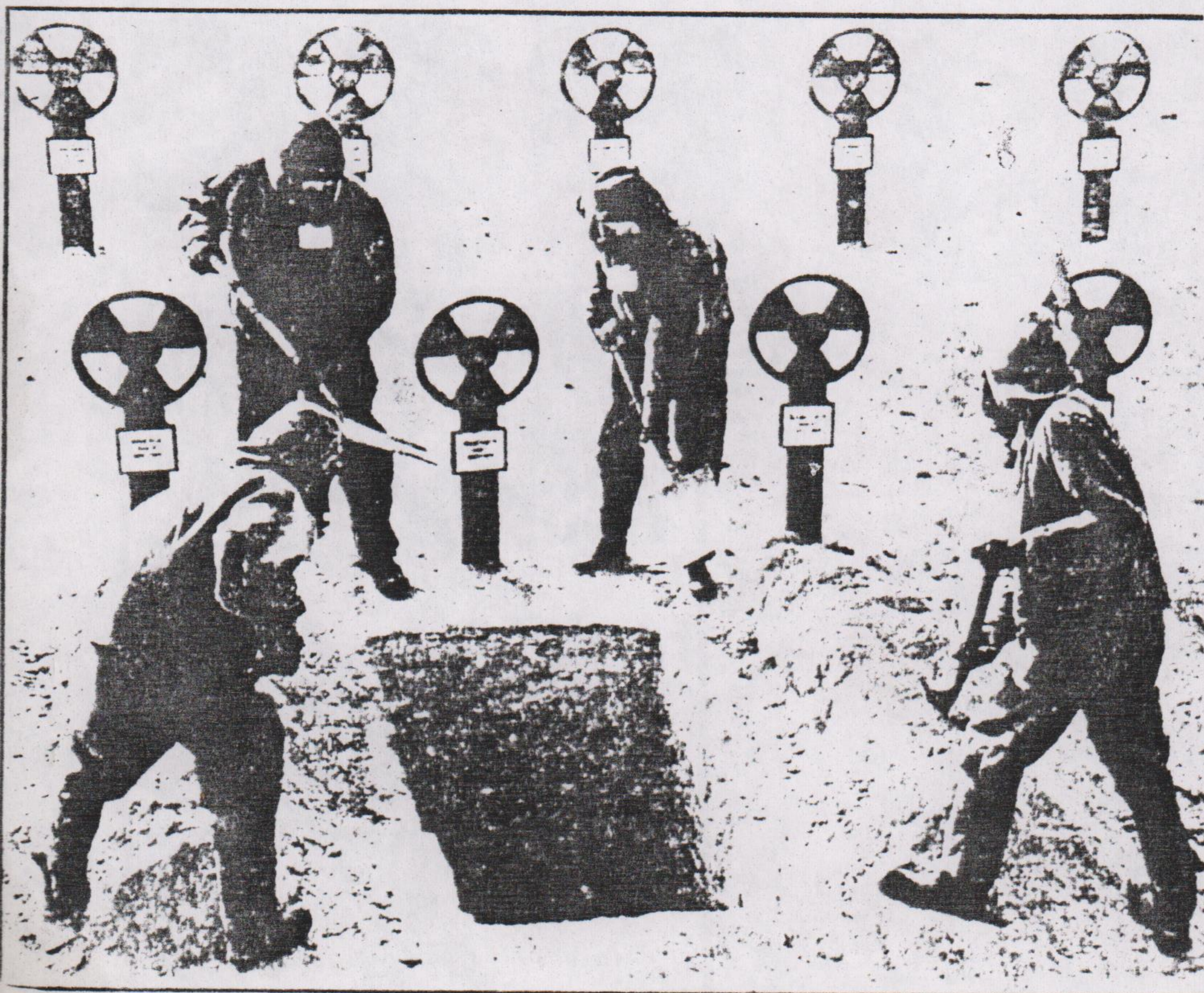
Hull & District Trades Union Council

Hull's bright, progressive de registered docks, home of the 88-hour week, like-it-or-lump-it bully-boy management, and a safety record as bad as they come, has been processing some very dangerous nuclear cargoes over the past month.

Readers of the HDM will have read of a radioactive container "being dropped" on the quay, and how an experienced docker, refusing to handle the container with its fractured outer shell, was sacked.

Management said it was safe for a gang to handle the cargo if it was changed after an hour. BUT WHEN THIS RADIOACTIVE LOAD WAS LATER STORED IN ONE OF THE SHEDS, EVERY INSECT IN THE BUILDING DIED.

NEXT MONTH: A full report on what's happening on the docks.



A EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WORTH JOINING!

The German strike wave is, for the time being, over. Still, our German comrades showed us how to deal with a conservative government: you strike, and strike hard!

In Spain, land of Thatcherismo, the "Socialist" government has been cutting social security, privatizing hospitals and destroying industries. On May 28th over 4 million workers came out on a general strike which paralysed the major industries. The Socialist and Communist trade unions called for a four-hour stoppage, the CGT for 24 hours. The only large-scale violence was at Ford Valencia where riot police attacked a CGT picket line after the 'legal' four-hour strike had ended.

Here the bosses are hotly debating Europe. We too have much to learn from our continental comrades.

To be continued!

SEND AN ARTICLE TO
T.U.N. BY THE 3RD WEEKEND
OF JULY ITS YOUR NEWSFLEET

A GROUP CALLING ITSELF
 "BUILDING CONTRACTORS FOR THE
 GLORIOUS LIBERATION OF PROFITS
 FROM EXCESSIVE SAFETY COSTS"
 HAVE CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR
 TODAY'S TERROR ACCIDENT,
 WHICH TOOK THE LIVES OF
 YET ANOTHER 3 CONSTRUCTION
 WORKERS...



The CONSTRUCTION
 SAFETY CAMPAIGN
 AGM June 20th 1992

The AGM opened with a minutes silence for all those killed or seriously injured during the last year. Tony O'Brien (Sec) reported that deaths and injuries were on the increase. The recession and the employers' offensive both having devastating effects. Tony highlighted the recent killing of two building workers at Lewisham St John's, who had worked 19 hours non-stop. Attacks have not just been limited to the private sector, with DLOs suffering massive redundancies.

The last year has seen many advances in the campaign, with both the Labour Party and the TUC now supporting the CSC. Perhaps the most important gains have been an increase in the maximum fine at the magistrates court, and two named individuals are to be charged under section 37 of the HASAWA.

The AGM welcomed the change in the leadership of UCATT, but resolved to stay an independent campaign and not be taken in by national trade unions. The meeting also called on the national trade unions to take up the fight against the anti-trade-union laws.

members were re-elected, except F Clifford who did not stand. It was moved from the floor that Dave Nellist be elected; this was carried unanimously.

Speakers included Angela Lenny, sister of Steve Lenny who was killed on a building site in London, who is now secretary of the Victims/Relatives Support group. She reported that there are now 50 families involved.

Two speakers from the Joint Sites Committee spoke of the time being right to fight back and rebuild union organisation in the industry. Members of the JSC have carried off seven overwhelmingly successful strikes in the last two months, the most recent involving the occupation of a 300ft tall crane.

Delegates voted to reschedule the mass lobby of Parliament for the 25th November, and urged all affiliates and supporters to help build it.

The meeting also resolved to send fraternal greetings to the first OILC conference in Stirling on the 27th June.

Anyone wishing to attend the lobby, or to help organise a local CSC should contact:
 Vince Constable

60 Folkstone Street
 Hull

BSC

BIGOTED SEXIST COUNCIL

BRITISH SAFETY COUNCIL



VITAL SPARK The Hull City Play

NO trade unionist should miss this spectacular production which celebrates the lives of ordinary working-class people -- seamen, dockers, trawlermen, fish-house women and their families, in struggle. There are no heroes in this play.

It depicts the epic battle for union recognition by seamen and dockers in 1911, when there was virtually a general strike in Hull, led by John Bell and John Burns. Thousands starved and rioted, but solidarity was maintained and the owners were forced to concede union recognition (vitally important in Hull, which had twice been a centre for scabbing since the 1893 defeat). Labour history is brought vividly to life with the dramatisation of episodes like the intervention of the French syndicalist, Madame Sorgue, the shooting of a picket on the SS Ladywood, the attempt to use Finnish stewardesses to unload the Titania, the infamous telegram from Ben Tillet and the National Executive refusing their support, the childrens' strike ...

Trades Council members will remember Tony Topham's talk last autumn about the 1911 events. Tony's help with the research for the play has been invaluable, as has Chris Ketchell's Local History Unit. Many people have given up their time to transcribe 200 hours of reminiscences by local people, out of which Jon Oram and his fellow-director Rupert Creed have woven a coherent and exciting story. The history is presented in human terms through the life of the Flood family, as the different generations are affected by the struggles and the two World Wars.

This play has a lot to say about the women, who don't normally get much of a mention in history books -- right through from 13th century Loretta of Swanland, persuading her people to let Wyke be

flooded, to Lil Bilocca, Christine Smallbone, Yvonne Blenkinsop, Mary Denness of the womens' 1968 trawler safety campaign. 1968 was a watershed, the first time working class women took the lead in militant action.

The second act of the play is very emotional. It depicts the grief and the passion of the wives' fight to save lives after the triple trawler disaster. There is a very moving representation of the sinking of the Ross Cleveland. The effect is enhanced by Hilary Gordon's haunting original music.

An interesting note is that the play has been actively supported by actual participants in the 1968 campaign, notably Christine, Yvonne and John Prescott who have added their weight and advised the cast on how it was.

Very spectacular effects are achieved with the techniques of promenade theatre. The audience goes into the middle of a lively Hull Fair and from then on the action happens all around. Wyke floods through the middle of the auditorium, the children march through to Corporation Fields singing "Fall In and Follow Me". Set design by Eryl Ellis and costumes by Chris Lee are excellent: they have been helped by dedicated volunteers. The whole thing is achieved with an amateur cast, many of whom are recreating their own and their families' lives.

Vital Spark shows the collective strength of the working class, inspired by revolutionary syndicalism. It also shows reactionary elements, like the persecution of German nationals in 1914, men driven to blacklegging by hunger, etc. It exemplifies the weakness of non-political militancy, with its message that what unites East and West Hull is the loss of major industries and the spirit of resistance (vital spark) born of adversity and heartbreak.

Vital Spark is a source of inspiration and a salutary reminder of what trade unionists are up against.

Gaye Jarvis
NUT
(and member of cast and production team.)

Wobbly Doxology
(from the Australian IWW)

Firmly—don't drag

G Em Bm C G Em D G
Praise Boss when morn-ing work-bells chime. Praise
Em G D Em Am G D Em D G D G
him for chunks of o-ver-time. Praise him whose blood-y
C D7 G D G Em Am G D G C G
wars we fight. Praise him, fat leach and par-a-site. Aw hell!

AND FOR BALANCE...

I attended Vital Spark on its first night and like Gaye found it an uplifting experience, especially the scenes of the 1911 Hull strike with the ever-relevant message of direct action and solidarity, regardless of the weak-kneed attitude of union leaders.

Unlike Gaye, who was directly involved in the play, I would like to offer some constructive criticism. John Oram, the playwright claims in the programme that he wrote Woody Guthrie's "Talking Union Blues" and the IWW classic "Praise Boss". What a bloody nerve!

I'm no fan of copyright, but I do believe in credit where credit's due. Grave-robbing's an ugly crime, although there's nothing new about bright young professionals making their way to the top at other people's expense.

Joe Hill, Guthrie and their likes gave their songs as ammunition in the union struggle, not as a means of furthering arty careers. THESE SONGS ARE PART OF A PRICELESS HERITAGE BECAUSE THEY NEVER HAD A PRICE PUT ON THEM.

John assures us that he will be adding an erratum to all future programmes and cassettes.

Does Hull still have a vital 'spark'? The 70s dock strikes, support for the miners in '84, the anti-Poll-Tax movement and the anti-Gulf-War campaign show it's not just a thing of the past.

Those hundreds of enthusiastic actors ought to continue the tradition they celebrated so well by getting stuck in, in their unions, in their trades council, NOW!

Guy Cheverton

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN AND INTO THE WOK.

Thousands of bank workers will have breathed a sigh of relief now that Lloyds' hostile bid for Midland has fallen through. Upwards of 20,000 jobs would have been lost through branch closures.

However, the successful Hong Kong Bank bid still means trouble as it's owners have promised to carry out Midland's original lay-off plans. BIFU members need to remain vigilant!

WHAT A TRIUMPH

Our government has won the right for British workers to work over 48 hours per week from the EEC. With a triumph for free choice like this we can leave behind old fashioned concepts like the 8 hour day, let alone the 35 hour week! Work less, overtime is scabbing on the unemployed.

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