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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE UK SHIPPING INDUSTRY  
SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by

J. McConville

A Thesis presented in partial  
fulfilment of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| A.U.E.W.   | Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers  |
| D.W.T.     | Deadweight tons. Vessel carrying capacity, 2240 lbs. to a deadweight ton.   |
| E.S.S.     | Established Service Scheme.   |
| G.C.B.S.   | General Council of British Shipping.  |
| G.R.T.     | Gross registered tons. Ship's cubic measurement based on 100 cubic feet equals one G.R.T.                                 |
| I.T.F.     | International Transport Workers' Federation.  |
| LASH       | Lighter Aboard Ship. Vessels which are built to carry lighters.   |
| M.M.S.A.   | Mercantile Marine Services Association.   |
| M.N.A.O.A. | Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association.  |
| M.S.A.     | Merchant Shipping Act. Conditions of employment defined under these Acts are known as Articles of Agreement, or Articles. |
| N.B.P.I.   | National Board for Prices and Incomes.  |
| N.M.B.     | National Maritime Board.  |
| N.U.S.     | National Union of Seamen.   |
| O.B.O.     | Oil/Bulk/Ore carrier.   |
| O.E.C.D.   | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.   |
| Reefer     | Vessel built for carrying refrigerated cargo.   |
| R.E.O.U.   | Radio and Electronic Officers' Union.   |
| Ro-Ro      | Roll-on Roll-off vehicle carrying vessel.   |
| T.U.C.     | Trades Union Congress.  |

## PREFACE

Thirteen years as a merchant seaman and the desire to understand the dynamics of the changes the shipping industry has undergone in the last three decades provided the impetus for this research. While there is no lack of literature concerned with the sea and shipping, it tends to reflect either the romantic notions of the landsman and the challenge of the elements, or the pride and traditions of being an island nation. There is, however, a paucity of analytical work on the shipping industry which is in part due to the tendency to romanticise about 'going to sea'. Also the industry, by its very nature, is separate from the shore with its own language and attitudes and, therefore, any researcher has the problem that it is surrounded by an air of mystique. This is compounded by the fact that there is a tradition of secrecy which stems from the closeness engendered by the structure of family ownership and the practice of small groups of owners acting together to limit competition.

I have been extremely fortunate that my sea-going experience has provided both an entree into the industry and a basic understanding of its complexity. Nevertheless, this work would not have been possible without the cooperation of the employees' organizations, and the General Council of British Shipping, formerly the British Shipping Federation. In particular I should like to thank Mr. Rice Oxley, C.B.E., of the British Shipping Federation for his help and advice. The General Secretaries of the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers Association, Mr. E. Nevin, and the National Union of Seamen, Mr. J. Slater, provided valuable assistance in permitting personal interviews and allowing access to documents. Mr. J. Kinahan, Research Officer of the

N.U.S., was unfailing in his patience not only with my many questions but also with my lengthy presence in his office. The work could not have been undertaken without the cooperation of the Clerk of the National Maritime Board.

I am indebted to Professor H.A. Clegg and Professor G.S. Bain for their encouragement and constructive criticism during the preparation of this thesis. My work has been made less arduous by the willing support of the staff of the Public Record Office and the librarians of the City of London Polytechnic at both Moorgate and Tower Hill.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The shipping industry has undergone a period of rapid and fundamental change during the three decades since the end of the Second World War. While these changes have been experienced world-wide and have promoted the implementation of technological advances and the growth of the world fleet, they have occurred during a period which has also witnessed a substantial relative decline in Britain's maritime position. It is the aim of this study to analyse their effect on industrial relations in the U.K. shipping industry.

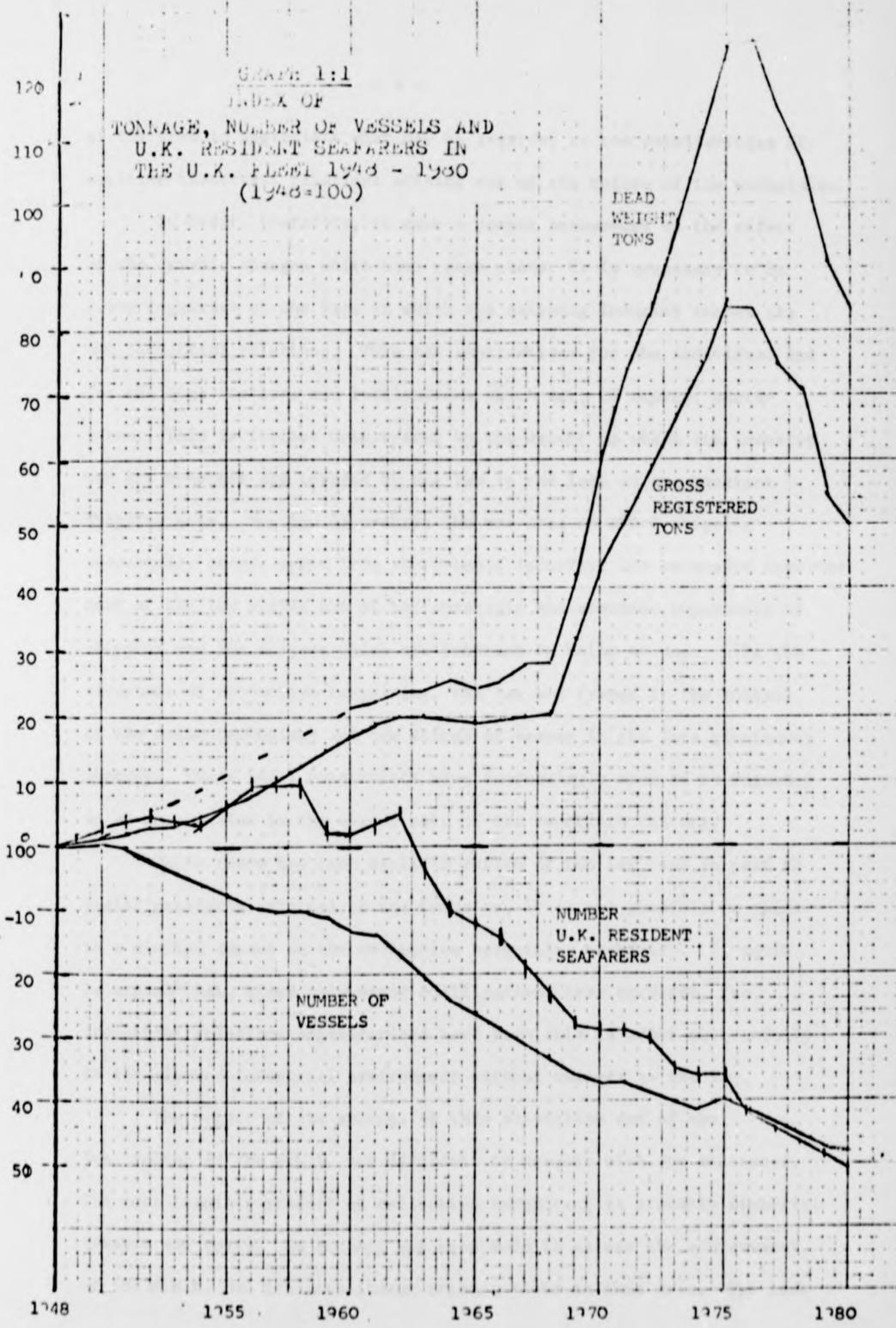
Maritime industrial relations in the U.K. have their roots in the nineteenth century technology and the three-departmental hierarchy of the steam ship. This is reflected in both the employees' organization and the collective bargaining machinery, the National Maritime Board (N.M.B.). The N.M.B. was established during the First World War, with governmental participation in the spirit of the Whitley Report, mainly in order to solve one of the central problems of maritime industrial relations, the supply of ratings.

The importance of supply is perhaps greater in shipping than shore-based industry because of the nature of the workplace. The employer is concerned with being able to get the ship to sea immediately in order to take advantage of commercial opportunity. While for the employee, and especially the rating, control of supply is the only way effective organization may be maintained. It was in order to satisfy both these needs that the joint control of supply became a central aspect of industrial relations in the industry.

The structure of industrial relations appears to have remained substantially unchanged since the establishment of the N.M.B. as a bi-partite organization in 1920. This is surprising in view of the depth of change the industry has experienced and the implications these have had for employment opportunities and manpower planning.

Looking at the industry as a whole the most obvious effect of change, in the period since the Second World War, has been the dramatic contraction in the number of seafarers employed, from a peak of 152,000 in 1957 to 69,000 in 1980. There has been a similar fall in the number of U.K. registered vessels (over 100 G.R.T.) from 6,025 in 1948 to 3,181 vessels in 1980. This is partly due to Britain's loss of supremacy, but of more importance has been the change in technology. This latter point is illustrated by the massive growth in tonnage during the period, particularly deadweight tonnage, from 23,500M d.w.t. in 1948 to 43,000M d.w.t. in 1980. Graph 1:1 highlights these contrary trends.

The impact of these changes in the size of the U.K. fleet and the labour force it employs has not been uniform throughout the industry. This has gone some way to undermine the homogeneity of shipowners and to threaten the traditional positions of the employee organizations. In spite of this there have only been relatively minor modifications to the industrial relations structure, as in the case of the joint supply scheme, and until 1966 no major official strikes. The lack of strikes is in itself remarkable in an industry which is regarded internationally as strike prone.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to question this record of harmony because effective industrial action is precluded when the employee is at sea and the legal constraints are such that the seafarer may only strike when unemployed. This is simply one illustration



Source: Lloyds Register of Shipping

of the need to appreciate what may be regarded as the peculiarities of maritime industrial relations arising out of the nature of the workplace.

In order, therefore, to make a proper assessment of the effect of the dynamic changes which have taken place, it is necessary to be fully cognisant of the ways in which the shipping industry shapes its own industrial relations. This has implications for the individual and for the organizations and institutions which are, of course, shore-based. This is further complicated by the extent to which the industry and its manpower are covered by the law in the form of the Merchant Shipping Acts. The law is perhaps the one area in which shipping undoubtedly stands apart from shore-based industry; the extensive involvement of the law arises out of the strategic and economic importance of shipping and the dangers which are inherent in being at sea. Like the structure of collective bargaining, the law was framed in the context of the steam technology and low status of seamen in the late nineteenth century. These legal constraints have increasingly come to be regarded as an anachronism in the second half of the twentieth century.

While there has been explicit reform of the law, due in part to social pressures external to the industry, it is not possible to point to a similar impact on the collective bargaining machinery. It could be argued that, since only minor modifications have occurred, the industrial relations organizations have been able to adapt successfully to the altered industrial environment without changes to the law.

The degree of the success of this adaptation and of the functioning of the N.M.B. are difficult to measure with any exactness. The most tangible product of collective bargaining is probably financial rewards and costs. An attempt has been made to assess the achievement of the N.M.B. and its constituent organizations in this area. The task

is complex partly because of the diversity of the industry's pay structure and partly due to the nature of seagoing employment which does not permit of easy comparison. Even if a conclusion can be drawn in relation to rewards and costs it has to be modified to take account of other factors such as hours and working conditions. Labour costs assume a particular importance because they are the one element in operating costs which may be determined nationally and therefore are to some extent within the control of the U.K. owners; all other costs are set in the international market.

Success may also be measured in terms of industrial peace and at least superficially the N.M.B. may be regarded as being successful in this sphere if official strikes are used as the measure. As has already been stated, however, the usefulness of this conclusion in respect of seafarers is limited because of the problems of strike action. Furthermore, the 'official' strike does not in itself reflect the amount of potential and 'unofficial' conflict which may exist. Nor should conflict in itself be regarded as a sign of failure.

A study has been made of the experience of the ratings in the period in regard to unofficial and official agitation. From the late 1940s until the mid-1960s there were a number of examples of unofficial industrial agitation all of which produced surprisingly similar demands. These were concerned with a reduction in hours, a redrafting of the Merchant Shipping Acts and the right to plant level, that is, ship-board representation. This agitation was in all instances as much directed against the ratings' own organization, the National Union of Seamen, as against the employers or the collective bargaining machinery. The reiteration of the demands over a period of fifteen years and the support they achieved indicates the existence of considerable amounts of underlying discontent.

In many respects the official strike of 1966 may be seen as an inevitable outcome of the previous disputes and the pressure they had created within the N.U.S., although it was distorted by the government's commitment to its incomes policy. While only one section of the labour force was directly involved in the strike, it resulted in a major long term reappraisal of maritime industrial relations.

The fact that there have been no significant changes in the N.M.B. and the functioning of joint supply is not an indication of a lack of recognition, by both employers and employees, of the implications the loss of job opportunity and changing technology have had for manpower planning. While there have been attempts to find ways of matching the needs of the industry to those of its personnel during the 1970s, any recommendations have always been seen in the context of the existing nineteenth century based structure.

In view of the importance of shipping to the British economy it is surprising that it has attracted so little research and no serious study has been made of maritime industrial relations. The main contribution to any broad discussion of maritime industrial relations has been initiated by government inquiries. This is not to deny that there is a certain amount of general maritime literature but this tends to be somewhat subjective and biased towards the traditional romantic view of the sea.

The two government inquiries, the Court of Inquiry into certain matters concerning the shipping industry, chaired by the Rt. Hon. Lord Pearson, CBE<sup>2</sup> and the Committee of Inquiry into Shipping, chaired by the Rt. Hon. the Viscount Rochdale, OBE<sup>3</sup>, were related to the official strike of 1966. The first, Pearson, was directly concerned with industrial relations and especially the causes of the strike and its solution, which was seen to imply a reconsideration of the Merchant

Shipping Acts. The second inquiry, Rochdale, arose out of a promise made by the Prime Minister during the strike to initiate a wide ranging examination of the industry, and while it discusses manpower generally it makes no specific reference to industrial relations. These inquiries did engender certain ancillary research, the most important being that undertaken by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations into the sociological aspects of seafaring.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these secondary sources the present analysis has been based on the Minutes of the National Maritime Board from its inception; documents from the Shipping Federation, the General Council of British Shipping, the Mercantile Marine Services Association, the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association, the Radio and Electronics Officers' Union, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, and the National Union of Seamen. Reference has also been made to the Minutes of the Hull Sailors and Marine Firemens Amalgamated Association and the Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers Union, together with the papers of the Board of Trade held at the Public Records Office. The international comparison of wage and other costs is based in part on surveys undertaken and information provided by the International Labour Office and the International Transport Workers' Federation.

This thesis falls into three sections: the first section (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) fulfils a descriptive side setting out the base from which the effect of change may be assessed; Chapter 2 examines the distinctive features of maritime industrial relations, the workplace and the shipping industry's relationship with the law, while Chapter 3 looks at the way the collective bargaining institutions have been shaped by these factors and the industry's historical context. Chapter 4 outlines the internal and external changes which have occurred during the period under discussion.

The second section (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8) analyses the effect of these changes and the implications for industrial relations. Chapters 5 and 6 trace the impact on the quantity and quality of labour demanded and make a comparative examination of the effect on pay and costs. The industry's claim to an unusual degree of harmony is then considered with a detailed analysis of the experience of the ratings and the events culminating in the official strike in 1966.

The study concludes with an assessment of the extent to which the industry has thought it appropriate to modify its industrial procedures and manpower policy under increasing competitive pressure and finally an attempt is made to forecast future trends.

NOTES

1. C. Kerr and A. Segal, 'The Interindustry Propensity to Strike - An International Comparison' in A. Kornhauser, R. Bubin and A. Ross (eds.), Industrial Conflict (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).
2. Court of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Shipping Industry, Chairman the Rt. Hon. Lord Pearson, CBE. First Report 1966 (Cmnd 3025), Final Report 1967 (Cmnd 3211).
3. Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Shipping. London: HMSO, 1970, (Cmnd 4337). Chairman: the Rt. Hon. the Viscount Rochdale, OBE, TD, DL.
4. J.M.M. Hill, The Seafaring Career (London: Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1972).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE WORKPLACE AND THE LAW

The shipping industry has a number of characteristics which set it apart from shore-based industry. What is fundamental in respect of industrial relations is the fact that employment in the industry necessitates going to sea in a ship. Superficially this would appear to be a trite statement but it is this which influences every relationship within the industry for both the group and the individual and presents problems for the effective organisation and representation of employers and employees.

While every industry has special labour needs and its own individual environment, this is perhaps particularly true of the shipping industry. As Hohman points out:

Seafaring is something more than just another kind of job, it is a separate and distinct way of life . . . The nature of the seaman's work inevitably dominates his entire pattern of life, both on and off the job.

In order to understand industrial relations and institutionalised collective bargaining these must not be abstracted from the working environment since they will be shaped by and reflect the needs of the particular industry with which they are concerned. In respect of shipping the two most important factors are the hazards of the sea and the strategic importance of the merchant marine. These have resulted in a quasi-military division between officers and men (ratings). This hierarchical structure of the labour force is more complex than a mere division in terms of seniority since it extends to the departmental organisation of the ship.

The three departments of the ship - deck, engine, and catering - are directly related to steam technology. The deck department is concerned with navigation, the general maintenance of the vessel and its cargo, and

was the only department under sail. The engine department came into being with the introduction of steam and is concerned with propulsion and the maintenance of engine and ancillary equipment. In both these departments recruits enter as either officers or ratings and there is minimal upward mobility between the two groups. The development of a catering department was due to the increase in crew size with the steam ship and the contemporary growth of passenger sea transport. Officers are generally promoted from ratings on the basis of experience and length of service.

Within this structure the seniority and authority of the officers are not directly related. For example, although the Chief Engineer would be next in seniority to the Commander of the ship, the Master, he would not be the next in the authority structure. A seafarer may only become a Master by promotion through the deck department, of which he is always perceived to be a member. Once the vessel is at sea the Master assumes complete responsibility for the ship even to the extent at times of overriding shore management.

The deck department is the one through which the line of command runs; for example, if the Master became ill the First Deck Officer (Mate) and not the Chief Engineer would assume that post. To take an extreme case, in a lifeboat a Third Deck Officer (Mate) would take precedence in terms of authority over the Chief Engineer. The Catering Officer would be considered to be at the bottom of this hierarchy in terms of both seniority and authority.

The hierarchical structure is also reflected in the attitude of the ratings to their own place in the ship organisation. It must not be assumed that all ratings necessarily have a common interest since there are numerous grades and rates of pay<sup>2</sup> in addition to the departmental divisions. The deck ratings are regarded and regard themselves as senior to the engine room ratings and both regard themselves as senior to those

involved in catering.

The division between officers and ratings is emphasised by the way they enter the industry and the training they undergo. Deck officers enter the industry as cadets with some formal academic qualification and they train both at sea and ashore, and they have been almost invariably recruited through the shipping companies. Entry as an engine room officer has generally been through craft apprenticeship or a similar craft qualification. The training of officers and the qualifications they obtain are regulated by the Department of Trade and Industry (formerly the Board of Trade) within a system of certificates of competency. These cover both foreign and home trade and promotion is related to the certificate held and the length of sea service.

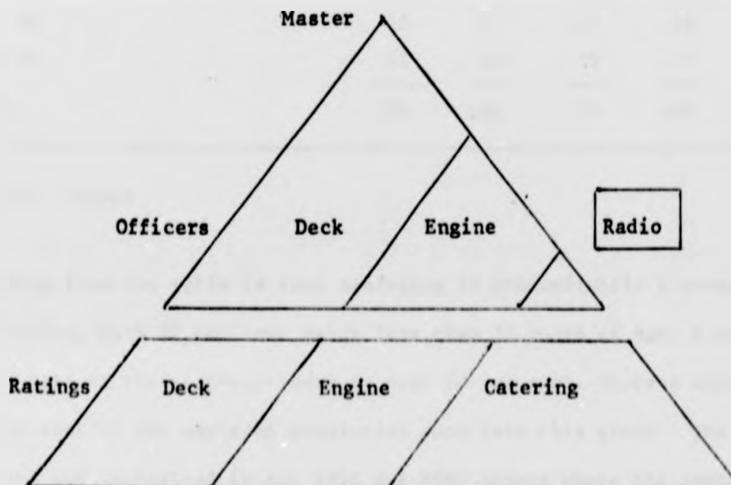
Ratings are recruited and trained largely by the employers' association, deck and catering recruits entering the industry between the ages of 16 and 17½, with catering ratings receiving a short period of sea training and deck ratings following different courses after the first four weeks. Following the initial qualification, again under Department of Trade regulations, promotion is based on experience and length of sea service. While the catering ratings will have an opportunity to become officers by promotion, for deck ratings this is extremely rare. Promotion beyond Able Seaman to become a Petty Officer depends on ability, experience, the dictates of the employing company, and luck. There is, at least in theory, no obstacle to deck ratings obtaining a Department of Trade certificate of competency to become a deck officer. However, the number who do so is extremely small. It has been estimated that only 5 per cent of deck ratings obtain even a Mates Certificate.

Recruitment of ratings to the engine room follows a different pattern. In the first place, the recruits are older, between 18 and 30,

and they are given a three-week induction course in simple engine room procedures, lifeboat work, and fire prevention.

The size of the workplace is such that each grade of personnel will tend to be isolated from his equals in the industry, unlike, for example, the army or the police which have similar structures. For the officers there will only be a single representative of each grade, apart from the most junior, and on small vessels this may also be true of some ratings. Advances in technology mean the size and number of vessels where this is true are growing. In the case of radio officers there will only ever be one operator.

A diagrammatic representation of ship structure is shown below. The proportion in each department will, of course, depend on the type of vessel, method of propulsion, and trade. For example, the catering department in a coastal tanker would be totally different from that of a foreign-going passenger liner where approximately 60 per cent of the crew would be concerned with catering.



On Board Structure

The ship differs from the factory or workshop of shore-based industry in that it operates as a 'total institution'<sup>3</sup> - a place within which its members, the seafarers, often for long periods of time, have to find all aspects of their life fulfilled, albeit away from their own family ties and background. The industry makes unusual demands on its labour force, with the seafarer facing varying periods away from home, lack of regular communication with the outside world, and perhaps irregular work patterns. These factors are reflected in the seafaring labour force which tends to be younger than the shore average with a high rate of turnover.

The age distribution of the maritime labour force over the last fifty years is shown in Table 2.1. The basic and rather obvious point

TABLE 2.1

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SEAMEN 1931-1971 (UK RESIDENTS AND ALIENS)

| <u>Age Group</u> | <u>1931</u> | <u>1938</u> | <u>1951</u> | <u>1961</u> | <u>1971</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                  | <u>%</u>    | <u>%</u>    | <u>%</u>    | <u>%</u>    | <u>%</u>    |
| Under 20         | 9           | 10          | 13          | 14          | 11          |
| 20 - 24          | 16          | 14          | 22          | 23          | 22          |
| 25 - 34          | 33          | 27          | 27          | 26          | 26          |
| Over 35          | 42          | 49          | 38          | 37          | 41          |
| Total            | 100         | 100         | 100         | 100         | 100         |

SOURCE: Census

emerging from the table is that seafaring is predominantly a young man's occupation, with 50 per cent being less than 35 years of age, a percentage which rose in the post-war years to over 60 per cent, whereas ashore only 40 per cent of the employed population come into this group. The young element was emphasised in the 1951 and 1961 census where the groups under 24 years grew considerably, mainly at the expense of the over 35 years.

A number of influences were present in this trend but the existence of military conscription must be of importance.<sup>4</sup> A comment in the 1951 Census gives some credence to this view:

It is interesting to note that a similar age redistribution did not occur after the First World War and the proportions in each age group were nearly the same in 1921 as in 1911.

Conscription was not, of course, imposed post 1919. The 1971 census suggests a trend moving back towards the inter-war situation, the over-35s gaining at the expense almost wholly of the under-20s. While the most stable group, 25 - 35, remains remarkably constant throughout the period under consideration.

When manpower is split into the different major sectors of the industry - foreign trade and coastal/home trade vessels - the latter has an age distribution much closer to shore industry. Presumably the older man remaining at sea avoids, as far as possible, long voyages and the family separation implied in foreign-going ships. Table 2.2 illustrates the extent of the difference between age and department.

TABLE 2.2  
AGE DISTRIBUTION AT 30 SEPTEMBER 1968

| Section of Industry | Coastal/Home Trade |              | Foreign Trade |              |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
|                     | To 34<br>%         | Over 35<br>% | To 34<br>%    | Over 35<br>% |
| Deck                | 42.8               | 57.2         | 64.8          | 35.2         |
| Engine              | 37.4               | 62.4         | 63.9          | 36.1         |
| Catering            | 45.2               | 55.8         | 62.2          | 37.4         |

SOURCE: Rochdale

All the other censuses consistently illustrate similar trends, all three departments attracting younger men to the foreign trade which employs the majority of seafarers.

The age distribution is reflected by the age of recruitment to and departure from the industry indicated by a relatively short length of service. One third of all entrants leave within their first year, a figure rising to one half or more before the end of their second year. Only 25 per cent of any year's recruits remain in the industry for five years, a figure halved, to 12 per cent, ten years after signing their first articles.<sup>6</sup> It is not surprising to find that officers tend to remain longer in the industry than ratings since officers have a greater commitment through longer training.<sup>7</sup>

Three factors, all related to the nature of the industry, appear to explain the relatively short period of service of all groups. Firstly, the inability to survive the act of going to sea; for example, the largest number of ratings, some 13 per cent, leave immediately after completing their first voyage, unable to overcome the induction crisis.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the perception of seafaring as a way of becoming a 'man' and achieving security in the short term rather than as a life-long career, young men see in shipping adventure and a method of seeing the world whilst being paid. The importance placed on this factor in the industry is reflected in an employers' pamphlet aimed at encouraging recruitment entitled 'A Passport to Adventure'. Another major motivation is economic. There is an old adage 'where there are rich farmers there are not seamen'; in other words, where there is booming industry and full employment men are reluctant to go to sea.

Seafaring is also perceived as a method of achieving emotional security. A fairly high percentage of recruits come from broken or inadequate homes, and presumably see the crew of a ship as a substitute family. Many orphanages have traditional connections with shipping, perhaps not only perceiving the industry as a substitute home but also

as providing a secure environment in which an individual may have an opportunity to mature and develop. Other groups and individuals may use it for this 'moratorium' purpose.

There may be value for young people in having a period away from home in which to mature and develop before making more final commitments in life. For some this period may be provided by University, for others by service in the Merchant Navy. A few seafarers explicitly compare their service with a University.

For these reasons, therefore, seafaring is not perceived essentially as a career; a limited survey undertaken by Gallup found that one quarter of the entrants interviewed expected to leave the industry within five years.

Obviously, some entrants must see seafaring in career terms but there is evidence that in the long run they will be under considerable social pressure either to return ashore or to take seagoing employment which permits frequent shore contact. The latter is likely to curtail career opportunities. The extent of social pressures is perhaps indicated by the work the Gallup Poll did on the most frequently mentioned reasons for leaving the sea. Family commitments, the decision to marry, was the paramount reason (26 per cent), together with the needs of children (12 per cent). If these reasons are combined with insufficient leave, on the assumption that the individual with his own family would place more emphasis on leave than a single man, over 50 per cent of the reasons for leaving pivot around family involvement; this is particularly applicable when there are young children.<sup>10</sup>

All these factors result in a 'casual' approach to the industry, particularly among ratings. What emerges is a high movement of labour not only out of the industry but within shipping itself. The longer a man remains in the industry the greater the proportion of time spent ashore.<sup>11</sup> The Pearson Inquiry gave examples of passenger liner companies whose labour

turnover within a year was 150 per cent, and of tankers where under half the ratings stayed over twelve months.<sup>12</sup> Hill's research estimates that the vast majority of seamen leave a vessel after one or two voyages, with a minority staying longer. For example, in excess of 50 per cent of all ratings serve on, at the very least, eight vessels during their first five years in the industry, and 75 per cent of all seafarers are unlikely to remain on the same vessel for more than two or three voyages. There also appears to be a correlation between the frequent vessel changes and a lack of long-term commitment to seafaring. This mobility is not confined to the national fleet since seafarers are part of an international labour force. Not only will UK seafarers, particularly officers, sail under foreign flags but UK employers will recruit a considerable number of non-European ratings, and when labour is short are in a position to use the international pool at Rotterdam.<sup>13</sup>

The casual nature of seagoing employment is not only related to individual attitudes to seafaring and the type of labour force but directly to the needs of the industry as a whole. Shipping is subject to fluctuations in demand which are less predictable than in most other industries and employers require a pool of labour to be available at any moment in order that they may take advantage of every commercial opportunity that is offered. The joint supply of labour which developed is an attempt to equate the employers' need for flexibility with the protection of the interests of the UK employee for security of employment. This degree of flexibility tends to be incompatible with the need for the recruitment and retention of highly skilled personnel. Recognition of this problem was given in the late 1950s by an attempt to develop a pension scheme. This was seen as a way to

encourage seafarers to make a career of the occupation and spend

as much of their working life in the industry as possible and not in and out taking up other occupations at their convenience.<sup>14</sup>

These factors mean that the industrial relations organisations and institutions are concerned with a labour force that is distant, fragmented, and highly mobile. Furthermore they have to operate, unlike shore-based industry, in an explicit legal framework because of the strategic and economic importance of the industry and the dangers of seafaring. Indeed, one of the main grounds on which the shipping industry has been regarded as unique is the extent to which it is directly governed by statute. If this is the only ground on which uniqueness is judged, then it cannot be denied that the shipping industry's relationship with the law is exceptional. There is no doubt that the law appears to have a more direct and constraining influence than is perhaps found in the industrial relations of any other industry.

Until 1970 the shipping industry was governed by the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 (MSA), and indeed much of this legislation remains in force. It is important in the context of this research since it sets out the legal parameters as constraints within which the various maritime industrial relations organisations and institutions had to develop. The 1894 Act was a piece of consolidating legislation which brought all the law regarding shipping under the umbrella of one Act of Parliament. In this Act the Board of Trade was designated 'the department to undertake the general superintendence of all matters *[by italics]* relating to merchant shipping and seamen'.<sup>15</sup> Its comprehensive nature cannot be in doubt since 'all matters' ranged from the rights of the shipowner to register under the British flag, the standards both owner and master must adhere to in respect of the seaworthiness and manning of their ships, the competence, discipline and working conditions of the crews, and the

question of lighthouse management and pilotage.<sup>16</sup>

While the MSA does not specifically legislate for industrial relations procedure it does place restrictions on the freedom of the seafarer when he is in dispute with his employer. Under the MSA to strike while employed would be regarded, for example, as either desertion or mutiny and therefore as a criminal act. Seafarers do not have the protection of the provisions of the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act and the 1906 Trade Disputes Act. The MSA has undoubtedly influenced the nature of collective bargaining and the attitude of the employer and seafarer to relationships within the industry.

The extent of this influence is extremely difficult to quantify but it is perhaps best illustrated by the status the Act gives to the Master. The Act places his total command of the ship in an unquestionable position and reinforces the hierarchical structure of the ship. The Master is not only placed in an unusual relationship with his fellow, if subordinate, employees but he also to some extent usurps what would be accepted as the normal position for the employer in any other industry. The contract of employment, i.e. the articles of agreement, are made with him, albeit as the representative of the employer, and in most cases of breach of this contract he is the judge and final arbiter.<sup>17</sup> Thus if a comparison of the Master's role is made with shore-based industry his situation is analogous to that of a plant manager but the power he possesses, however that may be justified in terms of safety, far exceeds any management function in other industries and indeed that of the employer as well. This type of management removes the employer and employee from each other and whilst not necessarily intruding in their relationship, must affect it.

In a much more direct way the Master's legal right of command

makes the withdrawal of labour by the crew impossible, an important point since their 'right to strike' is not legally protected as is the case with shore-based workers. Similarly, the provision that the crew should not combine to disobey a lawful command<sup>18</sup> inhibited not only industrial action but also any kind of plant level organisation.

The quasi military type discipline created by the Act and based on the 'lawful command of the master' establishes a divisive element within the labour force. This together with the administrative hierarchy of officers and men makes the employer/employee relationship less clear-cut. The officers in many respects might be regarded as having, until recently, more community of interest with their employers than with their fellow seafarers.

Obviously not all the provisions of the Act impinge on industrial relations, although any restrictions on the freedom of the employer or employee may well inhibit the freedom of negotiations, for example in the case of manning and safety regulations. Nevertheless much of what might be regarded as the province of voluntary industrial relations came within its purview, thus not only circumscribing the freedom of the participants in the organisations but directly influencing the shape of its formal institutions. This is perhaps best illustrated by its coverage of matters such as supply, conditions of work, and methods of payment.<sup>19</sup>

The Act's regulations worked in two ways: either by setting fixed rules only some of which could be waived by the Board of Trade under exceptional circumstances, or by setting minimum standards which could, of course, provide the basis for negotiation by the employer and employee. In the matter of supply the regulations were specific and had to be strictly adhered to:

110. The Board of Trade may grant to such persons as the Board think fit licences to engage or supply seamen or apprentices for merchant ships in the United Kingdom, and any such licence shall continue for such period, and may be granted and revoked on such terms and conditions as the Board think proper.

111(1). A person shall not engage or supply a seaman or apprentice to be entered on board any ship in the United Kingdom, unless that person either holds a licence from the Board of Trade for that purpose, or is the owner or master or mate of the ship, or is bona fide the servant and in the constant employment of the owner or is a superintendent.

The penalty for contravention was a fine of £20 for each seaman or apprentice supplied.

The form of the seafarer's contract of employment was specifically approved by the Board of Trade and had to be entered into in the presence of a superintendent in the case of foreign-going vessels. A copy of the agreement was retained by the Board of Trade and any late alterations in the crew had to be notified to them before the ship left the United Kingdom; clearance of the vessel could be denied if the regulations were contravened. Whilst the Act did not specify the exact details of the rate of pay and hours of work etc., it did state exactly how and where the seamen should be paid, what allotment of pay could be made to relatives, and these provisions had to be included in the articles of agreement. The main terms the agreement was to contain are given as follows:

- (a) Either the nature, and, as far as practicable, the duration of the intended voyage or engagement, or the maximum period of the voyage or engagement and the places or parts of the world, if any, to which the voyage or engagement is not to extend:
- (b) The number and description of the crew, specifying how many are engaged as sailors:
- (c) The time at which each seaman is to be on board or to begin work:
- (d) The capacity in which each seaman is to serve:
- (e) The amount of wages which each seaman is to receive:

(f) A scale of the provisions which are to be furnished to each seaman:

(g) Any regulations as to conduct on board, and as to fines, short allowance of provisions, or other lawful punishment for misconduct which have been approved by the Board of Trade as regulations proper to be adopted, and which the parties agree to adopt.

The approved agreement included coverage of requirements concerning medical supplies, the quality of food to be provided, and the accommodation to be occupied by the crew. These were subject to minimum standards set out by the Board of Trade and a scale of compensation was laid down if food and accommodation were inadequate.

The extensive influence and range of legal provisions mean that much of what might be regarded as the province of voluntary industrial relations comes within the purview of the MSA. Furthermore, this legal framework circumscribes the freedom of both employees and employers. This problem is faced by all groups; for the employees the law denies any form of effective industry-wide shipboard organisation, an important deprivation because of the diversity and isolation of the workplace. An effect exacerbated by the casual nature of the labour force; there will be little continuity of participation in their organisation's affairs which may to some extent lead the officials to discount rank and file opinion. This is perhaps less important for the officer and his professional organisation than for the rating and his trade union. For the employer, who is shore-based, there is no direct communication with his employees and his relationship with them is complicated by the position which the Master holds and the function he fulfils.

The greatest problem to be faced, therefore, is one of effective communication. One major hurdle to solving the communication problem is antipathy which is felt by all seafarers for the shore. Since the employer, all the industrial relations institutions, and their officials

will be shore-based and no longer active seafarers, a problem of identification is created. Indeed, it is this point concerning alienation from the shore on which there is the greatest consensus among seafarers. It is perhaps emphasised by the fact that all levels express the view that between the shoreside officials of the shipping company and the seafarer there is a 'wall' that is extremely difficult to penetrate.

'Shoreside', it is said, 'just don't want to know.' They treat you 'like bits of machinery' and so long as they man the ships so they can sail are relatively indifferent to the sailor's needs. They don't tell you when you are sailing, where you are going, how long you will be away, when you can go on leave, etc., etc. Moreover it is noticeable that these complaints that the sailor is treated as less than human are not only widespread today, but appear consistently in historical records.<sup>21</sup>

It is just this 'wall' that the collective bargaining institutions must penetrate during consultations and negotiations if the system is to function at all. The relationship is not, however, a straightforward employer/employee one because of the constraints of state involvement and legislation and the complex structure of the ship. Collective bargaining must, therefore, also adapt itself to represent that structure, and since the ship is a total institution it must concern itself with a far wider range of conditions than would be considered appropriate in shore-based industries.

NOTES

1. E.P. Hohman, 'Maritime Labor Economics as a Determinant of the Structure and Policy of Seamen's Unions', Proceedings of the Industrial Relations Research Association, 1957, 163-4.
2. See National Maritime Board Year Books.
3. See E. Goffman, Asylums (Pelican Books, 1968).
4. See for discussion B. Mogridge, 'Labour Relations and Labour Costs', British Shipping and World Competition, ed. S.G. Sturmev (London University Press, 1963), particularly p. 301. Also J.M.M. Hill, The Seafaring Career (Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1972), para. 78.
5. Census of Seamen and Shipping (HMSO, 1951), 15.
6. Hill, op. cit., paras. 26 and 27.
7. Final Report of the Court of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Shipping Industry, Cmnd 3211, February 1967 [Pearson Inquiry], paras. 82 and 83.
8. Hill, op. cit., para. 83. See also table 5, p. 124.
9. ibid., para. 93. See also E.H. Erikson, 'Ego Identity and the Psychosocial Moratorium', New Perspective for Research, eds. H. Witner and R. Kotinsky (Washington: US Department of Health and Welfare, 1956).
10. The Attitude of Seafarers to their Employment (3 vols.), Report to Committee of Inquiry into Shipping (Rochdale) by Social Survey (Gallup Polls) Ltd (Board of Trade, 1970).
11. Hill, op. cit., para. 93.
12. Pearson Inquiry, op.cit., para. 85.
13. See Pearson Inquiry, op. cit., and Hill, op. cit.
14. NUS Minutes - Notes on Meeting at Head Office regarding Pensions, 29 February 1960.
15. Merchant Shipping Act 1894 (57 & 58 Vict., c. 60), para. 713.
16. See ibid. for details.
17. ibid., beginning section 220.
18. ibid., section 225E.

19. This is by no means a definitive list. See *ibid.*, Part III.
20. *ibid.*, sections 114, 131, 132 and 134 to 137 - passim.
21. Hill, *op. cit.*, para. 166.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE NATIONAL MARITIME BOARD

Industrial relations institutions and organizations reflect and cater for the needs of the particular industry with which they are concerned. While one of the major elements in industrial relations in any industry is the supply of labour this assumes far greater importance in the shipping industry. The employer is concerned that he does not lose control of supply because of his vulnerability at the point and time of the vessels departure, and his desire to have flexibility in his response to changing market conditions. For the employee, especially the rating whose bargaining power in terms of skill is limited,<sup>1</sup> the question is fundamental since, without at least some control of supply, any long-term collective industrial organization is impossible. The fragmentation and casual nature of employment even within the industry militates against effective organization unless there is some form of institutionalised control in which they participate. The weakness of the employees is compounded by the position in which they are placed by the law, not least that they may only strike when they are unemployed.

The control of supply had been a matter of contention and indeed confrontation between the employers, through their organization, the Shipping Federation,<sup>2</sup> and the ratings union, the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union,<sup>3</sup> since their formation in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. With the more impartial attitude towards employers' right of control by the Liberal Government after 1906, the issue became and continued to be of crucial importance to both sides.<sup>4</sup> In this context the post-war collective bargaining structure, the National Maritime Board (N.M.B.) developed.

This bi-partite organization was a modification of the machinery for negotiation set up by the Ministry of Shipping in the Autumn of 1917. This was itself the outcome of earlier attempts to overcome delays in shipping caused by demands for increased wages, labour shortages in vessels carrying troops and stores for the Army and Navy. The public outcry against profiteering shipowners undoubtedly also played its part as did the submarine attacks on British and Allied shipping which severely exacerbated existing shipping problems.

The immediate problem in 1917 was the settlement of local stoppages, generally by ratings, on the North East coast which later spread to the Humber, Thames and South and West coast ports. These were 'adjusted after discussion with representatives of men and owners'<sup>5</sup> but it became increasingly obvious that standardization of wages was essential if future disruption was to be averted and the supply of seamen was to be properly organized.<sup>6</sup> To this end the Ministry of Shipping set up a Conciliation Committee with representatives from the National Seamen and Firemen's Union, the main ratings union, and the Shipping Federation, the organization which represented the large majority of employers. The idea being to encourage the setting up of a permanent committee to settle differences that might arise.

By late August a draft constitution had been agreed, for the formation of a Board whose aims would be to establish better cooperation for settling differences, the introduction of standard rates of pay and improved conditions of employment of seamen. Since control of supply had always been a major issue between the employers and the ratings' union, and was a matter of prime importance to the government in war-time, it was realized that any permanent solution to labour problems in the shipping industry would require the matter of supply to be faced squarely. The statement made on these negotiations is perhaps a

nice example of civil service understatement and compromise:

Considerable difficulties were experienced in finding a satisfactory basis on which both parties would cooperate, but these were eventually overcome by embodying in the constitution a statement of the principle which each party considered vital to their interests.<sup>7</sup>

What emerged was a scheme for joint supply under which the shipowner would have the right to select his crew at any time through a jointly controlled supply office, with special arrangements, where necessary, for the coasting trade and the shipping of substitutes. On the other hand, the seamen were to have the right to select their ship. This scheme meant that the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union established itself as the main representative of ratings in any negotiations, and what is more, there was full acceptance of the union membership of seafarers.

The Shipping Federation represented most, but not all, the British shipowners, the most notable exception being the Liverpool Steamship Owners Association. This group was invited to join the negotiations but they declined as they were opposed to the principles underlying the function of the Board. Whilst the ratings were the prime concern and indeed the motivation for the formation of the Board, other grades of seafarer were soon involved. In October 1917 the tripartite N.M.B., with representatives of the employers, employees and the government, was constituted in four panels, and it also provided for the setting up of District Boards for the appointment of Port Consultants.

What is most remarkable about the N.M.B. is that it was reconstructed after the war with very little modification to its original constitution or the principle of joint supply for ratings. The main changes which occurred were related to the withdrawal of the Government

which had acted as final arbiter when agreement could not be reached and had been responsible for the Board's finance, the provision of a secretariat, the appointment of chairmen. The new constitution embodied clauses enabling the bi-partite Board to fulfil these functions for itself.<sup>8</sup> However, the government remained indirectly involved in that Board of Trade Marine offices were still used for the joint supply scheme.

There was a relatively smooth transition from war to peace in the shipping industry for a multiplicity of reasons. The plans for reconstruction laid down by the government made it obvious that some form of institutionalised collective bargaining was to be established in most industries. In April 1918 the Ministry of Labour approached the Shipping Federation with regard to the setting up of an Industrial Council for the industry and they expressed themselves

Sympathetic towards the proposal. It is thought that the National Maritime Board and the District Maritime Boards which are now in operation [which included joint supply] will satisfy the objects of the Whitley Report so far as seamen are concerned.<sup>9</sup>

Even before the war some shipowners had recognized that 'whether we like it or not collective bargaining has come to stay'.<sup>10</sup> Following their experience in the war both the Shipping Federation and the seafarers associations had come to appreciate what this would have to offer.

For the employees institutionalised collective bargaining, such as that envisaged by the Liberal Coalition, necessitated national recognition of their organizations. This was something for which they had been striving for a number of years. For example, the engineering officers were pressing for recognition of their association as early as 1913.<sup>11</sup> National negotiation could, of course, only be to their advantage since it increased their strength and made it more difficult for individual employers to lower wage rates. Furthermore,

as a result of the war the negotiations in the N.M.B. had been widened to include conditions of employment and this was an advantage they would be anxious to retain. A view not shared by the employers who pointed out to the Chairman of the National Maritime Board, a government official in 1918:

It must, however, have become quite obvious to you, as it has to them, [the representatives of the Shipping Federation] that the various representatives of the employees have been as much concerned about the establishment of conditions of service not hitherto generally recognised as about the mere questions of wages.<sup>12</sup>

The employers were concerned that the concessions made in war time should not be regarded as setting precedents for the time when peace and 'normal' conditions returned.

The truth is, therefore, that shipowners will be presented when their business is returned to them, with a condition of affairs in which labour is entirely demoralised and under which artificial rates of pay are enjoyed, based upon an unnatural condition of affairs entirely inconsistent with the principles of political economy. Whether or not natural conditions can be restored without a fundamental dislocation of the trade.<sup>13</sup>

This they saw as depending to a large extent on the leaders of the men, both officers and ratings, but particularly the latter. The Shipping Federation also recognized the importance of unity within their own ranks. This was needed to ensure the proper implementation of uniform wages and conditions in the normal times of peace and what became increasingly important in view of events in the mining industry and on the railways to ensure a smooth transition from war to peace:

The shipowners need first a complete and cohesive organisation based on those principles of sound democracy which are now receiving world-wide recognition. This they possess in the Shipping Federation though it is earnestly to be hoped that an important though comparatively small minority (Liverpool Steamship Owners Association) which has hitherto thought it policy to maintain an independent association, will, in this crisis, throw in its lot with the majority of its fellow shipowners... shipowners owe it to themselves and the

nation to put into the background their individual views and predilections, where they conflict for the moment with those which their representatives laid down as the essentials of a sound national policy. Individuals and independent effort will mean a disastrous dissipation of strength, unless directed on common lines.<sup>14</sup>

At a more specific level the Federation had experienced the advantages of the Ratings Joint Supply Scheme which not only strengthened their position as the employers' representatives but also gave some assurance, particularly in times of potential industrial unrest, that vessels would sail unimpeded. In addition, it would strengthen the position of the main ratings union and they had learned they could rely on that union's President, Havelock Wilson, for loyal cooperation.<sup>15</sup> Again an important point in view of the threats to industrial peace and the claim of the less amenable unions to represent the ratings.<sup>16</sup> The employers also wanted, as they stated in May 1919, to:

Secure the smooth and complete working of the Scheme in order that stability of labour conditions may be preserved during the critical period of reconstruction which lies ahead.<sup>17</sup>

Both the Shipping Federation and the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union were anxious to make sure they had at least some say in supply and so they were prepared to compromise on other issues, under pressure from the government, and establish the industry's bi-partite collective bargaining machinery in 1920.

It is, however, unlikely that the employers would have co-operated so readily to establish a permanent negotiating machinery and joint supply had they not felt under considerable external pressure. On the one hand in the immediate post-war period, nationalization was a very real threat and furthermore the Shipping Federation was clear that:

The system of Industrial Councils recommended by the Whitley Report is one which all employers in the country will be expected to adopt if they are to avoid the suspicion of reactionary tendencies and escape the

responsibility in the public mind for any breaches of industrial peace which may occur in trades in which this machinery has not been adopted.<sup>18</sup>

It was against this background that the reconstituted Board came into operation on 1 January 1920 'as a Joint Industrial Council on the lines of the Whitley Scheme, disassociated from the Ministry of Shipping' with a wider representation than before.<sup>19</sup> The Constitution stated that:

1. OBJECTS - With a view to securing closer co-operation between the employers and employed of the British Mercantile Marine in the maintenance of the maritime supremacy of the British Empire there shall be constituted a Board known as the National Maritime Board and District Panels for the purpose of:-
  - (a) The prevention and adjustment of differences between Shipowners and Masters, Seamen and Apprentices;
  - (b) The establishment, revision, and maintenance of a National Standard rate (or rates) of wages and approved conditions of employment in the Mercantile Marine;
  - (c) The establishment of a single source of supply of sailors and firemen jointly controlled by employers and employed in accordance with the following general principles:-
    - i. The Shipowner shall have the right to select his own crew at any time through a jointly controlled supply office.
    - ii. Equal rights of registration and employment must be secured for all Seamen. Raw recruits to be registered as such.
    - iii. The Seamen shall have the right to select their ship.
2. CONSTITUENT PANELS - The National Maritime Board shall consist of the six following Panels, viz:-
  - a. Shipmasters' Panel;
  - b. Navigating Officers' Panel;
  - c. Engineer Officers' Panel;
  - d. Radio Officers' Panel (added in 1942);
  - e. Sailors' and Firemen's Panel;
  - f. Catering Department Panel.<sup>20</sup>

The Constitution also stipulated in its final clauses 'that the parties will neither assist nor encourage strikes or lock-outs, nor pay any indemnity or strike pay, until such times as the differences or dispute between the Shipowner and the Seamen have been referred to and dealt with by the Port Consultant, the District Panel and also should

it prove necessary the whole N.M.B.'. <sup>21</sup>

The machinery was based, therefore, on a series of Panels which directly reflected the on-board structure of the ship (see diagram). The Shipping Federation had actively opposed an alternative suggestion that there should be mixed committees to represent officers and men. This suggestion had come about following the formation early in 1919 of the Seafarers' Council which claimed to represent all grades of sea-going personnel. The Shipping Federation took the view that:

The whole principle underlying this combination is, of course, destructive of discipline on board ship, and, if the policy of the Seafarers' Joint Council is successful will undoubtedly be productive of a great deal of trouble and disorganisation among crews.

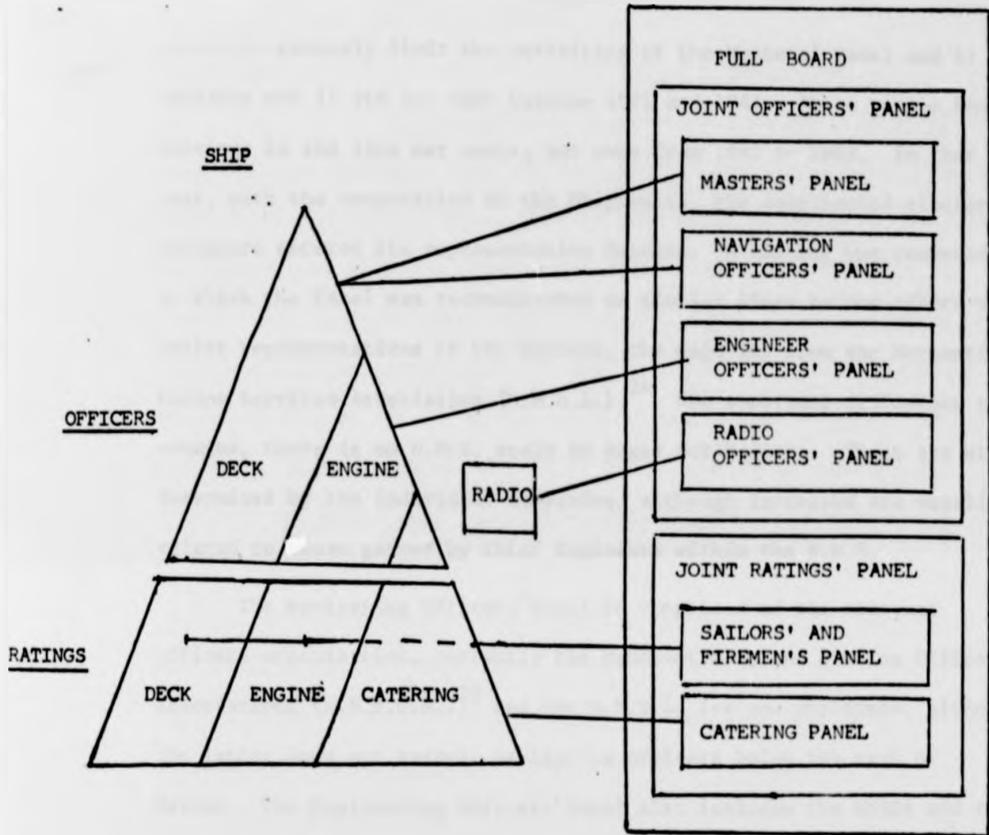
They, therefore,

insisted that they would only take part in an industrial council upon which the various sections of the personnel were represented separately and independently on Panels which would deal with matters appertaining to the grade which they represented. <sup>22</sup>

This involved both the separation of officers from men and officers from officers since there were two separate panels for deck and engine room officers.

Within this panel framework the N.M.B. could operate on three levels, the most important being that of the individual panels. The Master's Panel did not exist in the original government-sponsored N.M.B. Their organization pressed for one but the shipowners objected on the grounds of the unique position the Master held as a confidential employee. Such a position should, therefore, not be the subject of discussion within the Board. The 1919 Constitution made provision for a Masters' Panel, but the influence of the previous objections is much in evidence. For while there were six representatives elected from the three Masters' organizations of the day a further six representatives had to be sea-going Masters 'elected by Masters by means of a ballot amongst seagoing Masters, in accordance with a system to be mutually agreed between organizations representing Masters .... and Shipowners'. <sup>23</sup> The scheme

NATIONAL MARITIME BOARD



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ON BOARD STRUCTURE OF THE SHIP AND THE NATIONAL MARITIME BOARD

served to severely limit the activities of the Masters' Panel and it explains why it did not meet between 1921 and 1943. There were a few meetings in the late war years, but none from 1945 to 1963. In that year, with the cooperation of the Shipowners, the complicated electoral procedure secured six representative Masters. A meeting was convened at which the Panel was reconstituted on similar lines to the others with twelve representatives of the Masters, the majority from the Mercantile Marine Services Association (M.M.S.A.).<sup>24</sup> One important difference still remains, there is no N.M.B. scale of wages for Masters. These are still determined by the individual companies, although increases are usually related to those gained by Chief Engineers within the N.M.B.

The Navigating Officers' Panel is comprised of the relevant officers organization, currently the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Associations (M.N.A.O.A.)<sup>25</sup> and the M.M.S.A. for the employees, although the latter does not recruit navigating officers below the rank of Master. The Engineering Officers' Panel also includes the MNAOA and the only essentially shore based union of importance within the industry, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers.<sup>26</sup>

The Radio Officers' Panel, although part of the tri-partite N.M.B., was not included in the reconstituted Board until 1942. This is probably due to the bellicose attitude of the radio officers representatives and in any event Shipowners hired the radio officers from wireless companies rather than employing them direct. The Panel was re-instituted as part of wartime modifications. It was at this point that the Marine Wireless Employers' Negotiating Committee was elected to the Panel on the employers side, the Radio and Electronic Officers Union representing the employees.<sup>27</sup>

All the officers' panels may meet together as a Joint Panel which often negotiates as a body with the employers' representatives

which are in all cases members of the Shipping Federation.

The ratings are not divided into deck and engine room as is the case with the officers; they are represented on a single panel, the Sailors and Firemen's Panel. This was the original Panel of the N.M.B. The Ministry of Shipping experienced considerable difficulty in its creation for it meant some satisfactory basis had to be discovered on which the Shipping Federation and the Seamen's Union would cooperate. The acceptance of the principle of joint control of the supply of labour meant the construction of this Panel became possible. The N.U.S. continues to be the most important representative body of Deck and Engine-room Ratings, with one seat being allocated to an official of the Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths and Structural Workers. They are not party to the closed shop agreement and are there to protect the interests of carpenters and other skilled tradesmen whose conditions are regulated by this Panel.

The Catering Panel was instituted during the First World War. The employees being represented originally by the National Union of Ships Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers. In the Spring of 1921 this organization called a strike to protest at the N.M.B.'s reduction in wages and changes in conditions of employment and it left the N.M.B.<sup>28</sup> The vacancy was filled by the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union and the Marine Caterers' Guild. The latter soon collapsed leaving the national Union as the sole representative, despite the fact that their membership only included a small minority of such ratings. The union attempted to rectify this with numerous and expensive recruiting campaigns but found little response within the catering department, particularly of the large passenger liners. Eventually in 1942 an agreement with the liner companies brought catering ratings within the purview of the sailors' and firemen's pre-entry closed shop provision.

Since then the N.U.S. has both represented and organized this department. The Bakers Union, though not a party to the closed shop agreement holds a watching brief in the negotiations of the Panel. The Joint Ratings' Panel is a combination of the Catering Staff and the Sailors and Firemen's Panels.

The Full Board of the N.M.B. is constituted by the Panels sitting simultaneously. Both the employers and employees are entitled to seventy representatives, which suggests the meetings might be somewhat unwieldy. However, the quorum requires only fifteen representatives from either side. In the original constitution it was intended that the Full Board should meet at least once every six months. Meetings are in practice only held when, in the opinion of either side of any panel, a question needs submitting to the whole Board.

In the case of all Panels and the Full Board the N.M.B. has a system of joint chairmen, and joint secretaries, one from either side and serving at alternate meetings. The N.M.B. itself has a very small secretariat, consisting of a General Secretary, sometimes known as the Clerk-in-Charge, and some clerical assistants.

The third tier of the N.M.B. is the District Maritime Boards, often referred to as District Panels or Committees. They were instituted to deal expeditiously with localised difficulties. The primary importance of the original agreement between the National Union and the Shipping Federation is emphasised here. For while the need for District Panels is made clear in the N.M.B. constitution, excepting the Masters' Panel, only District Panels for Sailors and Firemen were actually established, an agreement being made some time later to allow the catering department to use the facilities. The structure of the District Panels is similar to that of the national ones, with joint chairmen and secretaries. These panels were empowered to appoint representatives,

one or more from each side, to be known as Port Consultants. Their duties come under two broad and closely associated headings. Firstly, to ensure an adequate supply of seamen, in order to avoid any delay in vessels sailing, and secondly to prevent or settle any grievance or dispute at local level on either a temporary or permanent basis. Such settlement has to be achieved within the structure for Port Consultants have 'no power to alter, vary or amend any rules, rates, scales, principles or procedures formulated by the National Maritime Board'.<sup>29</sup> If the Port Consultant fails to achieve a settlement he refers it to the District Panel and should it prove ineffective to the National Panel concerned, and finally, if necessary, to the Full Board.

The standard of uniform wage which had been implemented during the war was maintained by the reconstituted N.M.B. However, whilst in the case of ratings this became, and remained, the rate of pay for all ratings of any particular grade, for the officers it tended merely to represent a minimum. The reason for this was undoubtedly because the officers were neither included in the joint supply scheme nor was union membership by any means a matter of course; if anything the reverse was the case; therefore the bargain between employer and employee was for the officer a far more individual matter.

An examination of the minutes do, for the first year of its work, show that the majority of matters considered by the Board were single or individual issues of dispute, which were most often settled at District level. There was discussion of wages and hours of labour by the Full Board, that is all the Panels meeting together but the Full Board only met four times during the year. The national panels of the Board met singly or jointly on eighty-two occasions during the first year. 'Two meetings of the Masters' Panel; five meetings of the Navigating Officers' Panel; seven meetings of the Engineer Officers'

Panel; ten meetings of the Sailors' and Firemen's Panel; and eight meetings of the Catering Department Panel - together with forty-six meetings of Committees constituted by the Panels singly or jointly'.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, the District Panels, which were concerned solely with ratings, met ninety times in various ports of the U.K. These meetings, together with the eighteen for ratings at national level, highlight two major points that need to be made about the early years of the work of the N.M.B.: firstly the prime concern in terms of labour was with the supply of ratings, especially seamen and firemen, and secondly the point at which the N.M.B. did most of its work was in the district. Most problems which arose were local ones, often involving a single ship, and these were resolved by the local representatives of both sides. It was only when a solution could not be reached or where District decisions needed confirmation by the National Panel or Full Board that they were referred back to the central organization.

The General Secretary's summary of the way in which the Board measured its work for the first year makes these points very clearly:

In measuring the work of the various Panels it is necessary to bear in mind that in addition to 'progressive' legislation, the task of administering existing agreements and settling individual disputes not unnaturally attains considerable dimensions. Whereas in the case of many land industries, the scope of a National Wages Board may extend to no more than a fifty or a hundred factories, the purview of the National Maritime Board covers some 7,000 individual 'factories' afloat, with varying circumstances of trade construction, and complement. The magnitude of this branch of the Board's activities has varied, to some extent, according to the number of ratings affected in the case of each Panel. For example, while the Engineer Officers' Panel settled 49 claims affecting 30 vessels, and the Catering Department Panel 78 disputes in 45 of which a specific vessel was involved, the Sailors' and Firemen's Panel disposed of 206 cases, involving 175 different vessels.

Further, the local machinery of the Sailors' and Firemen's Panel has been of great utility.... (they) have during the past year settled disputes on 175 vessels, over and above the 150 cases which, for various reasons, they referred to the National Panel for decision.

He concluded by saying with regard to the past and the future:

As regards the Board's work as a whole, the year has gone far to demonstrate the success of a Joint Council of Shipping resting on a purely voluntary basis and dependent on mutual goodwill between the Employer and Employed and on recognition of a common interest, the prosperity of the industry and all engaged therein.<sup>31</sup>

A statement which must have gratified the hearts of those in the Ministry of Reconstruction.

The work of the Board's early years concentrated on the problems of the supply of ratings and the avoidance of strikes by this group of seafarers. The situation was made more complicated by the fact that there were a number of unions claiming to represent ratings; for example the British Seafarers based mainly in Glasgow and Southampton, and the Hull Sailors and Marine Firemen's Amalgamated Association concerned with the Humber ports. Such societies were anxious to participate in or at least influence N.M.B. proceedings, and this resulted in a degree of inter-union rivalry.<sup>32</sup> Theoretically these other organizations were represented where appropriate,<sup>33</sup> but the N.S.F.U. was intent on using its superior position as the most representative national union to achieve a closed shop status. A situation to which most ship-owners were not averse since the N.S.F.U. had shown itself very amenable to cooperation and dealing with one union on a national basis could only be advantageous in achieving peace and unity.

The closed shop for the N.S.F.U. was achieved during the 1920s. The opportunity which first presented itself was the need for re-organization of the Joint Control of the supply of ratings in 1922. The government was anxious to demonstrate its impartiality in regard to the joint industrial councils and, therefore, it discontinued the use of the Board of Trade local marine offices for implementing the joint supply scheme. The N.M.B. then had to establish its own offices for

this purpose to ensure that the scheme continued. To this end a document, the Port Consultant No. 5 (P.C.5), came into being which meant that separate offices did not have to be maintained except in special cases. The P.C.5 was dispensed by the N.S.F.U. and had to be signed by it and the Shipping Federation. A rating could not be employed without this document and the system was said to be 'very soon working smoothly. Generally a very favourable reception was accorded to the system, which is recognized as a business like method of regulating engagements convenient to shipowners and protective of the interests of the bona fide seamen'.<sup>34</sup> Initially it was not taken up in every port, and the other unions were obviously against its use since 'bona fide seamen' soon came to mean only members of the N.S.F.U. However, the need for change did provide the chance for the joint control scheme to be implemented, at least in part, in ports which had hitherto not been included satisfactorily.<sup>35</sup>

The P.C.5 minimized the potential influence of rival unions and eventually was the method by which they were destroyed. Shipowners instructed their Masters to employ only men with P.C.5s. This agreement was questioned by a seaman who was refused employment because of his membership of a rival union. In the case of Reynolds v. The Shipping Federation (1924), the Judge ruled the agreement to be legitimate on the grounds that it was not 'a malicious desire to inflict loss on an individual or class of individuals, but for a desire to advance the business interest of employers and employed alike to maintain the advantages of collective bargaining and control'.<sup>36</sup> Thus the Shipping Federation was instrumental in legitimising the closed shop in Britain, with their participation it became progressively enforced and has since been strictly maintained for ratings within the industry. Soon after its implementation the use of the P.C.5 was combined with a registered rota

system: the longest ashore was the first employed.<sup>37</sup> These developments facilitated the N.M.B.'s achievement in industrial peace, which was only marginally disturbed by unofficial action in the 1920s.

The inter-war years were a period of consolidation during which there were no organizational changes, although the panel structure was expanded to include a panel for the radio officers. These were changes in emphasis as the pre-entry closed shop for ratings became general, and the national decisions on wages and conditions more thoroughly implemented by the employers. Thus the necessity for intervention or conciliation by the District Panels lessened. By the mid-1930s there had been a very definite move to centralisation such as could be found in most other industries.

One of the main reasons why there was less pressure at District level was the high rate of unemployment that ensured an abundance of labour. The joint supply scheme was, therefore, during this period never fully tested. In the depression the casual nature of seafaring was not necessarily apparent since those leaving the industry temporarily or permanently were easily replaced, and in any event demand was low. To be regarded as successful the scheme had to be capable of providing an adequate supply of labour in all economic circumstances. In the improved economic situation of the late 1930s with its increased job opportunities ashore, seafaring was a less attractive occupation and recruitment and retention began to create difficulties as demand rose. The problem was a shortage of manpower and it became clear that the N.M.B.'s joint supply scheme based solely on the use of the P.C.5 did not in itself ensure an adequate supply of labour in all circumstances.

It is pointless to speculate how the N.M.B. might have been modified to meet this demand for labour in the industry had it not been for the advent of war. War again meant that the government intervened in the shipping industry to ensure the proper and adequate supply of

labour, on this occasion with legislation in the form of the Essential Work Order and the Merchant Navy Reserve Pool. These regulations took the matter of policy out of the hands of the N.M.B. which was left merely with the administration of the Essential Work Order.

The ending of the war provided an opportunity to re-assess the situation and to adapt to the demands and potential demands of the post-war years. The main question remained one of supply, there was no desire for the industry to return to the casualisation which had always epitomised the seafaring labour force, in particular for ratings. In addition the structure of the national labour market had altered with the state's commitment to full employment which had implications for the supply of all grades of maritime personnel.

The scheme of supply which was put into operation when the Essential Work Order was repealed was far more elaborate than that which existed before the war. The former joint control of the supply of ratings now became merely part of a scheme which covered the whole industry. The object of the new Established Service Scheme was to:

enable seafarers after a qualifying period of sea service to look to the Merchant Navy to offer them a stable and attractive career and greater regularity of employment and give Shipowners efficient and reliable personnel to man and maintain their ships at sea and in port.<sup>38</sup>

Under this scheme there were three categories of service which applied to both officers and ratings:-

1. The established seafarer who accepted a two year General Service contract with the Administration.
2. The Company Contract men who signed similar contracts to the above but with individual shipping companies. A form of contract which in the main applied to officers.
3. Unestablished men who had no wish to take part in the Scheme or were newcomers to the industry and so forfeited the right to these benefits.<sup>39</sup>

The first two groups qualified for preference of employment and payment while awaiting employment in addition to state unemployment benefit.

The responsibility for the working of the scheme was delegated to the employers' organizations, the Shipping Federation and the Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool. The employers in this role were designated as the Administration, although a Central Committee, with equal representation from the seafarers organizations and the Administration, determine:-

- (i) the number on the General Service Contract from time to time;
- (ii) the appointment of seafarers to ships or for relief or other duties; and
- (iii) disciplinary measures.

Local committees were also to be established 'with such functions as may be delegated to them by the Central Committee'.<sup>40</sup>

An important departure from previous practice in the scheme was the inclusion of a disciplinary structure in the collective bargaining machinery. As was argued earlier, maritime discipline is regarded as a matter of prime importance necessitating legal enforcement to a degree which would be unacceptable in shore based industry. This attitude to discipline is reflected in the new agreement with responsibility for enforcement being spread across both the employers' organizations and the seafarers societies.

Clause 6(q) DISCIPLINE - The Administration may impose penalties... if an Established Employee fails to carry out his obligations under the General Service Contract (including reporting as required by the Administration) or for inefficiency or misconduct or conduct prejudicial to discipline whilst employed by a Shipowner, or whilst attending an instructional course, even if such misconduct has already been punished in accordance with the law... a seafarer may appeal to the Administration

against the punishment either on the question of guilt or severity of the punishment... The Head Office of the Administration after consultation with the Central Committee may at its discretion decide to interview the appellant and either vary or confirm its previous decision.<sup>41</sup>

Hence the Established Service Scheme involved all the unions quite explicitly for the first time in the matter of discipline, superimposing as it did a new disciplinary structure on to the Merchant Shipping Act.

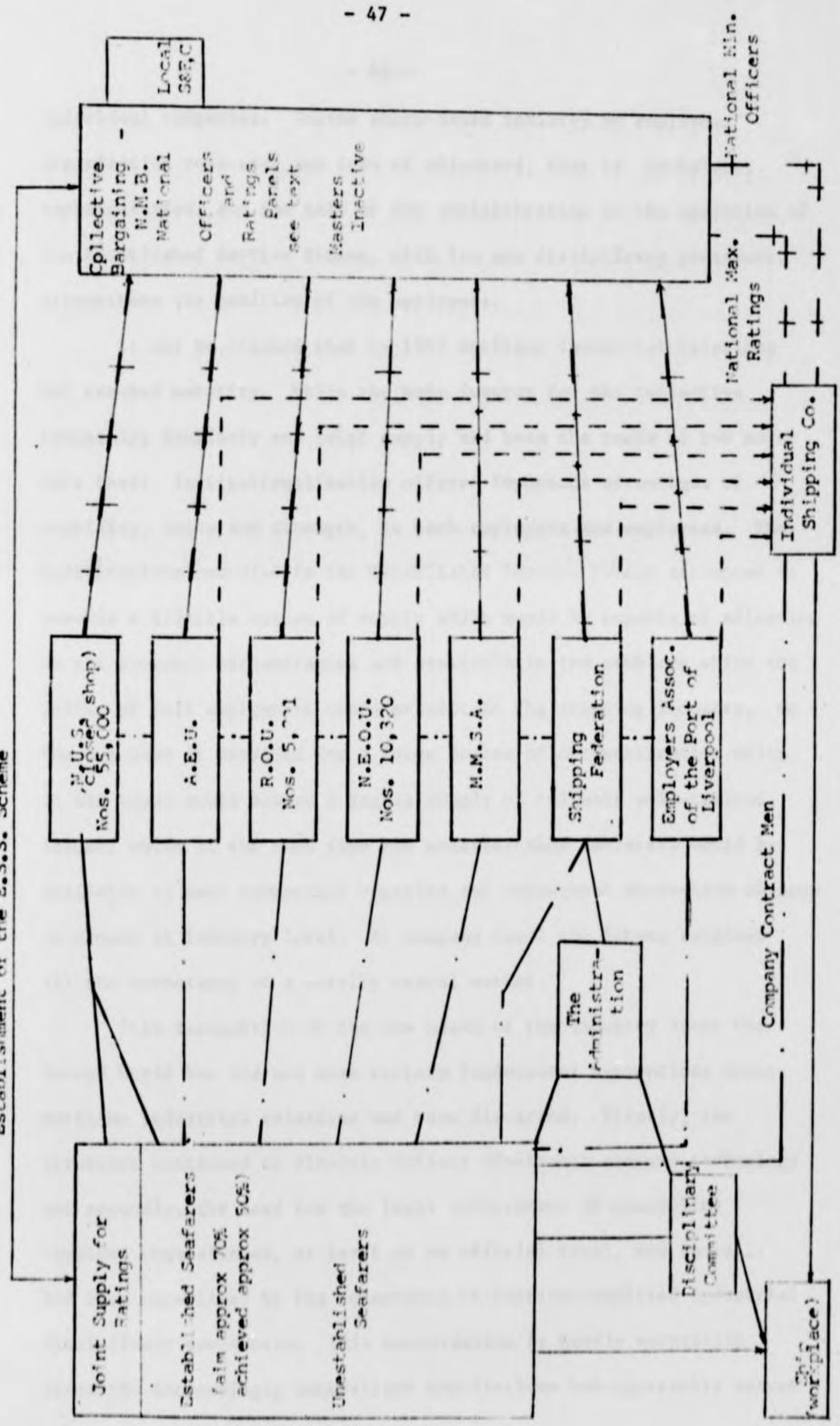
The final authority over the Scheme lay with the Central Administration, i.e. the employers, albeit in a role that was intended to be detached and impartial. It appears that the unique position in which the employers were placed by this agreement was accepted quite readily by the unions, which is perhaps remarkable in view of the N.U.S.'s commitment to joint supply. Presumably the pre-entry closed shop, which this agreement indirectly reinforced, and the partial de-casualisation were regarded as prize enough. For the officers' organizations the agreement was much more of a departure and it meant a closer involvement in the collective bargaining institutions, which must have strengthened their overall position. At this stage they did not have and, indeed, many did not want a closed shop.

With the implementation of the Established Service Scheme on 31 March 1947, there was a comprehensive structure governing the relationships between employers and employees that extended beyond the boundaries of the N.M.B. (see diagram). The post war modifications had not altered the fundamental link between the on-board organization of the ship, the seafarers associations and their separate panel representation. It also continued to be the case that, while the N.U.S. had a closed shop and negotiated only within the N.M.B., not all officers were members of trade organizations and the officers associations negotiated both within the N.M.B., which set minimum wages and conditions, and with

MODEL OF THE MARITIME INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM, IN 1947  
Merchant Shipping Act 1924

Chamber of Shipping

Establishment of the E.S.S. Scheme



Direct authority or supply relationships. ——— Collective bargaining relationships. - - - - Nos: = Union membership  
 Individual bargaining relationships. . . . . Other relationships. . . . .

individual companies. Unlike shore-based industry no employees' organization possessed any form of shipboard, that is workplace, representation, and the role of the administration in the operation of the Established Service Scheme, with its new disciplinary procedure, strengthens the position of the employers.

It may be claimed that by 1947 maritime industrial relations had reached maturity. While the main impetus for the collective bargaining machinery and joint supply had been the needs of two major wars their institutionalisation offered important advantages of stability, unity and strength, to both employers and employees. The modifications embodied in the Established Service Scheme attempted to provide a flexible system of supply which would be capable of adjusting to all economic circumstances and particularly the problems which the policy of full employment could present to the shipping industry. On the one hand it provided for a large degree of decasualisation which it was hoped would ensure a stable supply of reliable well-trained labour, while at the same time the unestablished seafarers would be available to meet commercial vagaries and consequent short-term changes in demand at industry level. At company level the Scheme retained all the advantages of a totally casual market.

This recognition of the new needs of the industry after the Second World War did not mean certain fundamental assumptions about maritime industrial relations had been discarded. Firstly, the structure continued to directly reflect nineteenth century technology and secondly, the need for the legal enforcement of discipline remained unquestioned, at least at an official level, and indeed, had been underlined by the acceptance of institutionalised industrial disciplinary procedures. This conservatism is hardly surprising since the increasingly centralised institutions had apparently served

the industry well. Its disputes procedure had resulted in a complete disappearance of the many localised disputes on wages and conditions that had characterised the industry before its inception; furthermore no major national disruptions or official strikes had been experienced. What is remarkable is that these institutions have remained virtually unaltered in the last thirty years in spite of the fact that during these years the industry has undergone fundamental changes which have had a direct impact on manpower.

NOTES

1. See J. Saville, 'Trade Unions and Free Labour: The Background to the Taff Vale Decision' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), Essays in Labour History (London: Macmillan, 1960).
2. See L.H. Powell, The Shipping Federation: A History of the First Sixty Years 1890-1950 (The Shipping Federation Limited, 1950).
3. See J.H. Wilson, My Stormy Voyage through Life, Vol.1 (Co-operative Printing Society Ltd., 1926). J. McConville and J. Saville, 'J. Havelock Wilson' in J. Bellamy and J. Saville (eds.), Dictionary of Labour Biographies, Vol.IV (London: Macmillan, 1978). H.A. Clegg, A. Fox and A.F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, Vol. I, 1889-1910 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). See also Appendix I.
4. I am indebted to B. Fletcher for access to her unsubmitted research for a Ph.D. at L.S.E. into maritime industrial relations in this period.
5. Public Record Office (P.R.O.) Papers on the formation of the National Maritime Board MT9/1231.
6. For example, the wages per month on the North East coast were £9 for sailors and £10 for firemen, whereas in London they were £7 and £8 respectively. Thus labour gravitated to the higher wage ports. See C.P. Hopkins, National Service of British Merchant Seamen 1914-1919 (London: G. Routledge & Son Ltd., 1920), Appendices II and VI.
7. op.cit. P.R.O. - N.M.B. MT9/1231.
8. First Constitution of the National Maritime Board, clauses 9, 10, and 22.
9. Shipping Federation (Sh. Fed.) Report of the General Purposes Committee to the Executive Council, 10 May 1918.
10. Sh. Fed. Minutes of Proceedings of the Executive Council, 19 June 1914. There had been some local recognition of seafaring unions following the 1911 disputes. See official wages published by the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union 1913 and Report of the Annual General Meeting of the National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers, February 1913. Also some unions had local recognition as early as 1887 - see B. Fletcher, Local Union in the Era of New Unionism - A Study of the Hull Seamen's Amalgamated Association 1870-1894 (Dissertation, University of Reading, 1973).
11. Sh. Fed. Minutes of Proceedings 14 November 1913 and 19 June 1914.
12. Letter from C. Laws, General Manager, Shipping Federation, 11 February 1918.

13. Sh. Fed. Report of the General Purposes Committee to the Executive Council, 5 November 1918.
14. *ibid.*
15. See J.H. Wilson, *op.cit.*, *passim*, and M. Eden, Saviours of the Empire, J. Havelock Wilson C.B.E. and 'Capt.' Tupper (Glasgow: Reformers Bookstall, 1918).
16. e.g. the National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers (1909-1921) and the British Seafarers' Union (1911-1921) merged into Amalgamated Marine Workers (1922-1927).
17. Sh. Fed. Report of the Shipowners' Representatives upon the National Maritime Board, 20 May 1920.
18. *ibid.*
19. The Liverpool Steam Ship Owners' Association were now represented on the Board.
20. P.R.O. N.M.B. MT9/1480.
21. *ibid.*
22. Sh. Fed. Report of General Purposes Committee to Executive Council, 15 November 1919.
23. N.M.B. Year Books, constitution clause 3.
24. See Appendix I.
25. *ibid.*
26. *ibid.*
27. *ibid.*
28. N.M.B. Minutes 1921, p. 132, and Minutes of N.U.S.S.C.B.B., Spring 1921, *passim*.
29. N.M.B. draft constitution agreed 28.11.1919.
30. Report of the Work of the N.M.B. - The Joint Industrial Council for Shipping for the Year 1920.
31. *ibid.*
32. B. Mogridge, 'Militancy and Inter-Union Rivalries in British Shipping 1911-1929', International Review of Social History, VI, 3, 1961.
33. For example, the British Seafarers' Union was represented on the liner section of the local Committee in Southampton.

34. P.R.O. MT9/1563.
35. This was true in the case of the Clyde.
36. 1 Ch 28.
37. This did not apply to catering ratings.
38. Established Service Scheme, N.M.B. Year Book 1947.
39. *ibid.*
40. *ibid.*
41. *ibid.* In practice this provision covered unestablished as well as established seamen.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE INDUSTRIAL CONTEXT

Industrial relations institutions function in a dynamic industrial and economic context to which they are bound to respond and react. In the case of shipping the context is an international one and in the period since the Second World War the shipping industry as a whole has experienced a massive growth not only in terms of tonnage but also in the number of maritime fleets operating in the world market. This growth is a result of a similar increase in seaborne trade, a redistribution of trade patterns, and technological progress.

Against this background the British shipping industry has undergone a period of challenge and change which has been particularly intense since the late 1950s. Britain has lost her historically predominant position, the maintenance of which the N.M.B. has as one of its main objectives. Her percentage share of the world fleet has fallen in gross tonnage terms from 34 per cent in 1919 to 22 per cent in 1949 and to 7 per cent in 1979.<sup>1</sup> This contraction of fleet size, together with the competitiveness of the newer fleets has important implications for employment opportunities, the cost and deployment of labour, and consequently for maritime industrial relations.

The decline is perhaps more significant than the figures indicate since it took place against a background of growth in world demand. Throughout the post war years there has been a steady growth in the volume of international seaborne trade from 360 million metric tons loaded in 1946 to 3,390 in 1978. This is related in the main to the massive growth in the gross national product of the industrialized nations (O.E.C.D.), countries which account for approximately 85 per cent of

world industrial production and about 75 per cent of world exports by value and 75 per cent of international seaborne tonnage imported. This has been allied to a redistribution of trade together with the growth of the movement of bulk commodities, in particular, oil. Furthermore the attitude of industry in general to transportation has undergone a radical change since the Second World War. Transport is no longer seen as a modal or collection of individual methods of the carriage of goods, rather it is now regarded as a total method of distribution where modes interlock in a process from point of production, of either manufactured goods or raw materials, to retail outlet. Shipping, therefore, has in some respects become merely a sector of a distribution system rather than an entity in itself; an example of this is the development of containerization. On the other hand shipping itself has become more specialized in the carriage of particular cargoes, for example the bulk carriage of gas, chemicals and grain. This development, aimed at achieving optimum efficiency on specific routes, involves a certain loss of flexibility since specialist vessels cannot be moved from trade to trade as in the case of traditional tonnage.

To some extent this may serve to explain why U.K. shipowners did not take advantage of the international growth in trade to the same extent as some of their rivals; the most obvious examples being the fleets of Liberia, Japan and Greece. Table 4.1 shows the growth of the principal merchant fleets since 1948. If Liberia and Japan are ignored (the growth of the latter's fleet being related to the expansion of the national economy and extremely liberal credit facilities which encouraged maritime development) and the comparison is made between the remaining countries in the table, all of whom has broadly similar financial and organizational arrangements, the U.K. fleet still has a slow growth rate overall. A comparison with similar maritime powers was made for the period 1958-1968 and it was discovered that the fleets of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Portugal had increased by between one-third and two-thirds, while, in the same period, the British fleet grew by 8 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 4.1

GROWTH OF THE PRINCIPAL MERCHANT FLEETS 1948-1978  
(100 GROSS REGISTERED TONS AND OVER)

| Flag    | Between<br>1948-58<br>(1948=100) | Between<br>1958-68<br>(1958=100) | Between<br>1968-78<br>(1968=100) | Between<br>1948-78<br>(1948=100) |
|---------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| U.K.    | 112                              | 108                              | 141                              | 171                              |
| Japan   | 534                              | 358                              | 200                              | 3,828                            |
| Norway  | 220                              | 209                              | 133                              | 613                              |
| Greece  | 125                              | 460                              | 446                              | 2,570                            |
| Germany | -                                | 161                              | 149                              | (240)*                           |
| Liberia | -                                | 255                              | 311                              | (796)*                           |

SOURCE: Calculated from Lloyds Register of Shipping

\*1958-78

In comparison with the fastest growing fleets such as Liberia and Greece the British performance pales into insignificance. The development of fleets such as those of Liberia and Panama has been one of the most important features of world shipping in the post war years. These fleets which have also included Honduras and more recently Cyprus and Singapore have become known as flags of convenience. The nations concerned have opened maritime registries to encourage foreign capital investment and they offer the shipowners the advantage of low taxation, insurance and maintenance cost, and, perhaps most important of all low labour costs.<sup>3</sup>

This growth of the world's fleets took place in conjunction with major technological advances which were a response both to the strength of world demand and a concomitant pressure for a fall in unit costs. There was an overall growth in vessel size, an improvement in speed capability, together with an increasing use of automation. External to the industry, but very important to certain sections of it, was the development of civil aviation. All are factors with which the maritime nations had to contend

or absorb. It could perhaps be argued that the newer maritime fleets were in a better position than that of the U.K. to take advantage of technological change but this by no means fully explains Britain's declining position or her failure to grasp the opportunities which were offered.

Developments in marine engineering have enabled a growth in the viable size of vessels. Tankers were in the vanguard of the movement toward much larger units but this has been followed to some degree by all types of vessels. Table 4.2 shows the amount of tonnage in the highest weight category in the world tanker fleet for selected years since 1938.

TABLE 4.2

TONNAGE OF WORLD TANKER FLEET IN HIGHEST WEIGHT CATEGORY  
SELECTED YEARS 1938 - 1979

| <u>Deadweight<br/>Tons</u>                    | <u>1938</u> | <u>1953</u> | <u>1955</u> | <u>1960</u> | <u>1965</u> | <u>1970</u>  | <u>1975</u>  | <u>1979</u>  |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 25,000 +                                      | 16.6        |             |             |             |             |              |              |              |
| 25 - 45,000                                   |             | 3.1         |             |             |             |              |              |              |
| 45 - 65,000                                   |             |             | 0.2         |             |             |              |              |              |
| 105 - 125,000                                 |             |             |             | 0.1         |             |              |              |              |
| 125 - 205,000                                 |             |             |             |             | 0.1         |              |              |              |
| 285,000 +                                     |             |             |             |             |             | 2.0          | 20.3         |              |
| 350,000 +                                     |             |             |             |             |             |              |              | 24.9         |
| <u>World Total</u><br><u>(million D.W.T.)</u> | <u>16.6</u> | <u>35.5</u> | <u>41.0</u> | <u>64.0</u> | <u>90.1</u> | <u>155.7</u> | <u>291.4</u> | <u>348.7</u> |

SOURCE: Maritime Transport O.E.C.D.

The increase in vessel size has been matched by an increase in speed. Table 4.3 indicates a consistent trend towards vessels capable of higher speeds. This has again necessitated greater skill on the part of engineers with more complex methods of propulsion, while the navigators are not only handling far larger vessels but ones which are travelling at increased speed.

TABLE 4.3  
ANALYSIS BY SPEED OF U.K. MERCHANT VESSELS OF 500 G.R.T. AND OVER

| <u>Knots</u> | Number of Vessels |                  |             |             |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|
|              | <u>1949</u>       | <u>1959</u>      | <u>1969</u> | <u>1979</u> |
| Under 10     | 137               | 347              | 51          | 7           |
| 10 - 12      | 1,076             | 854              | 353         | 167         |
| 12 - 14½     | 629               | 871              | 528         | 271         |
| 14½ - 17     | 531 <sup>a</sup>  | 640              | 775         | 540         |
| 17 - 20      |                   | 208 <sup>a</sup> | 210         | 184         |
| 20 and over  |                   |                  | 85          | 136         |
| Total        | 2,370             | 2,950            | 2,002       | 1,305       |

SOURCE: Annual Abstract H.M.S.O.

NOTE: (a) and over.

Like most industries over the last thirty years shipping has experienced a general movement towards automation with specific implications for manpower. The steady decline in engine room manning is directly related to the change in fuel type, that is from coal to oil burning, and the growth of the motor ship. In addition, control of the engine running is such that it no longer requires a standing watch, with the result that apart from docking, sailing, or emergencies the engine

room work may be regarded as day work. Navigation has undergone similar advances with the development of radar and self-steering directly affecting the deck rating. The automatic and electronic aids to navigation also modify the role of the navigating officer and could provide an expansion and a security of employment for the Radio Officer. Catering has also developed automatic techniques, thereby reducing job opportunities. The speed of turn round has been increased. This originally affected the tankers and bulk carriers but has now become a major factor in respect of the container, lash and roll-on-roll-off vessels whose prime object is to cut port time.

The impact of all these changes has been to alter the structure of the British fleet both in terms of ownership and type of vessel. Merchant operators, that is companies carrying primarily their own products and cargoes or those of associated companies, have become of growing importance within the industry. At the same time liner and tramp operators<sup>4</sup> have diversified their activities in order to spread the commercial risk and no longer maintain a strict division of operation between trades for example with the movement of ownership into tanker tonnage.<sup>5</sup> The period since the Second World War has witnessed major alterations in the make up of the fleet. The effects have not, however, been uniform in all sectors of the industry as Table 4.4 indicates. As the table illustrates, the passenger liner has contracted dramatically in both tonnage and number. This was a sector to which the industry was heavily committed; in 1950 it made up approximately one quarter of the fleet in tonnage terms. Following the heavy losses of the war, a renewal programme was embarked upon with vessels totalling 1.5 million tons being completed between 1946 and 1962. However, in the period 1958 to 1968, the U.K. passenger fleet fell from 2.511 million,

TABLE 4.4

U.K. MERCHANT VESSELS BY NUMBER AND DEADWEIGHT TONS 1950-79  
of 500 G.R.T. and Over  
(000)

| Vessel Trade  |        | 1950                  | 1955               | 1961   | 1967   | 1970   | 1975   | 1979             |
|---------------|--------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------------|
| Passenger     | No.    | 290                   | 323                | 274    | 173    | 129    | 116    | 101 <sup>c</sup> |
|               | D.W.T. | (3,916) <sup>b</sup>  | 1,947              | 1,674  | 919    | 575    | 254    | 174              |
| Cargo Liner   | No.    | 1,671                 | 2,111 <sup>a</sup> | 1,047  | 813    | 762    | 514    | 346              |
|               | D.W.T. | (9,946) <sup>b</sup>  | 14,018             | 8,094  | 6,908  | 7,003  | 5,557  | 4,561            |
| Tramp         | No.    |                       |                    | 844    | 559    | 410    | 307    | 262              |
|               | D.W.T. |                       |                    | 5,884  | 3,450  | 2,310  | 1,435  | 951              |
| Bulk Carriers | No.    |                       |                    |        | 155    | 190    | 267    | 203              |
|               | D.W.T. |                       |                    |        | 4,004  | 5,890  | 13,761 | 11,299           |
| Tankers       | No.    | 475                   | 607                | 643    | 481    | 486    | 478    | 393              |
|               | D.W.T. | (3,029) <sup>b</sup>  | 7,515              | 10,742 | 12,167 | 20,370 | 30,909 | 24,236           |
| All Vessels   | No.    | 2,440                 | 3,041              | 2,808  | 2,181  | 1,977  | 1,682  | 1,305            |
|               | D.W.T. | (16,891) <sup>b</sup> | 23,480             | 26,425 | 27,448 | 36,148 | 51,916 | 41,221           |

SOURCE: Chamber of Shipping Reports and G.C.B.S. British Shipping Statistics.

NOTES:

- a. All dry cargo.
- b. ( ) Gross Registered Tons.
- c. Only 13 of these are deep sea liners - the remainder are short sea ferries.

approximately one quarter of the world's fleet, to 1.415 million tons, one fifth of the world total, although the Queen Elizabeth II, presumably the last of the large traditional passenger liners, was completed in 1968. The experience of the world seagoing passenger fleet was similar: only considering vessels over 1000 tons. It contracted from 8,163 million tons to 6,734 million tons. The only traditional fleet to expand, due largely to government support, was Italy from 729 to 811 millions. This expansion

was matched by other lower paid, but non-traditional, passenger carriers like Portugal, Greece and flag of convenience countries often under Greek management. Two further exceptions to the general trend were the U.S.S.R. and the high wage Norwegian fleet.

Basically the reason for the decline in passenger traffic is the unprecedented rise in competition from aircraft, whose development even the most optimistic observer could hardly have foreseen. The airlines achieved remarkable success on the most important of passenger routes over the North Atlantic, where there were no scheduled passenger flights before 1946. On this route seasonal peaks, and the over-tonnaging that implies, were particularly important; travel by sea in the winter months being, in general, uncomfortable. Air transport thus entered an area of operation with not only the advantage of heavy demand, but also with long winter periods when sea competition was severely restricted. The extent of civil aviation's inroad into sea passenger transport is typified by the experience on the North Atlantic. The experience since 1955 is illustrated in Table 4.5.

Increasing demand for passages on the North Atlantic is associated with the higher income levels which have been generated since 1945. These initially created a situation where, while the percentage travelling by air increased dramatically, the number taking passage by sea also continued to increase until 1957. A factor explaining in part the substantial investment in passenger tonnage during the period. Since 1957, with the exception of 1962, sea passages have declined steadily and often substantially. Preoccupation with the Blue Ribbon routes gives a somewhat misleading impression since other long distance passenger carriage continued well into the 1970s. For example, the Australian route was still underpinned by emigrants, taking a considerable quantity of luggage, and this,

TABLE 4.5

DEVELOPMENT OF AIR AND SEA PASSENGER TRAFFIC  
BETWEEN NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

| Year | By Sea              |   | By Air              |   | Air Traffic as Percentage of Total Traffic |
|------|---------------------|---|---------------------|---|--|
|      | Thousand Passengers | Per Cent Increase/Decrease Over Previous Year | Thousand Passengers | Per Cent Increase/Decrease Over Previous Year |  |
| 1955 | 964                 | 3   | 652                 | 16  | 40   |
| 1956 | 1,018               | 6   | 785                 | 20  | 44   |
| 1957 | 1,036               | 2   | 968                 | 23  | 48   |
| 1958 | 957                 | - 8   | 1,193               | 23  | 55   |
| 1959 | 880                 | - 8   | 1,367               | 15  | 61   |
| 1960 | 865                 | - 2   | 1,760               | 29  | 67   |
| 1961 | 782                 | -10   | 1,919               | 9   | 71   |
| 1962 | 814                 | 4   | 2,272               | 18  | 74   |
| 1963 | 788                 | - 3   | 2,422               | 7   | 75   |
| 1964 | 712                 | -10   | 3,069               | 27  | 81   |
| 1965 | 649                 | - 9   | 3,611               | 18  | 85   |
| 1966 | 606                 | - 7   | 4,198               | 16  | 87   |
| 1967 | 506                 | -17   | 4,987               | 19  | 91   |
| 1968 | 375                 | -26   | 5,258               | 5   | 93   |
| 1969 | 335                 | -11   | 5,996               | 14  | 95   |
| 1970 | 249                 | -26   | 7,202               | 20  | 97   |

SOURCE: Maritime Transport 1970 O.E.C.D.

plus the economics of aircraft use, meant that until 1967 sea passengers rose steadily; since then, contraction has been at a gradual pace. The main initial impetus for the decline of routes to the East was the closure of the Suez canal rather than air competition. The growth in the ability of

airlines to compete has been at the root of the lack of investment in passenger tonnage, which is a corollary of the very low profit levels which are often not capable of covering depreciation. The fall in the level of profits reflects the decline in revenue from regular services. In an attempt to compensate for this U.K. passenger companies became more active in the cruise trade.

The rising standard of living and income in most industrial nations, and in particular North America, which produced the demand for air travel also created an expanding demand for leisure activities, of which pleasure cruising has been an important sector. These cruises are broadly of two types. Firstly, those combining the carriage of some passengers with regular transport service operations. The ability to do this depends not only on the vessel being designed to cater for this type of traveller, but also the suitability of the route from the point of view of weather and destination. Liners trading to the Cape, some Far East routes and to Australasia 'round the world', have gained additional income from this traffic, but activity was prohibited to traders on the North Atlantic by weather conditions, and the design of the vessels to combat such conditions.

The second type of cruise is that designed specifically for holidaymakers. During the 1950s and early 1960s this trade was seen as a method whereby surplus vessels could be employed during the slack season on their normal service routes. Hence, much of the United Kingdom's Atlantic tonnage was used, despite it being unsuitable for tropical or semi-tropical conditions and its generally inadequate leisure facilities. An additional disadvantage for most was their size and draft which made them incapable of entering or often even approaching the small port, typical of a cruise itinerary in the Caribbean, for example.

Since the late 1950s the tendency has been to build vessels designed not for a specific route, but for general world conditions, a factor in the contraction in vessel size, and, of more importance, building or extensively reconstructing tonnage purely for the cruise trade. Once in service these vessels often operate in conjunction with air services to eliminate the necessity for the vessel to take several days or more before arrival in regions of favourable weather. The nations traditionally owning passenger liners have not participated to the extent they might in this trade, the U.K. being no exception. Nations with no tradition of passenger capacity have been the most enthusiastic participants, for example, the Scandinavians and the Greeks, who under their own flag, or those of convenience, have expanded their activities in this area, often with refitted U.K. tonnage. Their competitors claim the basis of their success is cheaper labour as the passenger trade is a labour intensive operation. It has been calculated that on average the ratio of crew to passenger is 1 to 2.5, with 64 per cent of the crew in the catering department. The refitted tonnage has usually been designed to cut down labour unit costs. This has been done by making vessels single class, what traditional liners refer to as a tourist class, and with the introduction of cafeteria and other catering systems, which not only require less labour, but also less skilled labour. The traditional liner companies of the U.K. have, from necessity or choice, clung rather to the type of vessel split into two or more classes, each with their own catering requirements. This has substantially increased both their operating costs and their ability to compete with other less inhibited operators.

The traditional commitment of U.K. shipping to the carriage of passengers has meant that its decline has had a serious impact on the job opportunities of a relatively high proportion of U.K. seafarers, particularly catering ratings. The dry cargo liner trade was another sector to which the British fleet was strongly committed. These vessels ply on fixed routes, according to a pre-determined timetable, with a certain degree of flexibility to take account of unpredictable factors, like weather, but vessels do not generally leave their normal route patterns. Traditionally they were break bulk vessels, designed to carry heterogeneous cargoes, generally finished or semi-manufactured, in separate consignments. This type of vessel was related to an attitude to cargo movement which has changed dramatically since the mid-1960s with the advent of unit loading. As late as 1961 a little short of one half of the vessels and a third of the tonnage was involved in this trade; by 1979 the number of vessels had fallen to one quarter and the tonnage to approximately one tenth (see Table 4.4).

The nature of dry cargo liner trades makes it extremely difficult for shipowners in this sector to take advantage of the growth in vessel size and economies of scale. Firstly, they are in part constrained by the fact that they have to maintain a regular service with common carrier obligations and heterogeneous cargoes. Secondly, the size of vessel is to a large extent determined by the length of time it takes to load and discharge. The economic implications of this have seriously limited the size of the conventional liner, for to go beyond some optimum vessel size, broadly related to length of route and speed of turn round, necessitates protected cargo operation, with its increased costs, while the additional tonnage would only add

marginally to revenue. A typical cargo liner spends only half of its time moving cargo and the other half waiting in port; one study estimated that some 25 per cent of costs were due to traditional labour intensive cargo handling methods, and of total round voyage costs some 60 to 65 per cent were incurred while the vessel was in port, much of this time spent not moving cargo.<sup>6</sup>

The problem has been overcome to some extent with the acceptance of the concept of unit loading. There are three main types: palletization, containerization and roll-on-roll-off, all of which aim at reducing unit cost. Palletization, that is standardizing consignments into stacks some six feet high on flat trays measuring 40" x 48", was in fairly general use in overland distribution in the late 1940s, and was later extended to international trade.

The most important form of unit loading has been containerization, the use of standardized steel framed aluminium or steel covered 'boxes' generally compatible to through transit on most modes of transportation 'from door to door'.

Containerisation affects the economic structure of the industry in three ways. It brings economies of scale to the stevedoring process, by making the process capital intensive rather than labour intensive, dramatically increases vessel utilisation by reducing port-to-sea ratios from 1:1 to 1:4, and makes possible the development of intermodal services by facilitating the interchange between carriers. Because of high fixed capital costs, unit costs per ton may be lowered to one-half of breakbulk operations assuming volume operations are achieved.<sup>7</sup>

Roll-on-roll-off is regarded as a variation on the container theme. While containers lose some 20 per cent of cargo capacity, due to the vessels cellular structure and the containers themselves, roll-on-roll-off loses some 30 per cent to 40 per cent largely due to the space below the axles being wasted. Against this must be matched the

advantage of vessels specifically constructed with stern and occasionally stem doors, and cargo ramps, facilitating rapid loading and unloading of cargo.

The British shipowners were quick to realize the opportunities these developments offered particularly in relation to containerization. The large amount of capital investment necessary has in general caused the creation of loose consortia to operate container services. The most prominent of these are Overseas Containers Ltd. (O.C.L.); Associated Containers Transport (A.C.T.); and Freightliners, owned by British Rail, which operate short sea services. By 1979 the U.K. container fleet numbered eighty-five fully cellular vessels of all generations totalling 1.8m tons or about 18 per cent of the world's container fleet. Not all liner cargoes are suitable for containerization or may not be in sufficient volume to warrant the capital investment. Therefore, in spite of the U.K. fleets ready commitment to containerisation, approximately one half of the cargo liner fleet remains traditional tonnage.

This area of operation has been an expanding one, reflecting the growth in world trade but unfortunately the U.K. shipowner has not benefited fully from this expansion. Most recently this has been due to Britain's poor economic performance.<sup>8</sup> In the long run the most important factor has been the close ties between U.K. shipping and U.K. and commonwealth trade, which has not grown to the same extent as that of Northern Europe and the Far East. The U.K.'s traditional role as a cross trader,<sup>9</sup> which until quite recently was a large freight earner, has been undermined by the building up of local fleets, which means cargoes are not so readily available for U.K. shipping.

The result has been a contraction in the U.K.'s participation in liner trades. This, together with the shift to containerization, where each third generation container vessel has replaced six or seven conventional ships has meant a serious decline in job opportunities in this sector of the fleet.

One section of the fleet which experienced expansion until the second half of the 1970s was that of tramps and bulk carriers. Both of these types of vessel have taken advantage of the growth in vessel size and increases in speed capability. The tramp tonnage during the late 1970s constituted some 12 per cent of the world tramp fleet. These vessels are in general hired for a single voyage or on a time charter, and commonly employed in trading in full cargoes of homogeneous commodities of sufficiently low value in relation to their bulk or weight that cheapness of transportation outweighs speed or regularity of delivery. Liner companies charter out their temporary surplus tonnage to the tramp trade and when the need arises charter general purpose vessels to supplement their services. This is a trade denied to bulk carriers of all types, which have in recent years entered the tramp trade in increasing numbers, and are now included in the definition of this section of the industry.

Following the Second World War, there was a general reluctance on the part of British shipowners to invest in tramp tonnage. It was not until 1960 that, in tonnage terms, the fleet regained its pre-war level. This appears to have been due, in part, to the lack of foresight concerning the opportunities this branch of the industry was to offer. The other important influence has been the continuing decline in British coal exports, from a post-war per annum peak of just short of

14 million in 1953 (36 million in 1938) to approximately 2 million tons in 1975 - a decline which served to deny tramps an easily obtainable bulk commodity as an outward cargo from the U.K. This further removed the British tramps' advantage by necessitating an outward run in ballast, and brought U.K. tramp shipping generally in line with the international fleet, which it has been estimated spend between 30 per cent to 40 per cent of their operating time in ballast. The loss of the outward cargo was also an element inducing U.K. tramp owners to participate further in the cross trade, which in recent years supplied two-thirds of tramp freight.

The loss of comparative advantages, together with the apparent lack of dynamism already mentioned, influenced the poor profit levels of the general purpose tramp.<sup>10</sup> One reaction to these poor returns was a movement towards large bulk carriers, often of a specialized type. This movement was encouraged by comparatively new chartering arrangements, long term contracts of affreightment, whereby shipowners undertake to transport vast quantities of homogeneous product on a particular route or routes for a long period. Under the influence of such contracts, vast investments in tonnage have been made by Norway, Japan and flag of convenience countries. Despite the comparatively high profits in ore and other bulk carriers, the U.K. shipowners show a distinct reluctance to invest in this form of tonnage. The Economist pointed this out in 1970: 'highest returns have been earned in ore carriers (10 per cent) and other specialized carriers (5 per cent) but these have only attracted respectively 4.5 per cent and 3.4 per cent of new investment until recently'. This omission has to some extent been rectified in the years since 1969.

A large part of this investment was not made by traditional independent tramp owners, armed with long term contracts of affreightment, but by liner operators and merchant owners. Liner operators have ventured increasingly into tramp operations since the Second World War, and into bulk capacity for the last decade. This, plus a contraction in the number of independent owners, has caused a fundamental re-organization of the ownership and management of tramp tonnage:

TABLE 4.6  
U.K. OWNED AND REGISTERED TRAMP FLEET 1968  
(000 D.W.T.)

|                 | <u>Bulk<br/>Carriers</u> | <u>General Purpose<br/>Tramps</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Liner Operators | 697                      | 502                               | 1,198        |
| Merchant Owners | 100                      | 321                               | 421          |
| Other           | <u>3,306</u>             | <u>1,630</u>                      | <u>4,935</u> |
| Total           | 4,103                    | 2,452                             | 6,555        |

SOURCE: Board of Trade.

NOTES:

- a. General purpose tramp figures relate to vessels of 500 gross tons and over.
- b. Bulk carriers figures relate to single deck vessels of 10,000 deadweight tons and over, including OBO type vessels.

SOURCE: Rochdale p.142.

Table 4.6 summarizes how far the radical nature of ownership reorganization has gone since the war, and the trend appears to be continuing. The inter-relationship of this trend with increasing use

of bulk tonnage has had a further dynamic effect on the industry's structure, engendering the formation of consortia, including many liner companies. Seabridge, formed in 1965, was the first of these, its membership consisting wholly of U.K. companies. Since then a number of international consortia have been established; for example, Associated Bulk Carriers, whose members are P & O and the Anglo Norse Group, the latter's vessels being registered outside the U.K. The main, but not the only, objective of these consortia has been the organization, for its independent members, of long-term contracts of affreightment, in numerous commodities, using highly specialized or very large vessels.

These trends and the entry of surplus tanker tonnage into trade, like grain, have had a serious effect on the open market for tramp tonnage, the Baltic Exchange, and if the trend were to continue at the past rate, they would imply the demise of the small independent general purpose tramp companies. However, with the continuing expansion in international trade it has been predicted that some 15 per cent of it will continue to be shipped in 'handy' sized tramps of 10 to 20,000 tons. Traditional tonnage, drawing only a moderate amount of water, with its own cargo handling equipment is able to enter the minor ports of the world where variable quantities of commodities appear at unpredictable intervals. It is in this area of trading where the U.K. general purpose tramp operators' future lies.

While large vessels in respect of the bulk carriers and the fall in the number of conventional tramps has lessened the amount of labour required, this is perhaps not the most important aspect of changes in this part of the industry. The emergence of merchant owners has much wider potential implications for industrial relations.

While these owners operate ships, their first consideration in labour matters may not be that of shipowners. For them ships are merely part of the production process in which questions of maritime labour may be insignificant.

The tanker fleet has had a similar experience to other sectors with a declining percentage share in the world fleet. The term tanker includes vessels carrying all forms of bulk liquid, such as chemical products and liquid gas, but by far the largest proportion carry crude oil.

There have been major structural changes in the oil industry since the Second World War which have had important repercussions for the shipping industry. In this period refineries have been relocated nearer the market and away from the 'well' for economic, strategic and political reasons. A movement which was given impetus by the Persian Government's nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian refinery at Abadan in 1951. The change in refinery location brought in its train a total restructuring of tanker fleets, from concentrating largely on tonnage designed to distribute comparatively small parcels of refined products to tonnage dedicated to moving huge volumes of crude oil over long distances. In 1973 less than 20 per cent of the world fleet moved refined products and these were also solely engaged in the coastal or short sea trades. Crude oil carriage has encouraged the surmounting of technical difficulties, in order to build progressively larger vessels to take advantage of economies of scale. These economies are closely related to speed, time spent in port and length of voyage. The length of voyage factor became of major importance with the first closure of the Suez Canal in 1956. Even the canal re-opening,

together with its widening, deepening and increased efficiency, did little to hinder the movement towards larger vessels, with voyages being made southwards through the canal in ballast and homeward to Europe round the Cape. The general over-tonnaging in tankers between 1956 and 1966 appears not to have affected the trend to larger units either.

This trend has been affected however, by the massive increases in oil prices in the autumn of 1973 and 1979. As a result there has been the opening up of previously uneconomic fields and the search for other sources. The discoveries of deposits in the Far East which are nearer the Japanese market have shortened the length of the sea voyage. This, together with the increased bunker costs, has encouraged the use of medium sized tankers. There have also been other developments in oil carriage, such as the increased use of pipelines, particularly in relation to the newly discovered fields.

The U.K. tanker fleet has reflected these technological changes with a growth in vessel size, but it has not taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the growth in demand for oil which has been experienced over the whole period to the same extent as other fleets. Table 4.7 illustrates the massive growth of the tanker fleets of countries such as Japan and those of flags of convenience with an approximate twenty-fold and eight-fold increase respectively (1958-1978), while Table 4.1 shows that the U.K. percentage of world tanker tonnage has more than halved. The decline in the number of vessels in the U.K. tanker fleet, although limited to a growth in vessel size, has had a detrimental effect on job opportunities since the larger size of vessel does not imply a concomitant increase in the size of the crew.

TABLE 4.7

SIZE AND RATE OF GROWTH OF MAJOR TANKER FLEETS 1948/1958 TO 1978  
(2,000 D.W.T. and Over)

| <u>Flag</u>                | 1948 <sup>a</sup><br>Million<br>G.R.T. | 1958<br>Million<br>D.W.T. | 1968<br>Million<br>D.W.T. | 1978<br>Million<br>D.W.T. | Increase<br>1958-1978<br>(1958=100) |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| U.K.                       | 3.8                                    | 8.7                       | 15.4                      | 28.4                      | 326                                 |
| Norway                     | 2.1                                    | 8.1                       | 16.4                      | 26.7                      | 321                                 |
| Other Western Europe       | -                                      | 11.8                      | 26.3                      | 77.4                      | 656                                 |
| 'Convenience' <sup>b</sup> | 0.5                                    | 14.4                      | 31.5                      | 113.0                     | 796                                 |
| Japan                      | 0.4                                    | 1.5                       | 11.4                      | 29.3                      | 1,953                               |
| World Total <sup>c</sup>   | 11.6                                   | 55.7                      | 119.4                     | 328.4                     | 590                                 |

SOURCE: Lloyds Register. B.P. Statistical Review.

NOTES:

- a. 1948 figures over 500 G.R.T.
- b. Panama - Liberia - etc.
- c. World total calculated from more detailed table.

A further consideration is the extent to which tankers in the British fleet are owned by oil companies as opposed to conventional shipowners (see Table 4.8). Although this ownership pattern is less marked than it was in the early 1960s, there is still a significant proportion of the U.K. tanker fleet owned by companies for whom ship-owning is only a minor part of their total operation and, therefore, maritime industrial relations are not necessarily a prime consideration.

TABLE 4.8

U.K. TANKER FLEET OWNERSHIP 1963 - 1978  
(2,000 D.W.T. and Over)

|   | <u>End of<br/>1963</u> | <u>End of<br/>1978</u> | <u>% Increase<br/>1963 - 1978</u> |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Private <sup>a</sup>  | 3.5                    | 8.7                    | 248                               |
| Oil Companies   | 8.5                    | 18.8                   | 221                               |
| Oil Companies as % of<br>U.K. Tanker Fleet                    | 70.8                   | 68.1                   | -                                 |
| % U.K. Oil Company<br>Tonnage of World Oil<br>Company Tonnage | 30.0                   | 16.8                   | -                                 |

SOURCE: B.P. Statistical Review.

NOTE:

a. Including a very small amount of Government owned tonnage.

All the sections of the industry discussed above are also involved in the coastal and short sea trade and tend in these trades to be in competition with other forms of transport to a greater extent than the deep sea, foreign going routes. It is difficult to give a precise definition of tonnage engaged in Coastal, Home, Middle or Short Sea trades, for the general small vessels involved in one trade can transfer to another with ease, perhaps during one short single voyage. The trades can be defined as follows: Coastal and Home trade limits refer to all ports within the U.K., the Republic of Ireland, as well as those on the European coast from the Elbe to Brest. The Middle trade limit encompasses all this, but widens the scope to include ports between Santander and Bergen and the Baltic. The Short

Sea trade limit widens the area further to include the whole of Western Europe and ports in the Western Mediterranean. Larger foreign-going tonnage can of course occasionally enter in any of these trades, particularly the latter. There is no accurate calculation of the tonnage operating in the Short Sea trade, but it can be assumed that much of the tonnage shown in Table 4.9, which strictly speaking covers only Coastal and Home trade, also operates in the Middle and Short Sea and, therefore, it gives an adequate impression of these sections of the U.K. fleet's development.

As may be seen the experience of the Short Sea trade is very similar to that of the Deep Sea fleet. Table 4.9 shows that there has been a substantial contraction in liner and tramp tonnage. This is due largely to the increased efficiency of other sections of the transport industry: for example, road haulage with unit load and the like and, in particular, railway's development of bulk movement of goods in block and liner trains and company 'merry-go-round' trains offering highly competitive rates. These highly efficient methods of transporting large quantities has concentrated activity on a limited number of major ports, taking away business from many of the smaller ports which were previously served by coastal tonnage.

The decline of the coastal tramp is also closely related to the marked decrease in the coastwise movement of coal, mainly from England, North-East coast and Humber ports, to the Thames and South East. Coal amounts to more than two-thirds of all coastal dry cargo, and in the period 1956-1975 the amount seaborne fell by nearly 80 per cent, a contraction which appears to be continuing. Other bulk dry cargoes, consisting mainly of stone, sand, slag and china clay increased during the same period by some 1 million tons per annum,

TABLE 4.9

COASTING AND HOME TRADE MERCHANT SHIPS OWNED AND REGISTERED  
IN THE U.K. (OOO G.R.T.) AND COAL TRADE (MILLION LONG  
TONS) 1950 - 1975

| <u>Year</u>                      | 1950  | 1956              | 1960  | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| <u>Liners</u>                    |       |                   |       |      |      |      |
| Number                           | 374   | 340               | 292   | 251  | 170  | 170  |
| G.R.T.                           | 449   | 459               | 388   | 357  | 310  | 339  |
| <u>Tramps</u>                    |       |                   |       |      |      |      |
| Number                           | 758   | 643               | 506   | 409  | 310  | 311  |
| G.R.T.                           | 623   | 655               | 514   | 452  | 338  | 282  |
| <u>Tanker</u>                    |       |                   |       |      |      |      |
| Number                           | 83    | 117               | 140   | 120  | 107  | 118  |
| G.R.T.                           | 49    | 80                | 111   | 104  | 104  | 133  |
| <u>Total</u>                     |       |                   |       |      |      |      |
| Number                           | 1,215 | 1,100             | 938   | 780  | 587  | 599  |
| G.R.T.                           | 1,121 | 1,194             | 1,013 | 913  | 752  | 754  |
| <u>Coal Shipped</u><br>OOO. Tons |       |                   |       |      |      |      |
| Coastwise                        | 26.3  | 28.8 <sup>a</sup> | 20.9  | 20.8 | 13.5 | 5.0  |
| Exported                         | 13.5  | 8.5               | 5.1   | 3.8  | 3.3  | 2.0  |

SOURCE: Chamber of Shipping and G.C.B.S. Reports.

NOTE:

a. Post War Peak.

an increase which failed to compensate for coal's contraction.

On the other hand, the carriage of oil has been increasing over the last two decades and consists wholly of refined petroleum products. In 1968 some 30 million tons were conveyed, approximately 55 per cent of the total coastal trade. Not all of this was moved by coastal tanker; some was carried in Deep Sea tonnage, owned by the oil companies, or foreign flag vessels, in intervals between their normal trading. This type of tonnage was also engaged in the trans-shipment of crude oil around the coast. The petroleum product carrying coastal tanker is, of course, in competition with the U.K. pipeline systems which in 1968 had a through-put of 8 million tons and this had increased to some 20 million tons by 1975. There has not been the same expansion in tanker size as in the Deep Sea routes and therefore not quite such a large fall in job opportunities.

This consideration of individual sectors of the industry modifies the general analysis of the industry as a whole. The period since the Second World War has seen the loss of supremacy of the U.K. fleet and its inability and reluctance to take advantage of the growth and redefinition of world trade. Historically, the U.K. was committed to trades which have suffered decline in the last three decades and British owners were slow to transfer their capital to the areas of greatest growth. One exception to this has been the area of containerization where the U.K. has been a pioneer from the 1960s onwards.

The shipowners of other nations have been prepared, however, to grasp all the opportunities offered by changing world trade, particularly through the medium of flags of convenience. The increasing competitiveness of world shipping has resulted in a loss of job

opportunities for the British seafarer. A situation which has been exacerbated by technological advances which have reduced manning levels. These factors, together with the massive outlay of capital which is now characteristic of the industry, have necessitated a major restructuring of the fleet and placed increasing emphasis on the efficient use of resources, especially manpower.

NOTES

1. See Appendix II.
2. Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Shipping, Cmdd 4337 (HMSO, 1970), para.214 [Rochdale].
3. See Flags of Convenience - The Unacceptable Face of Shipping, a report by the NUS, 1981; and K. Grundy, Flags of Convenience in 1978, Polytechnic of Central London, 1978.
4. N.B. Liner - a ship engaged in providing a regular service for passengers and/or cargo on given routes. Tramp vessels are generally hired for a single voyage or on a time charter and commonly employed in trading in full cargoes of homogeneous commodities.
5. Rochdale, op. cit., p. 35 table 3:4 and paras. 119-122.
6. ibid., para. 345.
7. J.R. Barker and R. Brandwein, U.S. Mercantile Marine in National Perspective (Lexington Books, U.S., 1970), p. 6.
8. Shipping Review, Phillips and Drew, July 1980, p. 6.
9. Cross trade - voyage undertaken which neither begins nor ends in the country of the ship's flag.
10. Rochdale, op. cit., p. 335 table 18:4.
11. 9 May 1970.

## CHAPTER 5

### INDUSTRIAL CHANGES AND THE DEMAND FOR LABOUR

The changes which have occurred within the shipping industry have had a profound effect on the nature of demand for labour in the industry and the way it is deployed. At its most simplistic, the demand for labour has fallen. This, however, masks a much more complex situation since the fall in demand has been uneven throughout the industry. In part this has been related to increasing competition, and in part to the technological advances which have affected shipping worldwide. The latter advances have made shipowners and operators more conscious of their particular manpower requirements in the light of high capital investment and increasing specialization. Again this has not resulted in consistent trends, since different trades and types of vessels have differing cost structures and shipowners are more concerned with the needs of the trade in which they are engaged than with the needs of the industry as a whole.

The balance in the demand for labour has altered, and this of course, carried implications for the principle of central joint supply with its emphasis on the supply of ratings and the employers need for commercial flexibility and a degree of casualization. The job opportunities for officers have remained far more stable than those for ratings. In the case of ratings all departments have been under considerable pressure, with demand uneven both in respect of trade and size of vessel. The change in the structure of the labour force in this way is of particular significance since the setting up of the N.M.B. was directly related to the importance of the supply of ratings, then by far the biggest sector of the labour force, with a panel system related to grades rather than trade.

Since the inception of the N.M.B., it has, apart from the early 1920s, been concerned with a declining labour force. This is an experience which shipping shared with other staple industries in the U.K. but they were slow to recognize the impact of the First World War. In retrospect this trend is obvious using figures that were and are easily accessible, the Census of Seamen. These figures are not accurate in terms of numbers since they ignore seafarers not actually in employment; for example, on leave, sick or awaiting employment. However, since the basis on which they are collected has not changed substantially over the period, they do represent the long term trend in employment in the industry as a whole. The fact that they are collected only at long and sometimes uneven intervals does mask shorter and perhaps rising trends.

Table 5.1 illustrates the long decline in the total labour force which was relatively slow until the 1960s when there was a dramatic fall of just a third in ten years. The experience of U.K. resident seafarers

TABLE 5.1

CENSUS OF SEAMEN

| <u>Year</u> | <u>U.K.<br/>Residents</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Aliens</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Lascars</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|-------------|---------------------------|----------|---------------|----------|----------------|----------|--------------|
| 1921        | 96,072                    | 63.2     | 11,598        | 7.6      | 44,241         | 29.1     | 151,911      |
| 1926        | 129,289                   | 65.8     | 15,703        | 8.0      | 51,566         | 26.2     | 196,588      |
| 1931        | 108,882                   | 64.3     | 11,204        | 6.6      | 49,125         | 29.0     | 169,211      |
| 1938        | 107,088                   | 67.2     | 7,043         | 4.4      | 45,182         | 28.4     | 159,313      |
| 1951        | 105,080                   | 68.8     | 5,670         | 3.7      | 41,957         | 27.5     | 152,707      |
| 1961        | 95,549                    | 67.1     | 3,663         | 2.6      | 43,250         | 30.4     | 142,462      |
| 1971        | 54,442                    | 61.1     | 4,149         | 4.6*     | 29,191         | 32.7     | 89,156       |

\* In this census the definition of alien changes to include some Commonwealth citizens.

has followed the general trend of a fall in numbers since 1926 with the 1960s showing the greatest fall. This is especially significant since it has taken place at a time when U.K. residents were also declining as a percentage of the total labour force.

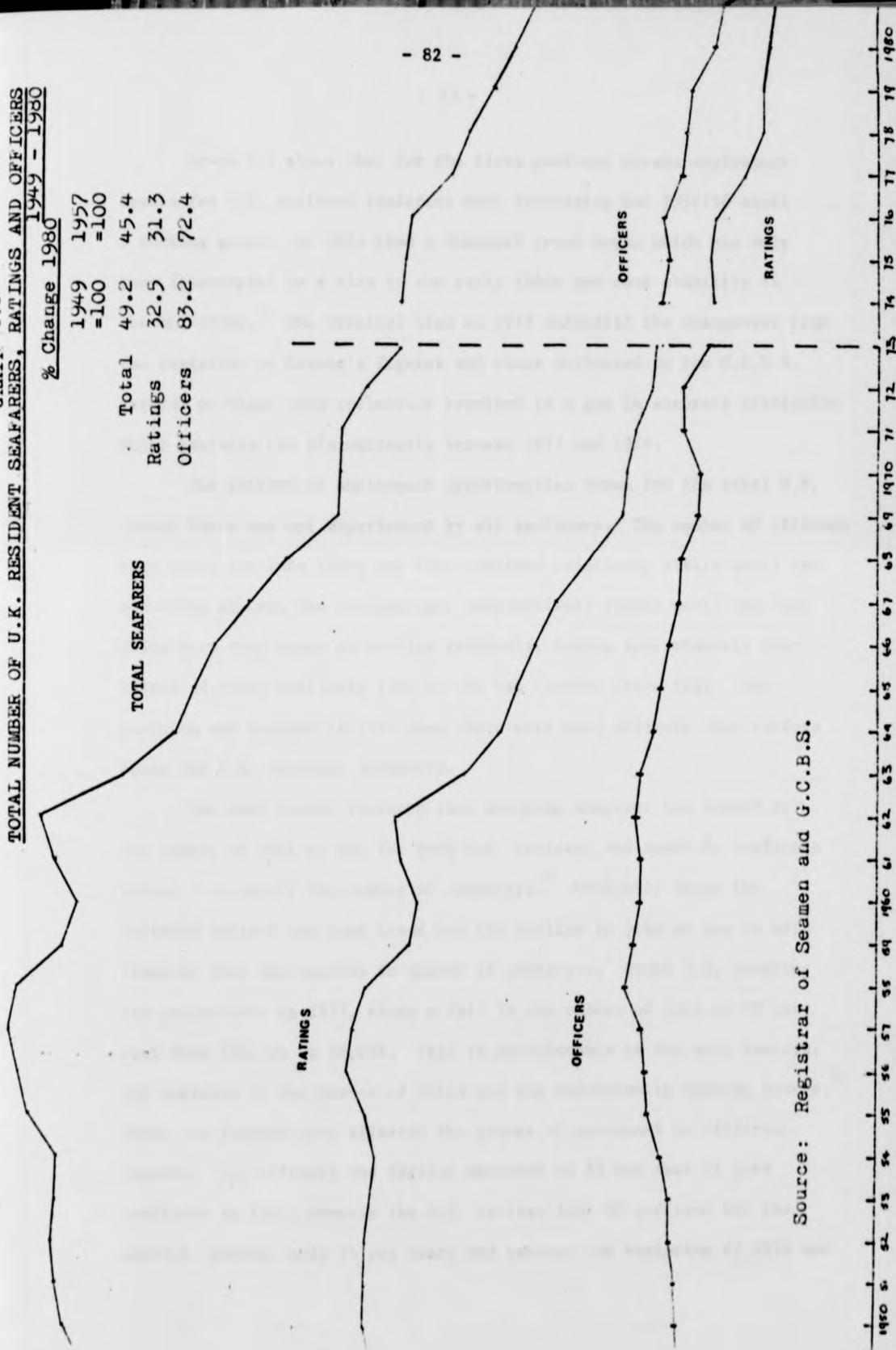
The Lascars, that is seamen who are resident in Asia, East and West Africa and the West Indies and who are employed on agreements which are opened and closed in those areas, have shown a remarkable stability throughout the whole of the period. Although they do show a fall of numbers in the 1960s, they were increasing as a percentage of the total. This rise in percentage in the 1960s is also true of aliens but to some extent this is explained by an alteration in census definition.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the whole period aliens have only represented a small proportion of seafarers in the U.K. fleet and their decline has no special significance.

The N.M.B. and the industrial relations institutions are most directly concerned with the U.K. resident seafarer and more detailed data on this category are available in the form of the statistics collected by the Registrar of Seamen until January 1973 when the task was taken over by the General Council of British Shipping (G.C.B.S.). These statistics represent the available labour force, that is active seafarers whether in employment, sick or on leave. The figures tend to overstate the numbers involved because seafarers remain on the register for 12 months after completion of their last voyage; this is known as the 12 month rule. The Rochdale Committee of Inquiry suggested that the Registrar consistently overstated the active labour force by some 13 per cent to 14 per cent.<sup>2</sup> While the figures may not be regarded as an accurate numerical guide, they do provide a reliable indication of general and particular trends over the last three decades.

GRAPH 5.1

TOTAL NUMBER OF U.K. RESIDENT SEAFARERS, RATINGS AND OFFICERS  
1949 - 1980

| % Change 1980 |      |
|---------------|------|
| 1949          | 1957 |
| =100          | =100 |
| Total         | 49.2 |
| Ratings       | 31.3 |
| Officers      | 72.4 |



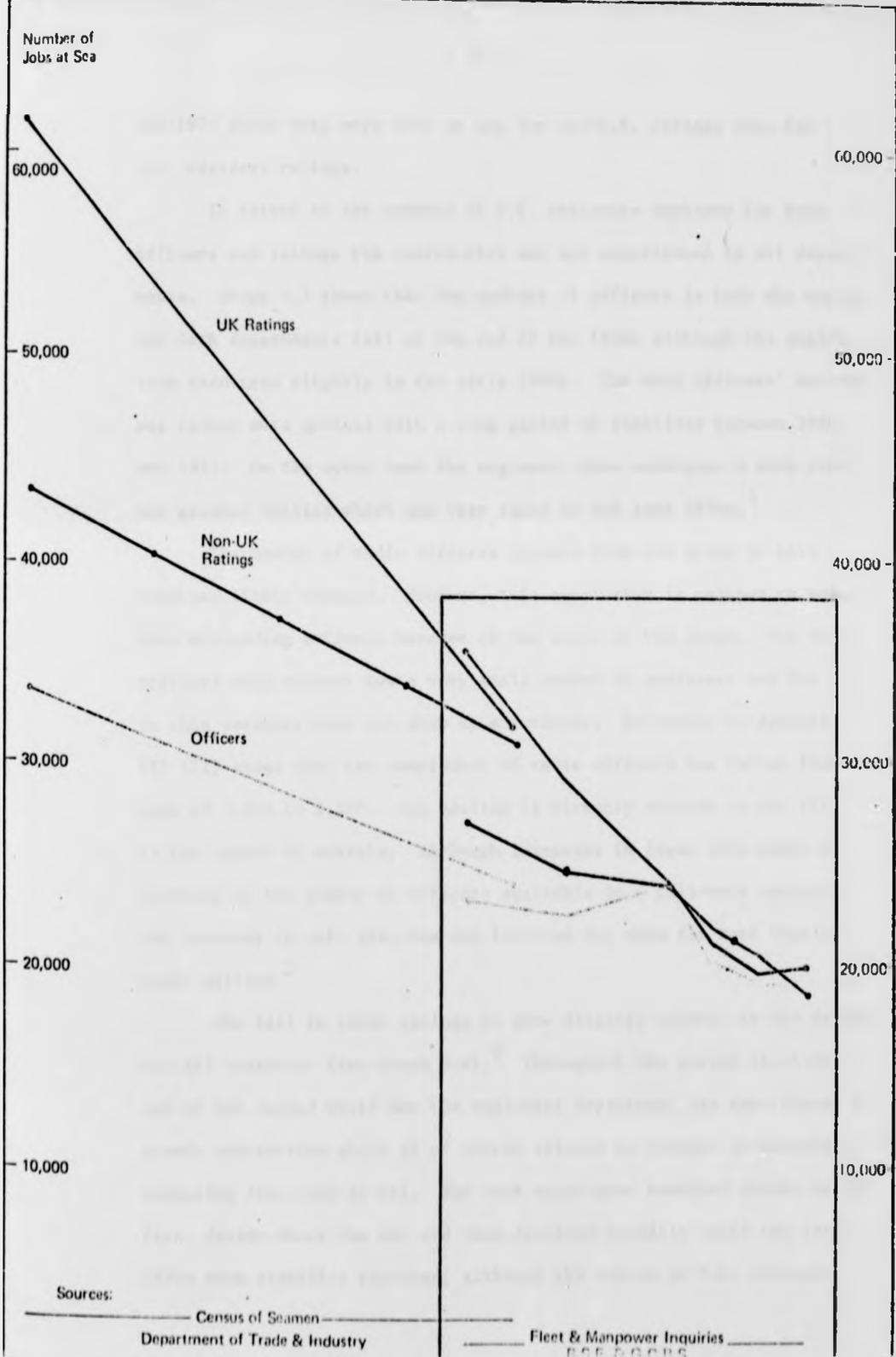
Source: Registrar of Seamen and G.C.B.S.

1950 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 1960 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 1970 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 1980

Graph 5.1 shows that for the first post-war decade employment levels for U.K. resident seafarers were increasing but 1957/58 marks a turning point. At this time a downward trend began which has only been interrupted by a rise in the early 1960s and some stability in the mid-1970s.<sup>3</sup> The vertical line in 1973 indicated the changeover from the Registrar of Seamen's figures and those collected by the G.C.B.S. Initial problems with collection resulted in a gap in accurate statistics which explains the discontinuity between 1973 and 1974.

The pattern of employment opportunities shown for the total U.K. labour force was not experienced by all seafarers. The number of officers rose until the late 1950s and then remained relatively stable until the mid 1970s whereas the ratings were comparatively stable until the late 1950s when they began to decline seriously, losing approximately two-thirds of their available jobs in the two decades since 1959. The position was reached in 1974 when there were more officers than ratings among the U.K. resident seafarers.

The most recent research into shipping manpower has looked at the number of jobs at sea for both U.K. resident and non-U.K. seafarers rather than merely the number of seafarers.<sup>4</sup> Obviously these two criteria reflect the same trend but the decline in jobs at sea is more dramatic than the decline in number of seafarers. Graph 5.2, covering the period 1961 to 1977, shows a fall in the number of jobs of 59 per cent from 138,799 to 58,056. This is attributable to two main factors; the decrease in the number of ships and the reduction in manning levels.<sup>5</sup> These two factors have affected the grades of personnel to different degrees. For officers the decline amounted to 43 per cent of jobs available in 1961, whereas the U.K. ratings lost 66 per cent but the non-U.K. ratings only 56 per cent, and between the beginning of 1974 and



mid-1976 there were more jobs at sea for non-U.K. ratings than for U.K. resident ratings.

To return to the numbers of U.K. residents employed for both officers and ratings the contraction was not experienced in all departments. Graph 5.3 shows that the numbers of officers in both the engine and deck departments fell at the end of the 1950s although the engine room recovered slightly in the early 1960s. The deck officers' decline was rather more gradual with a long period of stability between 1969 and 1975. On the other hand the engineers have undergone a more even but greater decline which was very rapid in the late 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

The number of radio officers appears from the graph to have remained little changed. However, this conclusion is reached on somewhat misleading evidence because of the scale of the graph. The radio officers only account for a very small number of seafarers and the fall in this category does not show up accurately. Reference to Appendix III (11) shows that the complement of radio officers has fallen from a peak of 3,510 to 2,330. The decline is directly related to the fall in the number of vessels. Although increases in leave have meant an increase in the number of officers available in a fall-back capacity, the increase in unit size has not involved the need for more than one radio officer.<sup>7</sup>

The fall in total ratings is more directly related to the decline for all seafarers (see Graph 5.4).<sup>8</sup> Throughout the period since the end of the Second World War the engineers department has experienced a steady contraction which is of course related to changes in methods of bunkering from coal to oil. The deck department remained stable in the first decade after the war and then declined steadily until the late 1970s when stability returned, although the number of U.K. resident

GRAPH 5.3

NUMBER OF U.K. OFFICERS BY TOTAL AND DEPARTMENT 1949 - 1980

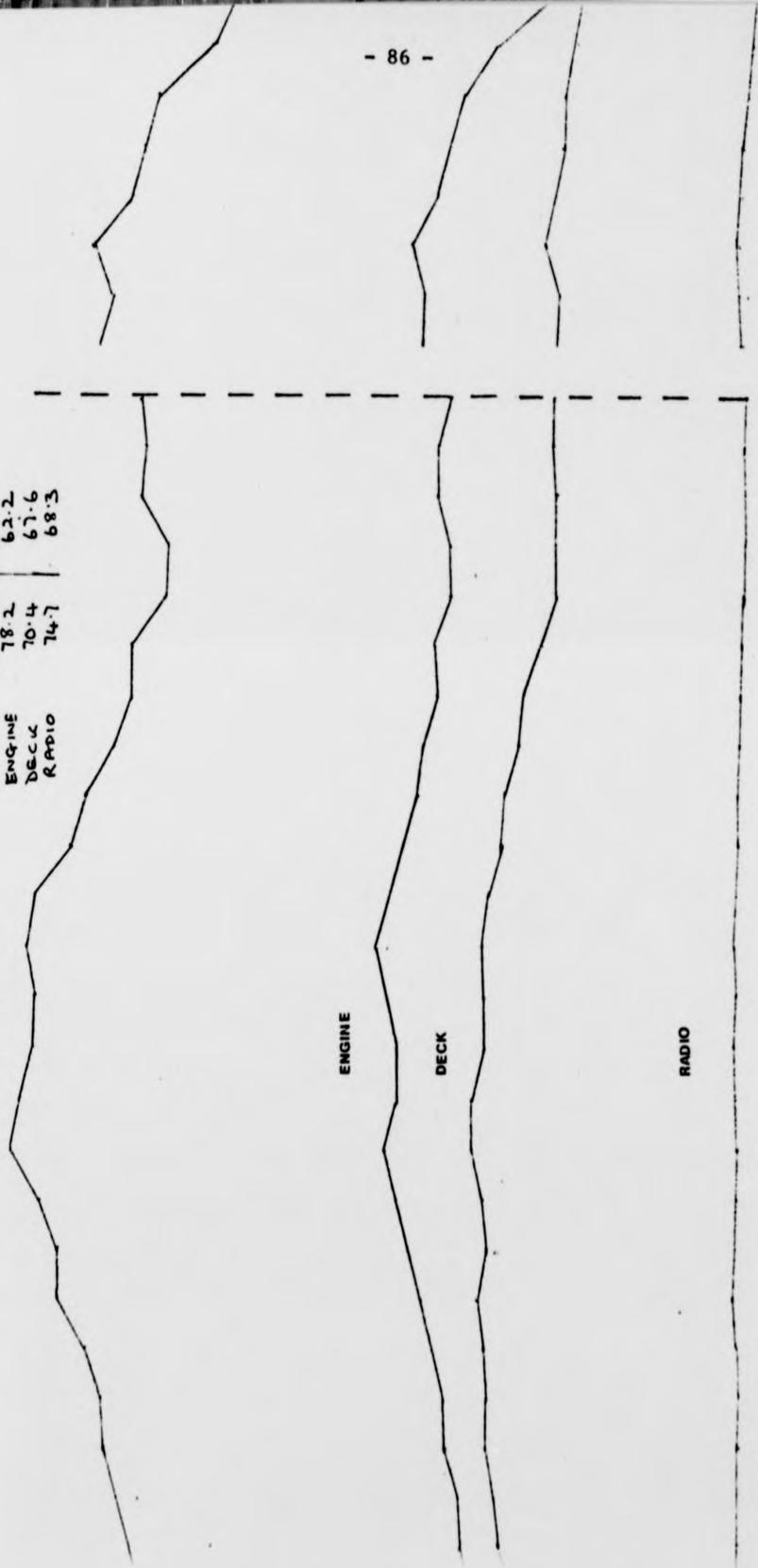
|                | % Change 1980 |      |
|----------------|---------------|------|
|                | 1949          | 1957 |
| TOTAL OFFICERS | 83.2          | 72.4 |
| ENGINE         | 78.2          | 62.2 |
| DECK           | 70.4          | 67.6 |
| RADIO          | 74.7          | 68.3 |

TOTAL OFFICERS

ENGINE

DECK

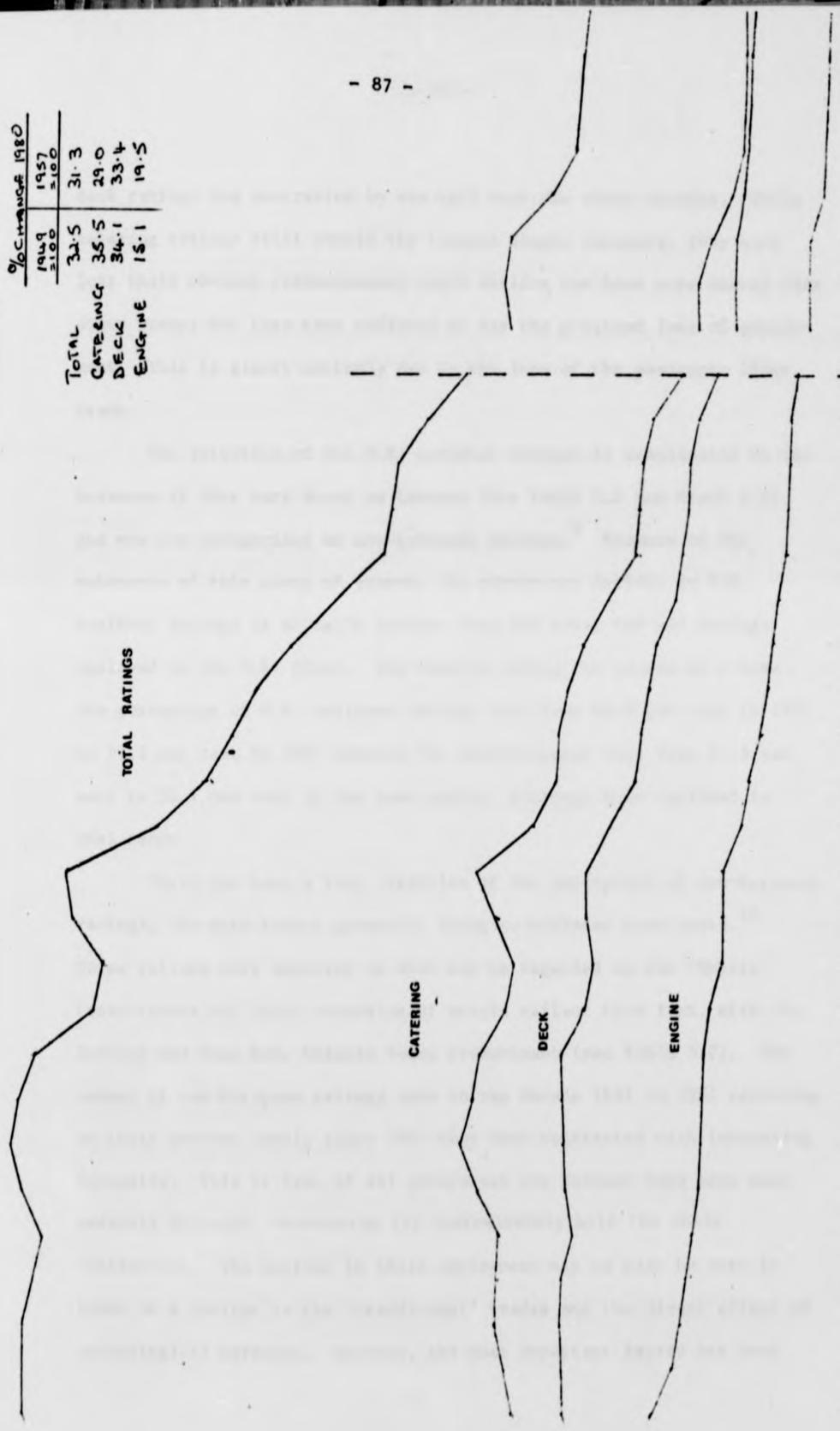
RADIO



1950 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 1980

GRAPH 5.4

NUMBER OF U.K. RATINGS BY TOTAL AND DEPARTMENT 1949 -1980



|          | % CHANGE 1980 |      |
|----------|---------------|------|
|          | 1949          | 1957 |
|          | 21.0          | 21.0 |
| TOTAL    | 32.5          | 31.3 |
| CATERING | 35.5          | 29.0 |
| DECK     | 34.1          | 33.4 |
| ENGINE   | 15.1          | 19.5 |

1950 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 1980

deck ratings had contracted by one half over the three decades. While catering ratings still remain the largest single category, they have lost their obvious predominance; their decline has been more uneven than other groups but they have suffered by far the greatest loss of employment. This is almost entirely due to the loss of the passenger liner trade.

The situation of the U.K. resident ratings is complicated by the presence of what were known as Lascars (see Table 5.1 and Graph 5.2) and are now categorised as non-European Ratings.<sup>9</sup> Because of the existence of this group of seamen, the percentage decline in U.K. resident ratings is actually greater than the total for all ratings employed in the U.K. fleet. For example taking the census as a base, the percentage of U.K. resident ratings fell from 68.8 per cent in 1951 to 61.1 per cent in 1971 whereas the non-Europeans rose from 27.5 per cent to 32.7 per cent in the same period, although both declined in real terms.

There has been a long tradition of the employment of non-European ratings, the main reason generally being to minimise crew costs.<sup>10</sup> These ratings were employed in what may be regarded as the 'Empire' cross-trades and their countries of origin reflect this fact, with the Indians and Hong Kong Chinese being predominant (see Table 5.2). The number of non-European ratings rose in the decade 1951 to 1961 returning to their pre-war level; since 1961 they have contracted with increasing intensity. This is true of all groups but the Indians have been most severely affected, accounting for approximately half the whole contraction. The decline in their employment may in part be seen in terms of a decline in the 'traditional' trades and the direct effect of technological advances. However, the most important factor has been

TABLE 5.2  
NUMBER OF NON EUROPEAN RATINGS 1951-1980

|              | 1951          | 1961          | 1966          | 1971          | 1973          | 1977              | 1980         |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
|              | (a)           | (a)           | (b)           | (a)           | (c)           | (d)               | (e)          |
| Indians      | -             | 24,376        | 18,600        | 14,682        | 14,000        | ) 11,550<br>(70%) | 4,862        |
| Pakistan     | -             | 4,118         | 4,200         | 3,286         | 1,600         |                   | 332          |
| Bangladesh   | -             | -             | -             | -             | 1,000         |                   | 665          |
| Hong Kong    | -             | 9,274         | 7,100         | 7,845         | )             | ) 3,960<br>(20%)  | 1,118        |
| Singapore    |               |               |               | )             | )             |                   | 817          |
| " Chinese    |               | 1,724         | -             | 555           | 6,300         | 85                |              |
| " Malays.    | -             | 29            | -             | 158           | )             |                   |              |
| West Africa  | -             | 2,042         | 1,500         | 1,037         | )             | 825<br>(5%)       | 43           |
| Others (e)   | -             | 281           | -             | 473           | ) 2,025       | 165<br>(1%)       | 1,068        |
| West Indies  | -             | 855           |               | 215           | ) -           | -                 | 985          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>41,957</b> | <b>43,250</b> | <b>31,400</b> | <b>29,191</b> | <b>24,925</b> | <b>16,500</b>     | <b>8,990</b> |

SOURCE:

- (a) Census.
- (b) Rochdale Commission.
- (c) British Shipping Federation.
- (d) Report of The Working Group on The Employment of Non-domiciled Seafarers. This did not give figures; merely %.
- (e) G.C. B.S. - private information.
- (f) Others includes Philipinos, (435) Seychelles, (520) South Africa, Zulus, (35) Gilbert and Ellis Island, (21) Koreans, (57) the figures in ( ) 1980.

the pressure on U.K. resident ratings. As the latter became aware of their own contracting job opportunities they also became more conscious of the extent to which non-Europeans might be regarded as depriving them of employment, particularly as the main reason for employing them has been to minimize cost.

The ratings' organization, the N.U.S., had an attitude of passive acceptance of this 'traditional' employment pattern until the mid-1960s. In 1965 they achieved a national agreement through the N.M.B. which provided:

- (i) no existing ships manned by United Kingdom-domiciled ratings shall change to non-domiciled ratings; and
- (ii) no new ship, or newly acquired ship, shall be manned by non-domiciled ratings without in each case the consent of the United Kingdom National Maritime Board.<sup>11</sup>

The traditional manning/trade concept remained but the managerial prerogative of British owners to man their ships with crews of whatever nationality they chose was curtailed to the extent that their intentions in this respect came under the scrutiny of the N.M.B. from 1965 onwards.<sup>12</sup>

In 1969 the N.M.B. implicitly recognized the claim of the N.U.S. that jobs on British ships were primarily the property of its members. Since then the N.U.S. attitude has hardened, due to the International Transport Workers Federation (I.T.F.) campaign for flag rates to be paid regardless of where the seaman is recruited, a campaign finding support among British and foreign dock workers and achieving some success, for in 1973 rates for A.B.'s signing non-U.K. articles were increased first to £32 and later to £48 per month. The criterion of 1969 was taken an important step further during the 1974 negotiations. If the job belonged to their members the N.U.S. argued, why were they

not recompensed for their loss? The shipowners took the point and agreed to pay a levy of £15 per annum to the union for each non-European seaman employed. This was in recognition of the fact that while the union was permitting non-union members to work in U.K. vessels it was receiving no compensation. The new agreement, which came into force in January 1975, has had an annual yield of some £300,000.

This revision must be seen as part of the long term strategy of the union. Firstly, to raise wage costs in such a way as to make the employment of non-European seamen less attractive, and to marginally close the differentials gap between these men and U.K. seamen. Secondly, if non-European seafarers are to be recruited to man British vessels, they should receive the same pay and conditions applicable to British seafarers. Thirdly, full N.U.S. membership for those seamen concerned will follow as a direct result of implementing the equal pay and conditions policy. The fulfilment of such a policy has resulted in a further decline in the employment of non-European ratings as Table 5.2 illustrates.

The discussion so far has been concerned with those seafarers, both non-European and U.K. resident, employed by the fleet as a whole. However, the U.K. fleet has not been affected evenly by competition and technological change. Some sectors have declined more rapidly than others and in the container, bulk carrier and tanker trades advantage has been taken of growth in vessel size and new methods of transportation. It might be expected, therefore, that this would result in a change in the balance of employment of seafarers between trades and type of vessel. Accurate up to date information on this pattern of employment is difficult to obtain. The only base which will indicate the long

term trends are the census figures, the limitations of which have already been discussed, and which do not provide a detailed analysis since they are concerned only with total seafarers, that is officers and ratings from all countries of origin. Furthermore, since the census is decadal the latest available statistics are for 1971 making it difficult to assess what has happened during the last ten years which have been very important for industrial relations in shipping. The only accessible evidence of trends during that period is provided by the research carried out into jobs at sea referred to above and, although this base differs from the census, it does provide a useful guide to current trends.

Consider first the census figures of all seafarers employed by type of vessel and department (see Table 5.3). As a percentage of the total seafarers, those employed in the passenger liners have fallen most, from 28 per cent in 1951 to 21 per cent in 1971, whereas the percentage employed in all dry cargo only fell 3 per cent in the same period from 59 per cent to 56 per cent. The tanker sector shows a contrary trend, rising from 13 per cent to 23 per cent. These changes took place, of course, against a background of a fall in total seafarers employed of some 44 per cent.

The various departments did not experience similar detailed trends. For example, on the census figures the deck department has contracted to the greatest extent in both percentage and numerical terms and rather surprisingly, in view of the demise of the large passenger liner, the catering department appears to have suffered least, while the engine room has declined by about 50 per cent. Table 5.4 shows the percentage change in distribution by department and type of vessel and this again illustrates the divergence of experience within

TABLE 5.3

NUMBER OF SEAMEN EMPLOYED BY GRADE AND VESSEL TYPE  
SELECTED YEARS

1951

| <u>Type of Vessel</u> | Passenger | Dry Cargo | Tankers |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <u>No. of Vessels</u> | 269       | 2,563     | 487     |
| <u>No. of Seamen</u>  | 43,211    | 89,749    | 19,705  |
| Deck                  | 10,339    | 42,639    | 9,197   |
| Engine                | 8,400     | 31,016    | 6,944   |
| Catering              | 24,472    | 16,094    | 3,564   |

1961

| <u>Type of Vessel</u> | Passenger | Cargo<br>Liners | Tramps | Tankers |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|--------|---------|
| <u>No. of Vessels</u> | 197       | 1,122           | 887    | 571     |
| <u>No. of Seamen</u>  | 35,933    | 52,137          | 22,657 | 25,725  |
| Deck                  | 7,939     | 23,706          | 11,395 | 11,615  |
| Engine                | 5,952     | 17,834          | 7,164  | 9,559   |
| Catering              | 22,042    | 10,597          | 4,098  | 4,551   |

1971

| <u>Type of Vessel</u> | Passenger | Container | Other<br>Cargo<br>Liners | Bulk<br>Carriers | Tramp | Tankers |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|------------------|-------|---------|
| <u>No. of Vessels</u> | 121       | 41        | 612                      | 198              | 461   | 510     |
| <u>No. of Seamen</u>  | 18,113    | 1,038     | 29,610                   | 7,866            | 8,737 | 9,486   |
| Deck                  | 3,685     | 393       | 11,872                   | 3,018            | 4,302 | 5,947   |
| Engine                | 2,729     | 298       | 10,393                   | 2,499            | 2,548 | 5,567   |
| Catering*             | 1,699     | 347       | 7,345                    | 2,349            | 1,887 | 7,972   |

SOURCE: Census of Seamen

\* Including General Purpose ratings.

TABLE 5.4

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION OF SEAMEN BY DEPARTMENT AND TRADE OF VESSEL 1951-1971

| <u>Department</u> | <u>Passenger<br/>Liner</u> | <u>All Dry<br/>Cargo<br/>Vessels</u> | <u>Tankers</u>   | <u>Total</u> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Deck              | -64                        | -54                                  | -35              | -56          |
| Engine            | -68                        | -49                                  | -20              | -48          |
| Catering          | -52                        | -26                                  | +55 <sup>a</sup> | -28          |
|                   | —                          | —                                    | —                | —            |
| Total             | -58                        | -50                                  | -1               | -44          |

SOURCE: Census of Seamen.

NOTE:

a. Including General Purpose Ratings.

the similar overall experience. While the engine room is the most severely affected in passenger liners followed by the deck department, the latter is the department which has contracted most in all dry cargo vessels. The tankers have shown the smallest fall in all departments and, indeed, in the case of the catering ratings there appears to be a very significant rise. These figures must, however, be treated with circumspection since in the census figures the category of the catering department includes those ratings who have been designated general purpose ratings and undertake general duties across departments, therefore detracting unrealistically from the numbers included in the other departments and falsely swelling the catering figures. The total change in percentage employed in tankers does, however, give a fairly accurate reflection of the trends in employment in that sector compared with the other two discussed.

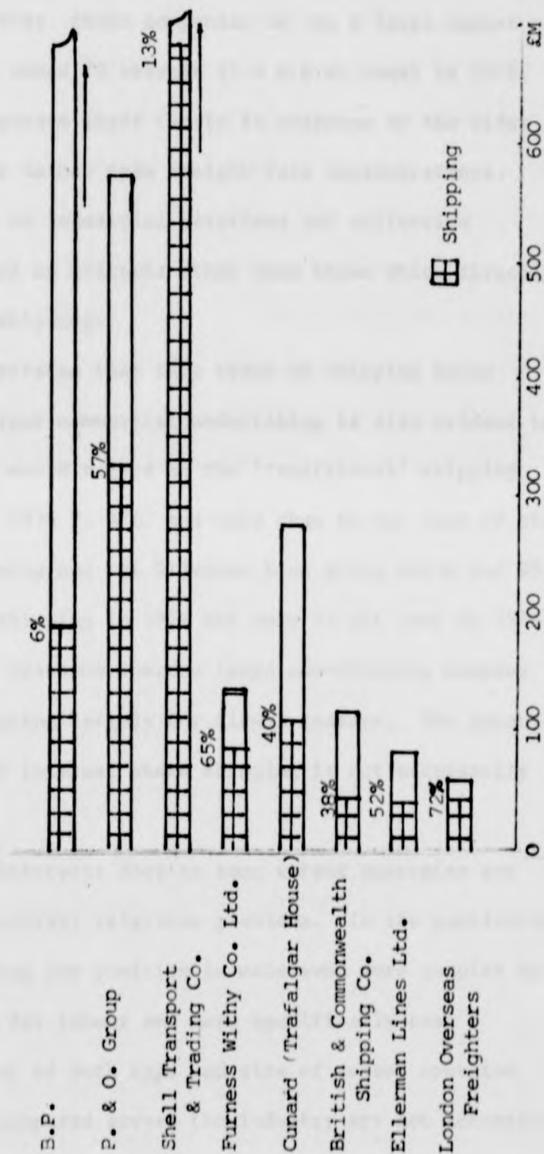
This trend appears to have continued throughout the 1970s. This view is supported by the 'Jobs at Sea' figures for the period 1972-77 which show that employment in passenger liners has continued to fall at a faster pace than that in all dry cargo while tankers have only lost a small percentage of jobs, mainly those for ratings.<sup>13</sup>

The tanker sector has, therefore, become increasingly important as an employer whereas dry cargo has developed a greater degree of specialization creating more variety of demand for labour in that sector. The growth of new methods of transporting dry cargo was very rapid and since in many respects they were breaking new ground the shipowners were able to take advantage of the latest technology. This, together with more intense competition throughout the industry, has tended to diversify the shipowners attitude to labour. Rather than pressure for unity over conditions, wages and qualifications, there is strong commercial pressure for individual rather than collective approaches to these issues.

The diversity of the shipowners' attitudes, which may exist within the same shipping group, arises out of two main developments, firstly the increasing specialization of vessel type and secondly the desire to spread the risk of such specialization. For this reason there has been a movement away from commitment to one type of shipping activity and in some cases shipping companies have developed interests outside the immediate maritime sphere. In addition industrial companies for whom shipping is a small but vital part of their production pattern have, as a result of specialization, found it feasible to develop their own shipping department.

A prime example are the large oil companies such as Shell and B.P. In the case of Shell, shipping represented only 13 per cent of their total fixed assets in 1976 and for B.P. it was as low as 6 per cent

**TABLE 5.5** FIXED ASSETS OF SOME MAJOR SHIPOWNERS 1976 £M  
 Divided into Shipping and Non-Shipping Activities



SOURCE: Annual Reports of respective companies 1976

(see Table 5.5). Nevertheless these companies do own a large amount of tonnage; for example, B.P. owned 78 vessels (7.6 M.D.W. tons) in 1976. These companies may well operate their fleets in response to the wider demands of the oil industry rather than freight rate considerations. Furthermore their attitude to industrial relations and collective bargaining may well be based on criteria other than those which directly affect or are relevant to shipping.

Table 5.5 also illustrates that this trend of shipping being merely a part of a much larger commercial undertaking is also evident in companies which the layman would regard as the 'traditional' shipping companies. For example in 1976 P. & O. had less than 60 per cent of their total fixed assets in shipping and the Ellerman Line group which had 99 per cent of its assets in shipping in 1971 had only 52 per cent in 1976. Cunard is an example of an instance where a large non-shipping company has become involved in shipping largely for fiscal reasons. The general trend of diversification of interest where shipping is not necessarily predominant has continued.

The wider range of interests does to some extent undermine any simplistic solution to industrial relations problems. In the particular area of collective bargaining the position is made even more complex by the extent to which demand for labour and more specifically cost structures differ in respect of both type and size of vessel operated. Cost figures which can be compared across the industry are not accessible over a long period and most of the statistics available are based on evidence collected for the Rochdale Committee of Inquiry. The growth of vessel size, specialized building, and the cost of finance have resulted in increased capital costs over the period. This has resulted in capital costs and depreciation accounting for something in the region

of 50 per cent of total costs. The acceleration in maritime technology has also influenced the economic life of tonnage. It was usual in the 1950s to write-off a liner or tramp in about 25 years and a tanker in 20 years. Today amortization is generally geared to 10 or 15 years, some companies having even lower estimates. This is a trend which serves to enlarge the capital cost element in a vessel's financial structure.

In such a heavily capitalized industry, labour costs are generally only a small proportion of total costs, and they appear to be contracting. Rochdale made some estimates of the magnitude of U.K. crew costs in different tonnage types, expressed as a proportion of total operating costs, which in this case include capital charges.

- i) For tankers and bulk carriers they may vary from 23 per cent at 15,000 deadweight tons to 6 per cent at 200,000 tons;
- ii) for container ships they may vary from 12 per cent for a small ship to 6 per cent for a large one;
- iii) for a typical cargo liner they may be around 12 per cent;
- iv) on small ships, which are more labour intensive, the proportions are generally much higher and may exceed 40 per cent; and
- v) passenger ships are also highly labour intensive, but the variations existing make it more difficult to quote any typical percentage.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to trade and vessel size crew costs are, of course, related to manning ratios. Here again the experience has not been uniform because not all trades can benefit to the same extent from economies of scale. Table 5.6 illustrates how manning ratios have altered over the period and this is a continuing trend. The massive capital commitment to new large vessels is in part related to the lowering of crew costs as a proportion of total costs; the large bulk carriers and tankers, with lower manning ratios per ton, radically reduce crew costs to less than 10 per cent of total costs. It appears that this percentage is reduced

TABLE 5.6

AVERAGE NUMBER OF SEAMEN FOR 1,000 G.R.T. 1951, 1961 and 1971

| Size of Group<br>000 G.E.T.    | Passenger Vessels  |                    | Dry Cargo <sup>a</sup> |            |               | Tankers            |            |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------------|------------|
|                                | 1961               | 1971               | Container Ships        |            | Bulk Carriers | 1961               | 1971       |
|                                |                    |                    | 1961                   | 1971       | 1971          |                    |            |
| Under 5                        | 17.2               | 18.5               | 10.9                   | 7.4        | -             | 10.9               | 10.8       |
| 5 Under 10                     | 11.7               | 13.4               | 5.9                    | 3.9        | 4.6           | 5.6                | 5.6        |
| 10 " 15                        | 10.9)              | 13.4               | 4.9 )                  | 2.5        | 2.7           | 3.9)               | 3.7        |
| 15 " 20                        | 13.0)              |                    | - )                    |            |               | 3.0)               |            |
| 20 " 25                        | 16.5)              | 18.6               | 2.2 )                  | 1.5        |               | 2.6)               | 2.1        |
| 25 <sup>b</sup> " 30           | 16.6)              |                    | - )                    |            |               | 2.1)               |            |
| 30 " 40                        |                    | 11.6               |                        | 0.9        | 1.4           |                    | 1.4        |
| 40 " 60                        |                    | 15.8               |                        |            | 1.0           |                    | 0.9        |
| 60 " 100                       |                    | 11.5               |                        |            | 0.6           |                    | 0.4        |
| 100+                           | -                  |                    |                        |            |               |                    | 0.4        |
| <b>All Vessels In Category</b> | <b>15.6</b>        | <b>16.1</b>        | <b>9.0</b>             | <b>2.3</b> | <b>2.1</b>    | <b>3.8</b>         | <b>1.6</b> |
| <b>All Vessels In Category</b> | <u><b>1951</b></u> | <u><b>1951</b></u> |                        |            |               | <u><b>1951</b></u> |            |
|                                | <b>16.0</b>        | <b>9.4</b>         |                        |            |               | <b>5.9</b>         |            |

NOTES:

a. The Dry Cargo Category of 1951 and 1961 was broken down into a number of categories in 1971, the most important have been selected for comparison.

b. 1961 all 25,000+.

N.B. Average all vessels in fleet.

1951 = 9.8      1961 = 7.0      1971 = 3.7

further, by one-fifth or a quarter in vessels manned by U.K. resident officers and Asian ratings. Presumably these mixed crews also lower crew costs in dry cargo vessels. In the typical dry cargo liner, crew costs are approximately 10 per cent of all costs, a figure substantially lower in cellular container vessels, a reduction once again closely related to unit size. At the other end of the crew cost spectrum is coastal shipping and passenger liners. Here the ratio of manning per ton is unavoidably high, hence labour costs are in the region of 40 per cent or higher in particular cases.

In an industry with such a large section of its costs dedicated to capital and depreciation payments, an analysis excluding these costs and concentrating only on operational costs and the crew complements of new vessels may be a more meaningful indicator of the relative importance of crew costs. The following estimates in Table 5.7 are for European based national flag vessels, of recent construction; to include older tonnage would require a considerably more complex calculation. Crew costs are defined here as wages, insurance, pension, leave and stand-by pay, victualling and transport costs, for both officers and ratings.

The table confirms the general point that labour costs decline in relation to the growth in vessel size. It also shows the extent to which the effect differs between trades and type of vessel. In the cargo liner trade the cost of operating and maintaining expensive and complex machinery and cargo storage equipment, and the generally higher speeds, are reflected in the high complement and proportionally higher crew costs. In tramp tonnage the need for cargo handling equipment and high maintenance costs make crew costs large. The very low administrative costs compared with liner tonnage give crew costs the appearance of being

TABLE 5.7  
CREW COST AS PROPORTION OF OPERATING COST  
IN RECENTLY BUILT VESSELS; END 1971

| Types  | Tonnage Ranges     | Complement | Cost of complement<br>as a % of operating<br>and maintenance<br>cost |
|--|--------------------|------------|--|
| <b>I. <u>Regular Trades</u></b>                  |                    |            |  |
| Cargo Liner                                      | 9,000 to 10,000    | 40         | 45%  |
| " "  | 15,000 to 17,000   | 43         | 47%  |
| Reefer   | 9,000 to 10,000    | 43         | 33%  |
| " "  | 15,000 to 17,000   | 47         | 33%  |
| Container Ship                                   | 9,000 to 10,000    | 37         | 38.5%  |
| " "  | 15,000 to 17,000   | 37         | 35%  |
| " "  | 30,000 to 33,000   | 40         | 24%  |
| <b>II. <u>Tramps and Bulk Carriers</u></b>       |                    |            |  |
| General Tramp                                    | 15,000 to 17,000   | 33         | 55%  |
| Bulk Carriers                                    | 22,000 to 25,000   | 33         | 47%  |
| " "  | 38,000 -           | 33         | 35%  |
| " "  | 75,000 to 80,000   | 42         | 31%  |
| <b>III. <u>Tankers and Combined Carriers</u></b> |                    |            |  |
| Tanker or O.B.O.                                 | 110,000 to 120,000 | 45         | 28%  |
| " " "  | 200,000 to 215,000 | 45         | 19%  |
| Tankers  | 225,000 to 250,000 | 39         | 17%  |

SOURCE: Westinform Shipping Report No. 299 July 1973. 'Manning the Merchant Fleet of World'.

disproportionately large. In bulk carriers and tankers the complement increases marginally with expanding unit size, while the manning ratio per ton falls steadily. Therefore crew costs as a percentage of operating costs fall steadily and, in the exceptionally large units, dramatically.

The specialization of capital is reflected in the need for increasingly specialized crews. In this respect the officer has been more directly affected than the rating since the carriage of dangerous cargoes in massive quantities requires officers with special skills to be responsible for them. More generally, there has been what may be regarded as a deterioration in working conditions. The development of container transport is perhaps one example of this with its regular runs and fast turn round which makes the opportunity of leisure in port much more limited and some tankers load and discharge without entering a conventional port. The extent to which this type of trade is regarded as disadvantageous in this respect is suggested by an advertisement for officers to join the Royal Fleet Auxiliary which states as an advantage of the job the fact that there are 'few fast turn rounds to mar your sightseeing'. The reduction in crew complement will, of course, increase the degree of social isolation experienced by the seafarer.

The restructuring of the U.K. shipping industry has involved a drastic contraction of demand for labour. The brunt of the fall in demand was taken by ratings with the result that there are now more officers than ratings in the labour force. The increased variety of vessel type and trade has created specific demands with in many cases an emphasis on qualifications and experience. This, of course, implies a long term commitment to the industry by the work force. These factors, together with the widening of operations to 'non-traditional' owners, would

suggest the need for individual approaches to particular manpower problems. Such an approach is contrary to the principles on which the N.M.B. is based; uniformity of action on the part of the employers and representation of the employees by grade of personnel. In addition it calls into question the extent to which the system of joint supply, based as it is on a degree of casualization, will provide the calibre of labour required.

NOTES

1. See Census of Seamen, 1961.
2. Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Shipping, Cmnd 4337 (HMSO, 1970), paras. 824-829 /Rochdale/.
3. See Appendix III(i).
4. See Central Manpower Supply to the Merchant Navy (Intermediate Report), Sealife Programme, 1978, Section 3.
5. See Appendix IV.
6. See Appendix III(ii).
7. See op.cit., Sealife, for discussion of fall back capacity.
8. See Appendix III(iii).
9. N.B. For the purposes of this discussion non-European ratings may be taken as equivalent to non-domiciled ratings.
10. See Report of the Working Group on the Employment of Non-domiciled Seafarers. Department of Trade, (HMSO, 1978) paras.1:8 and passim.
11. Minutes of the N.M.B. 1965 and N.M.B. Year Book 1966.
12. N.U.S. Press Statement 1st July 1973. For a similar statement see The Seaman, Vol. 31 No. 9 (September 1973).
13. See Appendix IV.
14. Rochdale, op.cit., para. 823.

## CHAPTER 6

### PAY

The most obvious product of industrial relations and, in particular, collective bargaining is pay agreements. The negotiation of wage rates has particular significance in the U.K. shipping industry since the maintenance of a uniform wage for ratings was seen as, and for most of the period under consideration has remained, central to the philosophy of the N.M.B. A uniform wage was the method whereby the unity of shipowners was ensured<sup>1</sup> and industrial peace encouraged. For many, pay is seen as the main product of the collective bargaining process. This may be particularly so in the shipping industry where the workforce is fragmented and where the Master assumes control over the running of the vessel and, therefore, the immediate working conditions over long periods of time. Furthermore, the failure of the collective bargaining machinery to fulfil the expectations of the employees in respect of pay is likely to lead to conflict. The measure of success for the individual is only partly the reward for his particular job; he will also be concerned with comparison between this and rates of other grades in the national industry, those employed in similar occupations ashore and his international competitors.

The 'success' of the N.M.B. is also important for the employer because of the relationship between wages and costs. While wages are not necessarily a large element in total cost they are vital since they are nationally determined whereas other costs are set internationally and labour costs may well be the factor in providing a shipowner with a competitive edge. The current movement by shipowners out of the U.K. flag into flags, or crews, of convenience now that the U.K. is a high wage country is proof of this.

All these factors make it essential to consider the extent to which pay has been influenced by or has influenced changes within the industry. The starting point of any examination of the industry's pay structure must be the experience of the U.K. officer and rating. However, any assessment of long term trends in seafarers' pay cannot be made in isolation with any validity. There must be comparison with trends in other industries and within the economy as a whole, since only trends specific to seafarers may be regarded as having direct links with that industry. In fact, in recent years the comparison with shore based workers has been regarded as increasingly important with the recognition that seafarers are not 'something apart'. For employers the rates paid will be seen in terms of costs, and these costs will be compared with those of their competitors who are not home based industries but foreign fleets. In this instance the important comparison is an international one and one which will also be of concern to the employee.

It would be misleading to assume that the existence of a centrally negotiated uniform wage makes the study of the pay of U.K. seafarers less complex than that of other industries. For example, in 1976/77 there were 157 basic rates quoted in the National Agreement for Engineering Officers and 69 for Ratings.<sup>2</sup> The multiplicity of rates arises because they not only relate to a variety of grades of personnel but also to types of vessel and trade. In addition, these basic rates do not take account of the enormous range of special payments which exist, quite apart from leave and overtime, for such jobs as cleaning tubes, dumping ashes, and cargo handling. This complexity of pay scales presents great problems for making any satisfactory comparison both over time and with other industries. In the event the only satisfactory criteria would appear to be basic rates thereby avoiding the variability of special payments of all kinds and allowing for some comparison across

industries. Furthermore, there is the problem of inflation when comparison is made over time.

The N.M.B. negotiations produce basic scales for all seafarers except Masters. While for ratings these scales are what is actually paid, for officers they are generally regarded as a minimum. Only a small minority of officers receive the N.M.B. rates; most shipping companies pay their own, higher, scale. The structure of these scales is closely related to that of the N.M.B. so that when an increase is negotiated in the Board it is the practice for a company's rates to be increased by the same amount in terms of cash. The consolidated basic rate includes compensation for working at week-ends and varies according to the tonnage of vessels, type of trade and the qualification the officer possesses.

The consolidated basic rate applies in respect of a standard working week but in practice these hours are generally exceeded and this is compensated for by two alternative agreements. The Section 'A' agreement, covering over 90 per cent of officers, includes continuity of pay in company employment, covering such items as sick pay, payment while on study leave, and occupational seniority pay for senior officers. Section 'B' agreements cover the remainder of officers. These provide direct compensatory pay or leave in lieu for senior officers; for other officers overtime payments or, by mutual consent, extra leave in lieu is received. Total leave entitlements under both agreements can be liquidated, up to a certain proportion, into cash, with the mutual consent of officers and shipowners. The amount of liquidation appears to increase with the seniority of the officer.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of ratings, the N.M.B. rates are, in general, those actually paid. Their basic wages are standard to conventionally manned vessels; where there is general purpose manning, there are special agreements which contain individual features relating to the company

and the trade in which it is involved. These are factors which produce various wage levels enhancing the basic minima of the N.M.B., even though these agreements are negotiated within the N.M.B. framework.

The other important additions to income for ratings are overtime and leave pay. The importance of overtime is illustrated by the comment that 'the union accepted that seamen were swayed into joining a vessel by the level of overtime offered. This was due to the low basic rate'.<sup>4</sup> During the period under discussion, a rating's leave was based on a small annual allowance plus the number of Sundays spent at sea, which were translated into days leave. The system was then changed to one based on an annual leave allowance. With some minor exceptions the seaman's qualifications for leave is related to the amount of time actually spent on Articles. Payment of ratings for leave is at the same rate as received while on Articles, supplemented by a food allowance. Should a crew member re-sign consecutive Articles his leave allowance is carried forward, payment for leave being made in a lump sum at the seafarers final signing off.

This type of 'lump sum' payment, which applies also to outstanding wages etc.,<sup>5</sup> is one of the major differences between foreign-going seamen and shore-workers, although the actual rate of pay is calculated on a monthly basis. Seamen on running agreement (Home Trade) are generally paid on a weekly basis.

From these complex scales of pay and allowances it is necessary to select grades of personnel who may be regarded as 'typical' in order to achieve a viable basis for comparison both across time and between industries. The generally accepted 'typical' grade in the case of ratings, and the one usually used in international comparison, is that of a fully qualified Able Seaman (A.B.).

The 'typical' officer presents a more difficult problem as he is not an accepted category in the same way as the A.B. To some extent the choice must be an arbitrary one and the N.M.B. basic scale for Second Navigation Officers with a certificate of rank in the largest category of foreign-going vessels has been selected. This scale would come within the middle range of officers' pay scales and would relate to men with a substantial degree of career commitment.

The pattern of the 'typical' officer and A.B.'s pay for the period under consideration, 1947-1980, is shown in Table 6.1. Two points emerge from the table. In the first place, negotiations appear until recently to have achieved a stability of scale with often two or three years between any substantial change; this is particularly noticeable in the early part of the period. From the N.M.B. minutes it would appear that the reason for this is that in one particular year the basic rate is agreed. The negotiations of the following two or three years are then concerned with the many 'additional' payments which go to make up earnings; the following year the basic rate would then again be the subject of negotiations. The trend towards annual negotiations has been a feature of all industries over the last two decades.

Secondly, the pay rates appear to have risen fairly steadily until 1965 when there is a rise of approximately 26 per cent for both grades. This was due to the restructuring of payments with the consolidation of many allowances into basic pay. Following this there was a period of stability which related in part to the consolidation and in part to the events of 1966;<sup>6</sup> for both officers and ratings the 1970s saw an acceleration of rate increases. This is, of course, due partly to inflation and partly to a direct improvement in levels of pay increases.

TABLE 6.1

BASIC MONTHLY RATES OF PAY OF THE 'TYPICAL' OFFICER  
AND A.B. 1947-1980

|      | <u>Typical Officer</u> | <u>Typical A.B.</u> |
|------|------------------------|---------------------|
|      | £                      | £                   |
| 1947 | 34.00                  | 24.00               |
| 48   | 34.00                  | 24.00               |
| 49   | 34.00                  | 24.00               |
| 1950 | 34.00                  | 24.00               |
| 51   | 38.00                  | 26.00               |
| 52   | 40.75                  | 28.00               |
| 53   | 40.75                  | 28.00               |
| 54   | 46.38                  | 29.50               |
| 55   | 46.38                  | 32.00               |
| 56   | 50.00                  | 34.00               |
| 57   | 50.00                  | 36.25               |
| 58   | 56.50                  | 38.00               |
| 59   | 56.50                  | 38.00               |
| 1960 | 62.50                  | 40.50               |
| 61   | 62.50                  | 43.00               |
| 62   | 65.15                  | 44.50               |
| 63   | 68.38                  | 44.50               |
| 64   | 71.88                  | 47.00               |
| 65   | 90.50                  | 59.38               |
| 66   | 90.50                  | 59.38               |
| 67   | 90.50                  | 59.38               |
| 68   | 90.50                  | 61.94               |
| 69   | 103.00                 | 61.94               |
| 1970 | 103.00                 | 73.75               |
| 71   | 138.45                 | 85.20               |
| 72   | 151.50                 | 93.90               |
| 73   | 162.90                 | 102.00              |
| 74   | 162.90                 | 105.38              |
| 75   | 201.45                 | 138.66 <sup>a</sup> |
| 76   | 262.35                 | 147.33              |
| 77   | 312.64                 | 147.33              |
| 78   | 343.90                 | 177.66              |
| 79   | 404.08                 | 196.81              |
| 1980 | 484.40                 | 274.08              |

SOURCE: N.M.B. Yearbooks.

a. A.B's changed in 1975 to weekly rate. Estimates obtained by multiplying by 52 and dividing by 12.

The basic scale for officers is less useful than that for the ratings since as has been stated, most companies do not pay N.M.B. scales. The only calculation of the differences between Company and N.M.B. rates, not including any compensation for overtime, was published by the National Board of Prices and Incomes in 1967; this is reproduced in Table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2  
COMPANY AND NATIONAL MARITIME BOARD MONTHLY PAY SCALES  
MAY, 1967

| Rank                       | Company<br>'Begin at'<br>rate | National<br>Maritime<br>Board<br>'Begin at'<br>rate | (2) as<br>percentage<br>of (3) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| (1)                        | (2)                           | (3)   | (4)                            |
| <b>Navigating Officers</b> |                               |   |                                |
|                            | £                             | £   | Per cent                       |
| 1st Officer                | 138                           | 115   | 120                            |
| 2nd Officer                | 103                           | 89  | 115                            |
| 3rd Officer                | 82                            | 70  | 117                            |
| 4th Officer                | 67                            | 61  | 110                            |
|                            |                               |   | <u>117</u>                     |
| <b>Engineer Officers</b>   |                               |   |                                |
|                            | £                             | £   | Per cent                       |
| Chief Engineer             | 200                           | 157   | 127                            |
| 2nd Engineer               | 131                           | 114   | 115                            |
| 3rd Engineer               | 96                            | 82  | 117                            |
| 4th Engineer               | 80                            | 67  | 119                            |
| 5th Engineer               | 72                            | 62  | 116                            |
|                            |                               |   | <u>119</u>                     |
|                            |                               | Average all Officers                                | <u>119</u>                     |

SOURCE: NBPI Inquiry.

These figures cannot be compared directly with the 'typical' officer, as defined above, and it should be noted that 'begin at' rates are used, thus underestimating what most officers would be earning. Nevertheless, this comparison does provide at least some measure of the extent to which N.M.B. scales have to be modified to reflect basic rates actually paid. From the table it will be seen that the rates received by the majority of officers are between 10 per cent and 27 per cent above that designated by the N.M.B. and the gap becomes greater the higher the rank. In respect of the 'typical' officer, the difference is 15 per cent. This is confirmed by a more recent ad hoc survey of companies advertisements (see Appendix V).

It is impossible to obtain any long run accurate assessment of officers' earnings as opposed to basic or company 'begin at' rates. However, in the early 1970s the General Council of British Shipping (GCBS) began to report on average earnings per calendar year and also to provide some basis of comparison with people ashore. The figures in Table 6.3 confirm the substantial increases shown in basic pay (Table 6.1).

The discrepancy between earnings and basic pay is, of course, explained in part by the fact that companies pay above N.M.B. rates for officers. In addition, the officers' earnings include compensation for the excessive hours worked at sea.

It may be seen, therefore, from this discussion of officers' pay that, despite the pressure on the industry, they do not appear to have suffered. In fact, in the crisis period of the 1970s they continued to gain substantial yearly increases and between 1973 and 1980 the average earnings of all officers rose by some 263 per cent and that of the 'typical' officer by 252 per cent. This movement must be seen against the relative stability of officers' jobs and the opportunity which they have of alternative employment in foreign fleets.

TABLE 6.3  
AVERAGE EARNINGS FOR OFFICERS 1974-1980

| Rank           | Average Earnings per Calendar Year<br>£ |      |      |       |       |
|----------------|---|------|------|-------|-------|
|                | 1973                                    | 1974 | 1976 | 1978  | 1980  |
| Master         | -                                       | -    | 8710 | 11401 | 15777 |
| Chief Officer  | -                                       | 4810 | 6365 | 8657  | 11771 |
| 1 NO (a)       | 3580                                    | -    | 6038 | 8275  | 11258 |
| 2 NO           | 2606                                    | 3607 | 4831 | 6722  | 9197  |
| 3 NO           | 2121                                    | 2845 | 3757 | 5351  | 7473  |
| 4 NO           | 1656                                    | 2896 | 3430 | 4929  | -     |
| Chief Engineer | 4759                                    | 6168 | 8063 | 10663 | 14644 |
| 1 EO (b)       | 3314                                    | -    | 6699 | 9129  | 14388 |
| 2 EO           | 2448                                    | 4471 | 5945 | 8149  | 11256 |
| 3 EO           | 2036                                    | 3375 | 4575 | 6399  | 8838  |
| 4 EO           | 1868                                    | 2771 | 3826 | 5439  | 7556  |
| All Officers   | 2761                                    | 3762 | 5430 | 7442  | 10030 |

SOURCE: Maritime Earnings Survey, British Shipping Federation and G.C.B.S.

NOTES:

- a. NO = Navigation Officer.
- b. EO = Engineer Officer

While for ratings there is little divergence from the N.M.B. rates in respect of the basic rates actually paid, there is a divergence between these basic rates and actual earnings which is mainly due to the massive amount of overtime worked. Table 6.4 shows the average gross weekly earnings of foreign-going ABs since 1965, together with an analysis of overtime pay and hours worked. The gross weekly earnings reflect similar movements to that seen in basic pay but the increase in earnings is far more substantial than in basic pay. The greater increase in average earnings is related to the increase in leave and overtime pay and the amount of overtime hours worked. For example, in 1965 leave and overtime payments constituted only 21.9 per cent of average earnings whereas in 1980 they accounted for 51.8 per cent.

TABLE 6.4  
AVERAGE GROSS WEEKLY EARNINGS FOREIGN GOING A.B. 1965-1980 (£)

| Year       | Consolidated Basic | Average Efficient Service Pay | Certificate Pay | Average Hours | Average Overtime | Overtime Pay | Leave Pay Per Week Served | Average Earnings (Including Leave Pay) |
|------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--|
| 965        | 12.33              | .97                           | .23             | 66. a         | 10.              | 3.0          | .80                       | 17.33                                  |
| 966        | 12.33              | .97                           | .23             | 66 b          | 18               | 5.40         | 2.13                      | 21.06                                  |
| 967        | 12.33              | .97                           | .23             | 66 c          | 26               | 7.80         | 2.13                      | 23.46                                  |
| 968        | 12.89              | .97                           | .23             | 65            | 25               | 7.75         | 2.30                      | 24.14                                  |
| 969        | 12.89              | .97                           | .23             | 65            | 25               | 9.0          | 2.30                      | 25.39                                  |
| 970        | 15.69              | 1.22                          | .24             | 66.2          | 26.2             | 11.31        | 2.70                      | 31.17                                  |
| 971        | 18.06              | 1.22                          | .24             | 66.2          | 26.2             | 13.00        | 3.08                      | 35.61                                  |
| 972        | 20.09              | 1.22                          | .24             | 66.2          | 26.2             | 14.54        | 3.11                      | 39.21                                  |
| 973        | 21.98              | 1.22                          | .24             | 66.2          | 26.2             | 15.85        | 3.74                      | 43.02                                  |
| 974        | 25.44              | 1.27                          | .24             | 67.5          | 27.9             | 19.53        | 4.51                      | 59.25                                  |
| 975        | 32.00              | 2.05                          | 1.0             | 67.5          | 27.9             | 25.11        | 7.51                      | 71.44                                  |
| 976 (Jan)  | 34.00              | 4.11                          | 1.0             | 67.5          | 27.9             | 26.64        | 7.97                      | 77.68                                  |
| 976 (July) | 34.00              | 4.11                          | 1.0             | 67.5          | 27.9             | 29.71        | 7.97                      | 81.13                                  |
| 977        | 34.00              | 4.11                          | 1.0             | 67.5          | 27.9             | 29.71        | 9.97                      | 82.18                                  |
| 978        | 41.72              | 4.11                          | 1.0             | 64.5          | 24.9             | 32.49        | 11.55                     | 97.40                                  |
| 979        | 45.65              | 4.25                          | 1.0             | 70.11         | 30.7             | 43.75        | 12.64                     | 113.34                                 |
| 980        | 63.25              | -                             | -               | 70.11         | 30.7             | 56.64        | 16.35                     | 140.8                                  |

SOURCE: Earnings Surveys, N.M.B. and Privately supplied information from the N.U.S.

NOTES:

- a. 56 hour week.
- b. 48 hour week.
- c. Begins 40 hour week.

These figures of course only relate to foreign-going ABs and the experience is not uniform throughout all trades. For example, the First Pearson Report 1966 stated 'the average weekly working time for a seaman in a foreign-going ship is 66 hours and in the home trade ship is 73.6 hours'.<sup>7</sup> This discrepancy was confirmed by a survey undertaken by the N.M.B. in 1978,<sup>8</sup> which showed that all ratings worked a weekly average of 32.02 hours overtime, with 61 per cent of all ratings working at least 30 hours. Since the average given in Table 6.4 shows a foreign-going AB working 24.9 hours overtime per week it would seem that the home trade ABs have a higher percentage of overtime. However, the fact that 'all ratings' include catering ratings must also be taken into account.

To the extent that the increased earnings are directly related to increased overtime, they may be seen as a reflection of increasing pressure on the shipowner. This has resulted in a desire to have more maintenance and repair work carried out at sea without the ship being stopped. In addition, it is generally cheaper to have this work done by seamen rather than shore workers, thus reducing cost. To some extent the higher overtime worked may also be related to smaller crew size which has resulted from technological change. On the other hand, the substantial increase in earnings and the fact that the AB is paid in a lump sum at the end of a voyage may explain the apparent lack of emphasis on basic pay. This is particularly so if the view is taken that:

It (overtime) benefits the seaman because usually he would rather have additional earnings than leisure time at sea.<sup>9</sup>

The AB has therefore made substantial gains in earnings but at the price of long hours. These gains have also been achieved against a background of considerable loss of job opportunity with less chance of alternative employment in other fleets than officers.

While all seafarers will be concerned with rates of remuneration within their industry, they will also be concerned with comparison with other industries. These comparisons will generally be with occupations requiring similar training, skill or status. Because of the nature of the industry, it is difficult to provide a basis for direct comparison. In the case of officers, the three groups chosen are non-manual employees; two in occupations which may be regarded as having some similarity such as transport, and where formal qualifications are usually required, as in national and local government. The third group, that of 'non-manual, all industries and services', places the 'typical' officer against a wider background as this group would be one of which he would consider himself a part (see Table 6.5).

Two rates are shown for the 'typical' officers. The first is the N.M.B. rate and the one shown in brackets includes the 15 per cent difference between these rates and actual company 'Begin At' rates as calculated in the Survey of the National Board for Prices and Incomes.<sup>10</sup> This provides a more realistic view of pay rates. The table must be considered in two distinct parts since the figures for 1970 are based on the New Earnings Survey and are not comparable to the figures before that date.

An examination of the period 1947 to 1970 shows that the 'typical' officer, using both N.M.B. and 'company' criteria, was receiving a rate of pay below that of similar occupations. In the period 1955 to 1970, where direct comparison may be made, using the assumed 'company' figures, the basic pay of officers was increased by 122 per cent whereas his counterpart in local government increased his basic pay by 146 per cent. In the period 1959 to 1970, his pay rose by 90 per cent in comparison with 126 per cent for transport managers, and that of all non-manual workers rose by 100 per cent. In real money terms the gap widens throughout the

period

TABLE 6.5

COMPARATIVE SALARIES OF THE 'TYPICAL' OFFICER<sup>a</sup> AND SELECTED NON  
MANUAL GROUPS /WEEKLY/ £

|      | 'Typical'<br>Officer        | Transport<br>Manager | General<br>Administrative<br>Local Govt. | All<br>Non Manual<br>Occupations | Index |
|------|-----------------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1947 | 7.84 <sup>b</sup><br>(9.01) |                      |  |                                  |       |
| 48   | 7.84<br>(9.01)              |                      |  |                                  |       |
| 49   | 7.84<br>(9.01)              |                      |  |                                  |       |
| 1950 | 7.84<br>(9.01)              |                      |  |                                  |       |
| 51   | 8.76<br>(10.07)             |                      |  |                                  |       |
| 52   | 9.26<br>(10.64)             |                      |  |                                  |       |
| 53   | 10.70<br>(12.30)            |                      |  |                                  |       |
| 54   | 10.70<br>(12.30)            |                      |  |                                  |       |
| 1955 | 10.70<br>(12.30)            |                      | 14.60                                    |                                  |       |
| 56   | 11.53<br>(13.25)            |                      | 15.50                                    |                                  |       |
| 57   | 11.53<br>(13.25)            |                      | 16.29                                    |                                  |       |
| 58   | 13.03<br>(14.98)            |                      | 16.74                                    |                                  |       |
| 59   | 13.03<br>(14.98)            | 15.37                | 18.80                                    | 18.03                            |       |
| 1960 | 14.42<br>(16.58)            | 17.71                | 18.87                                    | 19.10                            |       |
| 61   | 14.42<br>(16.58)            | 17.92                | 19.96                                    | 20.04                            |       |
| 62   | 15.04<br>(17.29)            | 19.0                 | 21.42                                    | 21.13                            |       |
| 63   | 15.78<br>(18.14)            | 21.9                 | 22.71                                    | 22.25                            |       |
| 64   | 16.60<br>(19.09)            | 22.75                | 23.39                                    | 23.53                            |       |

TABLE 6.5 (continued)

|      | 'Typical'<br>Officer | Transport<br>Manager | General<br>Administrative<br>Local Govt. | All<br>Non Manual<br>Occupations | Index |
|------|----------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1965 | 20.88<br>(24.01)     | 24.88                | 25.78                                    | 23.53                            |       |
| 66   | 20.88<br>(24.01)     | 26.47                | 26.69                                    | 26.69                            |       |
| 67   | 20.88<br>(24.01)     | 27.95                | 27.73                                    | 27.90                            |       |
| 68   | 20.88<br>(24.01)     | 29.76                | 29.11                                    | 29.77                            |       |
| 69   | 23.77<br>(27.33)     | 32.39                | 32.3                                     | 32.07                            |       |
| 1970 | 23.77<br>(27.33)     | 34.8                 | 36.0                                     | 36.12                            |       |

NEW EARNINGS SURVEY

|      |                   |       |       |       |
|------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1970 | 41.7 <sup>a</sup> | 32.6  | -     | 31.4  |
| 71   | 42.8              | 35.4  | -     | 34.4  |
| 72   | 47.3              | 39.2  | 40.9  | 38.5  |
| 73   | 47.9              | 45.8  | 44.1  | 42.8  |
| 74   | 53.4              | 50.9  | 61.7  | 48.5  |
| 1975 | 74.3              | 66.7  | 79.1  | 61.8  |
| 76   | 91.3              | 76.7  | 95.7  | 73.9  |
| 77   | 100.6             | 82.0  | 102.5 | 81.1  |
| 78   | 123.8             | 94.4  | 107.3 | 91.8  |
| 79   | 138.8             | 105.4 | 117.1 | 99.2  |
| 1980 | 165.3             | 136.3 | 154.6 | 127.7 |

SOURCES: N.M.B. Year Book.  
 British Labour Statistics - Historical Abstract 1886-1968.  
 British Labour Statistics Year-Books 1970.  
 New Earnings Survey 1970-1980.  
 All Department of Employment H.M.S.O.

NOTES:

- a. From 1970 onwards a Ships Officer as defined in the New Earnings Survey.
- b. Weekly rate estimated by multiplying monthly by 12 and dividing by 52.

In the period after 1970 it is more difficult to make a clear comparison in respect of the 'typical' officer as the New Earnings Survey implemented at that time, does not provide sufficient specific information. The ship's officers earnings are based on a 1 per cent sample of a wide range of personnel, including the shore staff of shipping companies, pilots, cadets and apprentices, and this distorts earnings, making them somewhat unrelated to the 'typical' officer. Furthermore, the figures include a large number of allowances as well as overtime on top of the basic rates. The only way of assessing the relationship of these figures to the earnings of the 'typical' officers is to compare them with the figures available in the Maritime Earnings Survey undertaken by the G.C.B.S. (Table 6.3). On this basis the New Earnings Survey would appear to underestimate the 'typical' officer's earnings by some £500 per year. They do, however, suggest that the officer maintained an improved position throughout the 1970s.

The same problems of providing a basis for comparison exist in the case of the ratings. Perhaps the most obvious comparison, not least for the rating himself, is with the dockers since it is not only an occupation which an AB might well enter on leaving the sea, but one with which he could well have close kinship and community ties. While government figures are available in respect of the basic rates for dock labourers, they give little or no indication of rates actually paid and even less of earnings. As has been pointed out in studies of dock labour, basic rates play a very small part in determining earnings.<sup>11</sup> This discrepancy is illustrated by comparing the quoted basic rate and the fall back guarantee; for example, in 1967-1968 the former was £11.08 while the latter was between £16 and £17. Furthermore, the average earnings of a London docker was £23.75 in 1967 and £42 by 1971 with some dockers earning up to £46 whereas the basic pay was £20.<sup>12</sup> This rendered any comparison meaningless.

The most directly comparable shore-based occupation in terms of working conditions, would seem to be that of long distance lorry driving since this involves absence from home and an atypical life style. In view of the relatively low basic rate of the AB it is useful to make a comparison with agricultural workers, the group most often cited in negotiations as representative of the low paid. Even when this decision is made problems still remain since they do not provide a basis of nationally negotiated rates. In the case of the AB the rates are not only nationally negotiated but they are those which are actually paid. The rates for those in road haulage are not negotiated on an industry basis but rather on a regional basis with groups of employers.<sup>13</sup> It is true that the rates for the agricultural worker are fixed by a National Board, but they only provide for a minimum wage. It has been suggested that the rationale for the Board is to ensure that a minimum is paid rather than providing a minimum of which higher rates are based. Further, the provision of accommodation, and payments in kind, distorts this analysis.

If the criteria are merely the basic rates shown in Table 6.6, the AB remains ahead of the two other groups throughout the whole period. Rather surprisingly, in view of their reputation as a group of low paid workers, the agricultural labourer maintains his position vis à vis the ratings, whereas the lorry driver appears to fall farther behind. However, the validity of this conclusion must be questioned when consideration is given to regional differences, overtime and other payments, both in money and kind. What the table highlights most clearly is the difficulty of providing an adequate basis for valid comparison, especially over time.

If the analysis is more broadly based to consider manual workers in all industries and services, the picture is considerably modified. The indices of basic rates earned by ABs and other manual workers, which uses

TABLE 6.6

BASIC WEEKLY RATES OF WAGES A.Bs AND OTHER SELECTED INDUSTRIES  
AND INDUSTRIAL INDEX [WEEKLY £]

| Year | AB's <sup>a</sup><br>Foreign-<br>Going | Road<br>Haulage<br>Driver<br>(Grade 1) | Agricultural<br>Labourer<br>[Wage Board] | A.B's Index<br>[1972 = 100] | All Industries <sup>b</sup><br>And Services Index<br>[1972 = 100] |
|------|--|--|--|-----------------------------|---|
| 1947 | 5.53                                   | 4.48                                   | 4.00                                     | 27.52                       | 25.7  |
| 48   | 5.53                                   | 4.80                                   | 4.50                                     | 27.52                       | 27.2  |
| 49   | 5.53                                   | 4.80                                   | 4.70                                     | 27.52                       | 27.9  |
| 1950 | 5.53                                   | 4.95                                   | 4.70                                     | 27.52                       | 28.4  |
| 51   | 6.00                                   | 5.30                                   | 4.70                                     | 29.86                       | 30.8  |
| 52   | 6.46                                   | 5.65                                   | 5.40                                     | 32.15                       | 33.4  |
| 53   | 6.46                                   | 5.90                                   | 5.65                                     | 32.15                       | 34.9  |
| 54   | 6.69                                   | 6.25                                   | 6.00                                     | 33.30                       | 36.4  |
| 1955 | 7.38                                   | 6.40                                   | 6.55                                     | 36.73                       | 38.9  |
| 56   | 7.84                                   | 6.90                                   | 6.75                                     | 39.02                       | 42.0  |
| 57   | 8.36                                   | 7.35                                   | 7.05                                     | 41.61                       | 44.1  |
| 58   | 8.76                                   | 7.90                                   | 7.05                                     | 43.60                       | 45.7  |
| 59   | 8.76                                   | 8.15                                   | 7.08                                     | 43.60                       | 46.9  |
| 1960 | 9.34                                   | 8.40                                   | 8.00                                     | 46.49                       | 48.1  |
| 61   | 9.51                                   | 8.90                                   | 8.45                                     | 47.33                       | 50.1  |
| 62   | 9.84                                   | 9.04                                   | 8.75                                     | 48.97                       | 51.9  |
| 63   | 9.84                                   | 9.26                                   | 9.15                                     | 48.97                       | 53.8  |
| 64   | 10.38                                  | 9.62                                   | 9.50                                     | 51.66                       | 56.4  |
| 1965 | 12.33                                  | 10.01                                  | 10.10                                    | 61.37                       | 58.8  |
| 66   | 12.33                                  | 10.61                                  | 10.50                                    | 61.33                       | 61.5  |
| 67   | 12.33                                  | 10.93                                  | 10.80                                    | 61.33                       | 63.9  |
| 68   | 12.89                                  | 10.93                                  | 11.55                                    | 64.16                       | 68.1  |
| 69   | 12.89                                  | 10.62                                  | 12.40                                    | 64.16                       | 71.7  |
| 1970 | 15.69                                  | 11.12                                  | 13.15                                    | 78.09                       | 78.8  |
| 71   | 18.06                                  | 16.20                                  | 14.80                                    | 89.89                       | 89.0  |
| 72   | 20.09                                  | 16.50                                  | 16.20                                    | 100.00                      | 101.3   |
| 73   | 21.98                                  | 18.00                                  | 19.50                                    | 109.40                      | 115.2   |
| 74   | 25.44                                  | 19.72                                  | 21.80                                    | 126.63                      | 138.0   |
| 1975 | 32.00                                  | 21.97                                  | 28.50                                    | 159.28                      | 178.7   |
| 76   | 34.00                                  | 21.97                                  | 30.50                                    | 169.23                      | 213.2   |
| 77   | 34.00                                  | 21.97                                  | 36.50                                    | 169.23                      | 227.3   |
| 78   | 41.72                                  | -                                      | 43.00                                    | 207.66                      | 259.3   |
| 79   | 45.65                                  | -                                      | 48.50                                    | 227.22                      | 298.1   |
| 1980 | 63.25                                  | -                                      | 50.00                                    | 314.83                      | 351.8   |

SOURCES: N.M.B. Year's Book.  
British Labour Statistics Historical Abstract 1887-1968.  
British Labour Statistics 1970.  
New Earning Survey 1970-80.  
All Department of Employment H.M.S.O.

NOTES:

- a. AB's Basic Consolidated Rate.
- b. Basic Weekly Wage Rates - Manual Workers.

1972 as the base year, show that, while initially the AB was in a better position, this position was lost in 1970. It was not regained until 1965 and 1966 with the consolidation of basic rates but this gain was only temporary. Since 1973 the position of the AB has, on this comparison, been declining. Moreover, one important point has to be made which modifies any conclusion drawn from a consideration of basic pay alone and that is the question of hours. The ratings worked a basic week of 56 hours until the early 1960s and did not achieve a 40 hour week until 1967.

The most realistic comparison for seafarers' wages is the international one and one very relevant to the seafarer and how he sees himself. Unfortunately, there are no published figures which would permit of a comparison for officers. However, internationally their rates are likely to bear the same relation to their fellow foreign officers as the ABs to their foreign counterparts. A limited international comparison of the position of the 'typical' AB is possible but again there are a number of qualifications which restrict the conclusions that may be drawn. For example, there are the problems of fluctuations in exchange rates, the difference in the standard of living in the individual countries and finally, the way in which the various basic rates are defined.

From Table 6.7 it may be seen that when ABs' rates in the U.K. are compared with those in other major maritime nations (Greece being representative of flags of convenience until 1970), they have declined throughout the period. By 1968 it is the lowest rate, in spite of the fact that consolidation had taken place in 1965; this was the point when their position began to improve nationally. For the remainder of the period only two fleets pay lower basic rates, Japan in 1970 and 1972, and Greece in 1970, 1972, 1976, 1977 and 1980. The figures for Japan must be treated with caution as their actual rates of pay are made up of

TABLE 6.7

A COMPARATIVE INDEX OF A.B.'s BASIC MONTHLY RATES  
1951 - 1980

| Country     | 1951 | 1958 | 1960 | 1968 | 1970 | 1972 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| U.K.        | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  | 100  |
| Japan       | 22   | 87   | -    | 104  | 76   | 78   | -    | 134  | 179  | 148  | 147  | 122  |
| Norway      | 77   | 119  | 103  | 141  | 184  | 135  | 157  | 131  | 272  | 230  | 225  | 167  |
| Greece      | 116  | 62   | 95   | 106  | 91   | 81   | 106  | 88   | 98   | 106  | 106  | 77   |
| Germany (W) | 74   | 83   | 77   | 118  | 105  | 119  | 128  | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Italy       | 80   | 132  | -    | 142  | -    | -    | 101  | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Netherlands | 90   | 104  | 93   | 146  | 142  | 127  | 151  | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| U.S.A.      | 369  | 379  | 334  | 328  | 297  | 232  | -    | 180  | 272  | 240  | 255  | 180  |
| Liberia     | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 180  | 161  | 155  | 119  |

SOURCE: I.L.O I.L.O I.T.F I.L.O I.T.F I.T.F I.T.F I.L.O Lloyds Lloyds Lloyds Lloyds

Lloyds - Lloyds Shipping Economist.  
For details see Appendix VI.

large special payments which make them almost totally unrelated to basic rates as paid in the U.K. It is interesting to note that Liberia, generally regarded as the epitome of the flag of convenience fleets, apparently has rates well above those of Greece and the U.K. and until 1980, Japan. If the U.S. is ignored, the U.K. had at the beginning of the period a wage rate considerably higher than its main competitors, whereas by the late 1970s it was below all major maritime nations. The point should be made, however, that by this time the traditional manning patterns had changed radically. The low costs crews now would be nationals from Taiwan, Korea and the Phillipines.

This relative loss of the position of the U.K. AB has been a gain on the employer's side of the collective bargaining. He is, of course, concerned with the relationship of his costs to those of his international competitors, particularly in relation to manning costs, not least because this is one of the few areas of total costs over which he has a direct influence, although he may be restricted by legislation as to the nationality

Crew costs ... are generally dictated by the nationality of the crew employed which in turn is usually a function of the flag of operation. Hence, ceteris parabus, the competitiveness of any one flag is determined by the level of crew costs associated with that flag.<sup>14</sup>

Shipowners are interested in national comparisons of reward in so far as they may provide the basis of a union's claim or effect recruitment and retention of labour, particularly in a full employment situation. Nevertheless the owners most important consideration will be his comparative position vis-a-vis his foreign competitors and since price (freight) rates are set internationally, an international comparison of manning costs is especially relevant. It must be pointed out that manning costs included a great deal more than the direct costs of basic rates; overtime etc. They will also include social insurance contributions, subsistence allowances, training costs, victualling, crew travel and welfare costs. Table 6.8 gives some estimates of international manning costs from a number of sources, which apart from 1975, which refers to short sea trades only, are more or less comparable.

In view of the wide range of items which may be included in manning costs, as discussed above, the comparison is limited since the definition of manning costs is not constant across all the sources. Neither do the figures give any indication of difference between trade vessel sizes and ratio of manning to tonnage. The table illustrates the general improvement in U.K.'s relative position from the ship operators point of view, with the exception of Italy and Japan, until the late 1970s. For example, in a report entitled British Flag: An Outline of its Scope and Advantages, a league table was published listing various maritime countries in order of their level of labour costs at July 1977, beginning with the highest:

U.S., France, Sweden, Denmark, West Germany, Norway, Belgium, Netherlands, Japan, Italy, Spain, Portuguese, United Kingdom (European Ratings), United Kingdom (Hong Kong Ratings), Hong Kong, Philippines, Greece, China, South Korea and Taiwan.

TABLE 6.8

SOME ESTIMATES OF COMPARATIVE MANNING COSTS

| Country     | 1949 | 1953 | 1960    | 1963/4             | 1971 | 1975 | 1978 |
|-------------|------|------|---------|--------------------|------|------|------|
| U.K.        | 100  | 100  | 100     | 100                | 100  | 100  | 100  |
| Italy       | 85   | 120  | -       | 80                 | 84   | -    | 130  |
| Netherlands | 122  | 117  | 100/108 | -                  | -    | -    | -    |
| Denmark     | 140  | 124  | 120/130 | -                  | -    | -    | 190  |
| Norway      | 98   | 111  | 104/111 | 97                 | -    | -    | 173  |
| Germany     | -    | -    | -       | 95                 | 131  | 126  | 182  |
| Greece      | 130  | -    | -       | 159 <sup>(a)</sup> | -    | -    | 65   |
| Japan       | -    | 97   | -       | 85                 | -    | -    | 160  |
| U.S.A.      | 288  | 456  | -       | 398                | -    | -    | 360  |
| Israel      | -    | -    | -       | -                  | 114  | -    | -    |
| Sweden      | -    | -    | -       | -                  | -    | 132  | -    |
| Finland     | -    | -    | -       | -                  | -    | 107  | -    |
|             | (1)  | (2)  | (1)     | (3)                | (4)  | (5)  | (6)  |

- SOURCES:
- (1) Sturmev G.S. British Shipping and World Competition p.314.
  - (2) House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries: Hearing on Maritime Administration and Federal Maritime Board; U.S.A. 1955 p.21.
  - (3) O'Loughlin C. The Economics of Sea Transport p.108.  
(a) On the face of it this figure would appear somewhat suspect.
  - (4) Cohen D. 'A Comparative Study of Seamen's Wages' Journal of Israel Shipping Research Institute, Vol. 3 No. 2. Aug. 1973.
  - (5) Ehrnrooth R.G. 'Finnish Shipping Today and Tomorrow' Unitas Economic Review Finland 2 1976 Vol. 48.
  - (6) Crew Costs: The Shipowners Dilemma? Galbraiths Shipping Advisory Services Ltd. (Dec.) 1979. (Based on comparisons on bulk carriers or tankers 32 man crew.)

However, since 1978 the position of the U.K. rating has altered as shown in the final column of Table 6.7. In the last three years U.K. crew pay has gone up by almost 55 per cent, Norwegian by 33 per cent and the Japanese by 15 per cent. One major element in the high percentage increase for the U.K. has been inflation as her inflation rate continues to exceed world levels. On this evidence it would appear that negotiating through the N.M.B. has kept the U.K. owner in a competitive position in regard to manning costs. This conclusion is confirmed by the AB's international comparative table above.

The initial conclusion to be drawn from this limited examination of wages is that the structure of payments for all personnel is extremely complex. This must complicate any negotiations and makes comparative analysis very difficult. Even if the structure had been simplified, comparison would not necessarily be facilitated since the work environment differs greatly from that experienced by shore-based employees.

It cannot be argued, however, that this precludes the necessity to find some basis for comparison. Whilst the seafarer may work in a different environment, he and his family live in the same society as shore-based employers. Finally, most wage claims are related to some comparative criteria and on all these grounds, therefore, the search for valid comparisons cannot be abandoned.

The general conclusion on the data considered in this chapter, is that from the national point of view both officers and ratings have improved their relative position since the mid-1960s. Internationally, their position has deteriorated; until the 1960s they were comparable with other maritime nations but since then their position has been considerably eroded. This movement has, of course, benefited the employers whose main concern is with international manning costs, since manning costs in U.K. registered vessels generally have experienced a relative decline over the last two decades. Thus, if wages are used as the criteria of

success, it would appear that the N.M.B. has served the shipping industry well with particular benefit to the employers because they operate in an international market.

It is extremely difficult to support any argument for a direct relationship between levels of pay or patterns of wage negotiations and technological change, not least because of the problem of isolating the dependent variables. Just because two events occur in close proximity does not mean they are necessarily linked as cause and effect. For example, while it is true that the improvements in pay of the late 1960s and in the 1970s happened at the same time as the new technology was being taken up by the British fleet, this is by no means the only factor which must be considered. At this time the industry as a whole was going through a period of reassessment following the overt conflict of 1966, and, while this did not have a direct relationship with either pay or specific technological change, it has to be seen in the total context of events affecting the industry. There may, however, be a case for seeing the improved rates as a recognition that the industry required a more experienced labour force with a high degree of career commitment<sup>15</sup> which does undoubtedly have a correlation with high technology.

NOTES

1. Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations 1965-1968 (Donovan Commission). Report. Cmnd 3623. London: HMSO, 1968. Para. 732 commented: 'This industry has in the past attached considerable importance to the negotiation of uniform rates of pay and the employers' association, the Shipping Federation, has expected individual companies to keep closely in line with them.'
2. N.M.B. Year Book 1976/7.
3. National Board for Prices and Incomes. Pay and Conditions of Merchant Navy Officers. Report No. 35. Cmnd 3302. London: HMSO, 1967. Para. 7.
4. Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. Board of Arbitration between the General Council of British Shipping and the National Union of Seamen. 1975. Para. 25, page 8.
5. See Chapter 8 below for discussion of 1966 strike.
6. First Report of Court of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Shipping Industry. Cmnd 3025. London: HMSO, 1966. Para. 7.
7. Report on the Ratings' Earnings Surveys, 1978. N.M.B. 1978, page 4.
8. Final Report of Court of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Shipping Industry (Pearson Report). Cmnd 3211. London: HMSO, 1967. Para. 98.
9. National Board for Prices and Incomes, op. cit., table 2 and paras. 9 and 10.
10. See M. Mellish, The Docks after Devlin, London: Heinemann, 1972, chapter 5; and D.F. Wilson, Dockers: The Impact of Industrial Change, London: Fontana/Collins, 1972, chapter 12 and Appendix 1.
11. ibid.
12. H.A. Clegg, The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, Oxford: Blackwell, 1979, page 39.
13. Galbraith's Shipping Advisory Service Limited, Crew Costs - The Shipowner's Dilemma, 1979, page 1.
14. Galbraith's Shipping Advisory Service Limited, Special Report, September 1977, Section 2 para. (iii).
15. See for further discussion Chapter 9.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE IMPACT OF CHANGE: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE RATINGS

The extent to which the expectations and demands of the employer and employee are successfully met by the process of collective bargaining is an extremely important element in industrial relations, particularly in respect of costs and rewards. Industrial relations however, encompasses a great deal of problem solving which never reaches the formal collective bargaining machinery, and may indeed do so only when industrial action of some kind is imminent. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the wider spectrum of industrial relations than the functioning of the N.M.B. in order to assess the extent of the impact of change within the shipping industry on its industrial relations.

The most obvious criterion to consider is the official strike since this is a measure of the failure of the whole problem-resolving structure. In this respect the N.M.B. has a reputation for achieving harmony within the industry, since the first official strike did not take place until 1966. Forty-five years of peace is certainly an achievement in an industry which had, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, based its industrial relations on conflict.

The 'degree of harmony' in the U.K. industry is even more remarkable in view of the fact that the maritime industry is regarded internationally as having a high propensity to strike.<sup>1</sup> Kerr and Segal, in their study of the strike proneness of industries in eleven countries, put forward an explanation of the high propensity of seafarers to strike which applies to other industrial groups such as miners and dockers.

The miners, the sailors, the longshoremen, loggers and, to a much lesser extent, the textile workers form isolated masses, almost a 'race apart'. They live in their own

separate communities, the coal patch, the ship, the waterfront district, the logging camp, the textile town. These communities have their own codes, myths, heroes and social standards. There are few neutrals in them to mediate the conflicts and dilute the mass. All people have grievances, but what is important is that all the members of each of these groups have the same grievances: industrial hazards or severe depression, unemployment or bad living conditions (which seem additionally evil because they are supplied by the employer), or low wages or intermittent work. And here is a case where the totality of common grievances, after they have been verbally shared, may be greater than the sum of the individual parts.<sup>2</sup>

The U.K. seamen are no exception to this analysis and in a period of rapid change the 'totality of common grievances' might be expected to have been intensified. Other variables, therefore, have to be considered to explain why the U.K. is an exception to the general conclusion. The most important variable may be of course the seafarers' legal position in respect of industrial action.<sup>3</sup>

A number of factors may have contributed to the absence of official strikes and counterbalanced the stress of industrial change and the problems it is likely to represent. First it is perhaps significant that by the beginning of the period under discussion the institutions of the industrial relations system were firmly established. Prior to this it is debatable as to what extent there was a realistic potential for conflict following the formation of the N.M.B. In the early years the participants were concerned with consolidating their new position and isolating any militant rivals.<sup>4</sup> In the 1930s, of course, the economic situation was hardly auspicious for successful strikes. This type of long term evolution of cooperation is seen by Walton and McKersie<sup>5</sup> as an important factor in problem solving. Furthermore, there is apt to be a long period for feeling out one another on the dimensions of trust, respect, etc. Walton and McKersie suggest that the effectiveness of (a) negotiations in general and (b) non-distributive bargaining in particular will be positively

related to the length of time the parties and the chief negotiators have been dealing with each other.<sup>6</sup>

In order to make an attempt to test this the records of the N.M.B. were examined to ascertain the length of service of negotiators on the employers and employees side of both the Sailors and Firemen's and Navigating Officers Panels of the National Maritime Board. Table 7.1 shows the numbers of years of experience of all those involved in negotiations in the particular years selected on a five year basis. 1947 was used rather than 1945 as this was the year in which the Established Service Scheme was implemented. The main points which emerge and which would appear to support the already available evidence are:

1. There is a high degree of stability of representation in all groups.
2. Since the selection is such that the length of service is measured in five year cycles (seven and three in respect of the 1940s) the figures would suggest that in any one year the percentage of new-comers would, in all probability, be below 50 per cent. The longest servers were the most senior officials although the tables do not specify individual membership.
3. The employers not only appear to have been the more stable group, in terms of years of service, but in the main they had more negotiators available to act in any one year. The reason for this may well be the fact that they were representing a more diverse group of interests than the employees' organizations.
4. It should be noted that throughout the period the officers' organizations were involved in amalgamations of one form or another and yet this apparently had no effect on the stability of their representation.

TABLE 7.1

## YEARS OF EXPERIENCE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE SAILORS AND FIREMEN'S PANEL FOR SELECTED YEARS 1921-1970

## Employees Representatives

| No. of Years on Panel | 1921% | 1925%   | 1930%   | 1935%   | 1940%  | 1947%  | 1950%  | 1955%  | 1960%   | 1965%   | 1970%   |
|-----------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| 0 - 4                 | 13    | 2 16.7  | 15 83.3 | 12 50.0 | 4 21.0 | 7 46.7 | 2 20.0 | 8 50.0 | 16 69.7 | 10 50.0 | 14 73.7 |
| 5 - 9                 |       | 10 83.3 |         | 9 37.5  | 6 31.6 | 3 20.0 | 3 30.0 | 3 18.7 | 5 21.7  | 7 35.0  | 3 15.7  |
| 10 - 14               |       |         | 3 16.7  |         | 7 36.9 | 4 26.6 | 1 10.0 | 3 18.7 | 1 4.3   | 3 15.0  | 1 5.3   |
| 15 - 19               |       |         |         | 3 12.5  | 2 10.5 | 1 6.7  | 3 30.0 | 2 12.6 |         |         | 1 5.3   |
| 20 - 24               |       |         |         |         |        |        | 1 10.0 |        | 1 4.3   |         |         |
| 25 - 30               |       |         |         |         |        |        |        |        |         |         |         |
| Total                 | 13    | 12 100  | 18 100  | 24 100  | 19 100 | 15 100 | 10 100 | 16 100 | 23 100  | 20 100  | 19 100  |

## Employers Representatives

| No. of Years on Panel | 1921% | 1925%  | 1930%  | 1935%   | 1940%   | 1947%   | 1950%   | 1955%   | 1960%   | 1965%   | 1970%   |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 0 - 4                 | 22    | 6 40.0 | 6 33.3 | 11 55.0 | 13 59.1 | 10 55.6 | 10 43.5 | 10 43.5 | 10 45.5 | 14 60.8 | 12 60.0 |
| 5 - 9                 |       | 9 60.0 | 4 22.2 | 3 15.0  | 4 18.2  | 4 22.2  | 6 26.1  | 7 30.4  | 4 18.2  | 2 8.8   | 5 25.0  |
| 10 - 14               |       |        | 8 44.5 | 6 30.0  | 3 13.6  | 3 16.7  | 4 17.4  | 3 13.1  | 2 9.1   | 4 17.5  | 1 5.0   |
| 15 - 19               |       |        |        |         | 2 9.1   | 1 5.5   | 2 8.7   | 2 8.7   | 3 13.6  | 1 4.3   | 2 10.0  |
| 20 - 24               |       |        |        |         |         |         | 1 4.3   | 1 4.3   | 2 9.1   | 1 4.3   |         |
| 25 - 29               |       |        |        |         |         |         |         | 1 4.3   | 1 4.5   |         |         |
| 30 - 34               |       |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Total                 | 22    | 15 100 | 18 100 | 20 100  | 22 100  | 18 100  | 23 100  | 23 100  | 22 100  | 23 100  | 20 100  |

TABLE 7.1 (continued)  
 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE NAVIGATING OFFICERS' PANEL FOR SELECTED YEARS 1930 - 1970

| Employees Representatives |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |  |  |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|--|
| No. of Years on Panel     | No. 1930% | No. 1935% | No. 1940% | No. 1947% | No. 1950% | No. 1955% | No. 1960% | No. 1965% | No. 1970% |  |  |
| 0 - 4                     | 8         | 5         | 8         | 4         | 5         | 3         | 13        | 13        | 12        |  |  |
| 5 - 9                     |           | 4         | 3         | 1         | 3         | 2         |           | 5         | 3         |  |  |
| 10 - 14                   |           |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 3         | 2         |           | 2         |  |  |
| 15 - 19                   |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |  |  |
| 20 - 24                   |           |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |  |  |
| 25 - 29                   |           |           |           |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1         |  |  |
| Total                     | 8         | 9         | 12        | 6         | 10        | 10        | 17        | 21        | 18        |  |  |

| Employers Representatives |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |  |  |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|--|
| No. of Years on Panel     | No. 1930% | No. 1935% | No. 1940% | No. 1947% | No. 1950% | No. 1955% | No. 1960% | No. 1965% | No. 1970% |  |  |
| 0 - 4                     | 8         | 9         | 14        | 9         | 17        | 5         | 7         | 15        | 9         |  |  |
| 5 - 9                     | 3         | 2         | 4         | 5         | 5         | 11        | 2         | 1         | 3         |  |  |
| 10 - 14                   | 9         |           | 2         | 2         | 3         | 3         | 5         | 1         | 1         |  |  |
| 15 - 19                   |           | 4         |           | 2         | 1         | 1         | 3         | 3         | 3         |  |  |
| 20 - 24                   |           |           | 1         |           | 2         | 1         | 2*        | 1         | 1         |  |  |
| 25 - 29                   |           |           |           |           |           | 1         |           | 1         | 1         |  |  |
| 30 - 34                   |           |           |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1         | 1         |  |  |
| Total                     | 20        | 15        | 21        | 18        | 28        | 21        | 20        | 22        | 12        |  |  |

1. Estimate of experience from other panels.

\* Not continuous service.

A further objective of the study was to identify the areas of discussion covered by the National Maritime Board Panels and, if possible, to detect any reflection of the changes the industry was undergoing during the period. The source for the following table (Table 7.2) is the N.M.B. Minutes for the years 1947, 1950, 1955, 1960, 1965 and 1970. 1947 was selected as the first year since it must be regarded as the first 'normal' year after the War. The categories shown cover all the major areas of discussion, where panels met jointly, indicated by brackets ( ) under the number of meetings, the item is entered under each appropriate panel. The category 'General' covers either very specific issues, i.e. one incident on a single vessel or such non-contentious issues as war memorials.

In the selected years the Full Board only met once, at the beginning of 1947, to discuss the Established Service Scheme; the Masters Panel did not meet until after 1964.<sup>7</sup> The N.M.B. does not have a formal timetable for convening meetings, but meets as and when it is felt necessary. For example, in 1955 the Navigating and Engineers Officers Panel met on three occasions whilst the Sailors and Firemen's and Catering Panel met six times, whereas in 1965 both Panels met only twice. These Panel meetings are not, of course, the only meetings held since some matters are referred to sub-committees; these are usually either to deal with specific single issues or to undertake groundwork before a final decision is given by the respective Panel. All areas of concern are, therefore, properly reflected in the following table in their frequency, if not their depth of discussion.

It is perhaps surprising to find that strikes are only discussed once, in 1947, although the selected years do in fact cover periods during which the industry was involved in considerable unofficial unrest.<sup>8</sup>

TABLE 7.2

## BREAKDOWN OF SUBJECT MATTER AND FREQUENCY OF DISCUSSION ON PANELS OF THE N.M.B. SELECTED YEARS 1947-1970

| Panels                     | 1947             |   | 1950             |   | 1955             |   | 1960             |   | 1965 (1)         |   | 1970                              |                                   |
|----------------------------|------------------|---|------------------|---|------------------|---|------------------|---|------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                            | Nav. & Eng. Off. | Radio Sailors & Off. Firemen & Catering | Nav. & Eng. Off. | Radio Sailors & Off. Firemen & Catering | Nav. & Eng. Off. | Radio Sailors & Off. Firemen & Catering | Nav. & Eng. Off. | Radio Sailors & Off. Firemen & Catering | Nav. & Eng. Off. | Radio Sailors & Off. Firemen & Catering | Joint Masters & Eng. & Radio Off. | Joint Masters & Eng. & Radio Off. |
| Rates of Pay               | 1                | 2                                       | 3                | 1                                       | 6                | 9                                       | 5                | 4                                       | 11               | 3                                       | 3                                 | 3                                 |
| Overtime                   |                  | 4                                       |                  | 4                                       | 2                | 1                                       | 1                | 1                                       | 1                | 6                                       | 2                                 | 10                                |
| Hours                      | 3                | 3                                       | 3                | 1                                       | 1                | 1                                       | 2                | 7                                       | 3                | 3                                       | 2                                 | 2                                 |
| Leave                      | 5                | 5                                       | 5                | 4                                       | 4                | 2                                       | 5                | 5                                       | 1                | 1                                       | 1                                 | 1                                 |
| Special Allowances         | 3                | 3                                       | 7                | 5                                       | 3                | 3                                       | 9                | 8                                       | 2                | 4                                       | 4                                 | 3                                 |
| Shorthand Money            | 1                |   | 1                | 1                                       |                  | 2                                       |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                                   |                                   |
| Travel Allowances          |                  | 1                                       |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                                   |                                   |
| Pension Fund and Sick Pay  | 2                | 1                                       | 3                | 2                                       | 1                | 3                                       | 2                |   | 4                | 3                                       |                                   |                                   |
| Manning                    |                  | 1                                       |                  | 1                                       | 1                | 2                                       | 1                |   |                  |   |                                   |                                   |
| Established Service Scheme |                  | 1                                       |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                  |   |                  | 1                                       |                                   | 2                                 |
| Strikes                    |                  | 1                                       |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                  |   |                  | 1                                       |                                   | 1                                 |
| Representatives            | 3                | 1                                       | 1                | 1                                       | 1                | 2                                       | 1                |   | 1                | 1                                       | 1                                 | 2                                 |
| Seniority                  |                  |   |                  |   |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                  |   |                                   |                                   |
| Accommodation              |                  | 2                                       |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                                   | 2                                 |
| Medical Examinations       |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                                   |                                   |
| Conditions of Service      | 1                |   | 2                | 1                                       | 2                | 2                                       | 1                |   | 3                | 1                                       | 1                                 | 1                                 |
| District Panels            |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                                   | 3                                 |
| Training and Recruitment   |                  | 1                                       |                  |   |                  | 2                                       |                  |   |                  |   |                                   | 1                                 |
| Discipline                 |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   | 1                |   |                  |   |                                   | 1                                 |
| General                    | 1                | 2                                       | 6                | 3                                       | 6                | 5                                       | 5                |   | 6                | 6                                       | 2                                 | 2                                 |
| Closed Shop                |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                                   | 2                                 |
| Negotiating Procedure      |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |                                   | 2                                 |

No. of Meetings

(1)

Joint Masters Panel in existence in 1965 but did not meet.

1 3 1 5(4) 6(4) 7(3) 3(2) 4(2) 4 4(1) 4(1) 4 2 2 5(2) 2 4(2) 5 4

Furthermore, in an industry where discipline is a bone of contention, it was only discussed four times in the sample. On the other hand there appears to have been a preoccupation with special allowances, to such an extent that it was commented on in the report of the Prices and Incomes Board where it was stated that 'They seem to us to show a greater zeal for securing a differential payment for every minor factor affecting an officers conditions of work than for securing a pay progression generally in keeping with progress in an officers career'.<sup>9</sup> Although this reference was specifically to officers, it holds true for all grades.

What does emerge is the similarity of the subject matter of discussion to what would be expected from any collective bargaining machinery. Furthermore, there is no indication in this sample of any shift of emphasis, or that the pressures under which the industry was operating produced new areas for negotiation. As a matter of interest Table 7.3 below, shows a similar analysis made of 1921 and this gives some indication of the stability of the range of topics over time.

The study of the N.M.B. minutes, therefore, gives little indication of the changes the industry has undergone and would appear to support the findings of Walton and McKersie. From this the conclusion could be drawn that the changes had not placed any strain on the collective bargaining structure and the participant organizations. A conclusion given credence by the lack of official strikes until 1966. What must be questioned is the assumption that the apparently unaltered functioning of the N.M.B. and the absence of official strikes are sufficient criteria on which to judge the effects of change. This, however, implies a limited view of industrial relations. The first to experience the impact of change will be the individual and his representative organization and

TABLE 7.3  
ANALYSIS OF CASES AND CAUSES DEALT WITH DURING YEAR  
ENDED 31 DECEMBER, 1921

| Subject                | National<br>Maritime<br>Board | Masters'<br>Panel | Navigating<br>Officers'<br>Panel | Engineer<br>Officers'<br>Panel | Sailors'<br>and<br>Firemen's<br>Panel | Catering<br>Department<br>Panel |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Rates of Pay           | 3                             | 7                 | 11                               | 26                             | 20                                    | 3                               |
| Overtime               | 12                            | -                 | 8                                | 17                             | 84                                    | 12                              |
| Annual Leave           | -                             | 1                 | 4                                | 19                             | -                                     | -                               |
| Accommodation          | -                             | -                 | 2                                | -                              | -                                     | 2                               |
| Bed and Bedding        | -                             | -                 | 1                                | 1                              | 3                                     | -                               |
| Heavy Ashes            | 1                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 14                                    | -                               |
| Tube Money             | 1                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 4                                     | -                               |
| Railway Fares          | -                             | -                 | 1                                | 1                              | 5                                     | 1                               |
| Manning                | 1                             | -                 | 1                                | -                              | 13                                    | -                               |
| Port Pay off Articles  | -                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 7                                     | -                               |
| Shorthand Money        | 1                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 6                                     | -                               |
| Bonuses                | -                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 3                                     | -                               |
| Runs                   | 2                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 9                                     | -                               |
| Representation         | 1                             | -                 | -                                | 1                              | 1                                     | 1                               |
| Subsistence Allowance  | -                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 1                                     | 1                               |
| Medical Examination    | -                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 3                                     | -                               |
| Tobacco Prices         | -                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 1                                     | 1                               |
| Registration of Seamen | 1                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 1                                     | -                               |
| Desertions, U.S.A.     | -                             | 1                 | -                                | -                              | -                                     | -                               |
| Pilotage               | -                             | 2                 | -                                | -                              | -                                     | -                               |
| Joint Supply System    | -                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | 2                                     | -                               |
| Publications           | 1                             | -                 | -                                | -                              | -                                     | 1                               |
| General                | -                             | 1                 | 2                                | 5                              | 16                                    | 6                               |
|                        | 24                            | 12                | 30                               | 70                             | 193                                   | 28                              |

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SOURCE: Report of the Working of the National Maritime Board 1920.

N.B. Tube money, port pay off articles, shorthand money, bonuses, runs and subsistence allowances would appear as special payments in Table 7.2.

it is at this level that manifestations of stress in industrial relationships will first occur. Only if the problems which arise cannot be satisfactorily resolved will they be reflected significantly in the collective bargaining machinery. In this respect unofficial agitation is as important to the analysis as official action, for the former indicates not only dissatisfaction with collective bargaining but also is an explicit statement of dissatisfaction with the particular representative organization. It must be remembered that in the maritime industry official strike action is severely inhibited legally, and seafarers do not share the same freedom as most other workers in this respect. The seafarer tends to express his discontent in what is perhaps regarded as 'traditional' behaviour, that is, excessive drinking and carousing. In addition to this, the high turnover of labour undoubtedly highlights discontent which the individual solves simply by leaving the industry.<sup>10</sup>

The lack of formal reference to active discontent by the N.M.B. ignores an important aspect of maritime industrial relations between 1946 and 1966 since during that period there were a number of unofficial strikes among groups of ratings. Furthermore, the N.U.S. faced considerable criticism from its members and extensive pressure for reform. The N.M.B. may well have avoided discussion of these issues because they would have been regarded as the private concern of the N.U.S. rather than the collective responsibility of the N.M.B.

Dissatisfaction among the ratings became evident immediately after the Second World War. In part this was due to the changed social and economic climate; there was a desire not to return to pre-war conditions and a greater individual expectation particularly in view of the commitment to full employment. There continued to be underlying discontent

related to developments in industrial relations practice ashore, such as plant bargaining, and, more directly in the later part of the period, with the contraction in job opportunities.

Immediately following the end of the war the industry was concerned with restructuring the system of joint supply of labour to meet peacetime needs and to replace the Merchant Navy Reserve Pool. The Established Service Scheme was instituted on 1st April 1947. The Scheme aimed at preventing, to some degree, a return of the pre-war casual employment by enabling seafarers to look to the Merchant Marine to offer them a stable and attractive career, greater regularity of employment and income, and give shipping companies efficient, reliable personnel to man and maintain their ships at sea and in port.<sup>11</sup>

The Scheme designated two categories of registered seamen: 'unestablished' - those who would remain essentially casual workers and the 'established' seaman, who in return for accepting a two year, renewable either 'Company' or 'General Service' contract, was given preference of employment, and paid in addition to unemployment benefit, while awaiting employment between ships. In this way the employers' flexibility to respond to changes in demand was preserved. The N.M.B. had overall control of the Scheme, but the day to day administration was left to the Shipping Federation, known in this instance as the 'Administration'. The Scheme superimposed on the Merchant Shipping Act a new disciplinary procedure for all registered seamen. Any act of misconduct, should the Master so desire, could bring a seaman before a disciplinary committee in the larger ports. These consist of three representatives, one from the Administration, one shipowner, and one from the seaman's union or association. The Committee's ultimate sanction is denial of further employment in the industry.<sup>12</sup>

The introduction of the E.S. Scheme was part of a larger package, including a restructuring of the wage payment system for ratings. As usual, taking the Able Seaman's (A.B.) rate, in this particular case the most contentious, the basic monthly rate was £14 plus a war risk payment of £10, the latter ceasing with the ending of the Merchant Navy Pool. The N.M.B. negotiations produced a basic rate of £20 per month, and introduced a new system of 'efficient service pay' of £1 a month, for each year in the industry after the first four, to a maximum of £24. This was described as an incentive to seamen to remain in the industry and was later to become a factor in the unrest. A clause was included in the new agreement ensuring no loss of pay to any seaman re-entering the industry who had served during the last 8 years. The last date for registering to avoid such a loss was 1 October.<sup>13</sup> Many claims were made that with the earlier ending of the Essential Work Order, numerous seamen had temporarily left the industry; quite normal practice under casual labour conditions. On returning they found their wage rates unrelated to their experience or skill. This was an important element in the dissatisfaction with the new agreement which resulted in a large indoor meeting being held in Liverpool on 15 October 1947.<sup>14</sup>

At this meeting a committee was elected, later entitled the 'Merseyside Seamen's Rank and File Committee'. There was also a unanimous call for a strike beginning on 25 October and a table of demands was drawn up in the form of a Seamen's Charter. Most of this was in direct opposition to the E.S. Scheme, with its employers' control, preference of employment, and the new efficiency payment. The Charter basically set out four demands: a unified 'pool' system for all seamen, i.e. no 'contract' group; 80 per cent of wages whilst waiting for a ship; maximum basic rate for all seamen according to their rating; a system of rating hiring to be based on the principle of 'first ashore,

first afloat'. All this was to be constructed around a union operated hiring hall, on the U.S.A. or New Zealand model. There was also a demand to suspend the rating training scheme, as they suspected an oversupply of seamen, and a call for some form of ship shop steward, or delegate. The designers of the Charter further questioned the need for the new disciplinary procedures and complained of its undemocratic nature.<sup>15</sup> The committees consisted of two shipowners representatives, and only one union official. An imbalance compounded in the case of disagreement by the fact that reference should be made to the Administration as the final arbiter. Finally, the N.U.S. was castigated for failing to present their interests with sufficient vigour. Representatives of the 'Rank and File Committee' were despatched to other major ports, the result being only minor sporadic stoppages in Manchester, Hull, Glasgow and latterly London and Southampton. The dispute was thus almost totally concentrated in Liverpool. The stoppage of two large Canadian Pacific liners, the Empress of Canada and the troopship, Empress of Scotland, gave the dispute impetus. As did press reports of pickets lying on the railway lines to prevent a train carrying some fifty 'loyal' N.U.S. members past the pickets into the dock system.<sup>16</sup>

By 29 October 18 ships were held up in Birkenhead and Liverpool<sup>17</sup> although later the Mersey District Secretary of the N.U.S. was to claim the strike committee 'only succeeded in persuading 483 men to come out on strike in Liverpool. That, my friends, is the number of men that were required to come from other ports to man our ships fully'.<sup>18</sup> Within a week much of the initial enthusiasm had waned and it appeared that the strike would quietly fade away. Momentum was regained when two of the strike leaders persuaded over 200 of the Queen Mary's crew in Southampton to join the dispute. The N.U.S. had remained aloof,

apart from either claiming the strike was over, or condemning it. The N.U.S. National Organiser, for example, claimed that the Liverpool seamen had 'been used as tools in the furtherance of a communistic attempt to hold British shipping to ransom and thus impair the nation's efforts to overcome its economic difficulties'.<sup>19</sup> Union officials were apprehensive about the possibility of the wide press coverage given to the Queen Mary's failure to sail regenerating the dispute. So the N.U.S. Acting General Secretary, Thomas Yates, went down to Southampton to meet the strike leaders on the quay. After some discussion it was agreed to begin negotiations on the strikers' demands.<sup>20</sup> Similar meetings were held in Liverpool, particular emphasis being placed on the revision of the E.S. Scheme. The following day, 6 November, the strike ended with a victory parade in Liverpool of, it is claimed, some 7,000 strikers. The Rank and File Committee claimed that 'when the Queen Mary's crew walked ashore and set off the biggest firework in N.U.S. history, Mr. Tom Yates [was forced] ..... into accepting Merseyside Seamen's Rank and File Committee's proposals to end the strike'.<sup>21</sup> Although the strike was over, pressure remained on the N.U.S. In order to prevent further stoppages, Tom Yates called a special meeting at N.U.S. headquarters where the ordinary members pressed again for modifications to the Established Service Scheme. Whilst this was apparently conceded at the time, no modifications were in fact made.

Three unofficial organizations emerged during the strike of which the Merseyside Seamen's Rank and File Committee was the most important. They saw their future policy as

First, that we must continue the fight in the most vigorous manner possible by keeping our Union books clear, in order that we may raise our voices inside the N.U.S.

That we must fight to get Rank and File leaders from all Ports on the Executive Council of the N.U.S.

That Rank and File Committees must be set up on all ships in order that the solidarity and determination displayed in the last two months is maintained.<sup>22</sup>

Whilst the strike was apparently unsuccessful, its unofficial nature represented a threat to the union although they attempted to minimize its importance. They were not prepared to recognize the possibility that it might have any widespread support among the membership and saw unofficial action as being organized by 'a very efficient Communist minority'.<sup>23</sup> There is no doubt that this was to some extent true but it is difficult to know whether the Communist influence was internal or external to the Rank and File Committee. The lasting effect of this was that the union became one of the leading British anti-Communist Trade Unions. Their sensitivity to and fear of any Communist influence meant that future questions of official policy were immediately stamped as Communist. In this respect it is interesting to note that unofficial stoppages were discussed in the General Secretary's Report under Communist Infiltration when it was stated that 'Ringleaders in such stoppages would be dealt with severely'.<sup>24</sup>

The one issue in the Seamen's Charter of 1947 which remained alive was that of shipboard representatives. This in fact was an issue that pre-dated the strike and was perhaps part of the general concern in British industry in the post-war period, with shop stewards. At the 1945 Annual General Meeting, resolutions were put forward concerning the appointment of ships delegates or committees but they met with little success. They were seen as 'nothing but an attempt to undermine the work of the union'<sup>25</sup> 'misleading the rest of the members of the crew'<sup>26</sup> whilst one of the Assistant General Secretaries (later to become the General Secretary) stated 'an unofficial committee could do a good job

but the moment it becomes an official committee, it is dangerous'.<sup>27</sup> The matter was remitted to the Executive Committee. At the following AGM, the matter was raised again but the meeting was informed that it was to be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting.<sup>28</sup>

In the context of the 1947 stoppage, the discussion of shipboard representatives at the 1948 Annual General Meeting is particularly relevant. When the matter came up for discussion, three main arguments were put forward by the officials as to the advisability and feasibility of ships delegates. Firstly, they were unnecessary in view of the presence of experienced officials outside the U.K. in places such as Antwerp, Rotterdam, Malta and New York; secondly, as there are 3000 vessels in the fleet, such a scheme would necessitate approximately nine thousand delegates; and finally 'Power was likely to get into the hands of the wrong people'.<sup>29</sup> The resolution on this occasion was defeated by 71 to 12. This question of power was perhaps the one that concerned the union most and the issue was raised again in 1949<sup>30</sup> and in 1951 when it is significant that the General Secretary, replying to a comment concerning the success of shop stewards in shore-based industry, said 'You can control shop stewards ashore'.<sup>31</sup>

The question does not emerge again for serious consideration until the unofficial strike of 1955 when it was included as one of the demands of the strikers. It is difficult to find any one particular cause of the 'unrest' among ratings in that year but the main stoppage was the last of several smaller incidents and its length and the response it engendered does suggest some wider underlying discontent. There is no doubt this was related in part to the manning of, and hours of work in, passenger liners which were coming under commercial pressure in the North Atlantic. Furthermore, individual seafarers were increasingly

prepared to attempt to settle issues at plant level rather than refer back to the union. In March, for example, the crew of the Queen of Bermuda engaged permanently in the passenger trade between New York and Hamilton, Bermuda, held an on-board meeting. During this a committee of six was elected to begin negotiations with the owners for a United States coast cost-of-living allowance. On approaching the Master, the six were dismissed as agitators, three were later reinstated. With the ship's arrival in New York, 210 of the crew walked ashore in protest at the dismissal of their three colleagues. All were promptly dismissed by the New York director of the company, the vessel sailing without passengers. The director told the press that 'There is no reason for negotiation with the men, we will have no mob rule. They are finished. This is not a strike. They deserted the ship. They are unemployed',<sup>32</sup> Discussions followed with Consular officials and the New York delegate of the N.U.S. The Company, after some delay, agreed to reinstate a majority of the men. A minority, some 70, elected to return to the U.K. The three committee men were not reinstated and no cost-of-living allowance was conceded.

There was also an incident on board the Cunard liner 'Georgio' engaged in the emigrant trade from Liverpool to Australia. On 14 May, about 100 of the catering crew walked ashore in protest at undermanning in the dining rooms. The men were particularly incensed by a notice posted on board asking passengers to volunteer as waiters during the voyage. Cunard did not press the issue, signed on additional staff and the vessel sailed after half a day's delay. A similar incident of undermanning occurred on board the 'Asconia' on 31 May, which was to provide the initial impetus to an unofficial dispute lasting four weeks, causing the loss of some 25,000 working days, although it is officially

estimated that only some 1,700 seamen were involved.<sup>33</sup>

Some 180 of the Asconia's crew, mainly from the catering department, walked ashore three hours before the vessel was due to sail for Montreal and Quebec. They complained of undermanning and demanded a revision of working hours, which were 70 per week before overtime. Further Pierhead meetings were called for 6.45 a.m. the following morning and at 10 a.m. in Huskison Dock. The latter was attended by some 200 or more seamen from four other liners docked in Liverpool. At a meeting held the same evening, a seven man committee, including representatives from all the ships involved, was elected. An N.U.S. official who appealed to the men to return to their ship and allow the normal negotiation of their grievance to take place received a less than sympathetic hearing. By 3 June, the strikers had agreed on a six point charter including a reduction in working hours to 44, regular meal hours, overtime for weekend watches, better living conditions, ships to be inspected regularly by union officials, recognized ship's delegates and the institution of proper safeguards against alleged inexperienced men being shipped at low wages. The shipping companies involved declined an invitation to negotiate with anyone other than N.U.S. officials, and proceeded to recruit alternative crews. Ship's officers and shipping companies' shore secretarial and clerical staff served passengers on board detained vessels. Meanwhile, dock gate pickets had been organized in Liverpool, and the dispute had spread to Southampton. The strike was gradually growing with each passenger vessel's arrival; by 6 June five large liners were strike-bound. At some strike meetings, the regular vote of no confidence in the N.U.S. was supplanted by an idea of setting up a breakaway 'British Seamen's Union' but nothing came of this. In Southampton, the local strike leader described the claims as '.... a pot

which has been boiling for the last decade. This time it has boiled over. We have to bring about a new era of British shipping'.<sup>34</sup>

The N.U.S. General Secretary, Thomas Yates, flew back from the U.S. to deal with the dispute. On 8 June, he went on board the 'Queen Elizabeth' and persuaded the crew not to join the strike. Later he described himself as 'the happiest person in Southampton'. 'I know the Queen Elizabeth will crack this thing wide open. I think we have broken the strike in Britain'.<sup>35</sup> He dismissed the idea of a breakaway union, pointing out that the strikers had broken their agreement and 'Before any of the men can ever be considered for re-engagement, they will have to come to the Union'.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the General Secretary's forecast, the strike continued seemingly unhampered, until its third week when it began to lose momentum and the sailing of the previously strike-bound ships was becoming more frequent. The strike leaders, in an attempt to inject renewed vigour into the dispute, concentrated all their efforts on stopping the 'Queen Mary'. Shortly before the ship docked, a meeting had been held and representation made to the Master, with claims similar to those of the strikers and stating their intention not to walk ashore if these were put to the ship's owners, Cunard. Thus Cunard were presented with an opportunity to considerably ease the delicate situation. Instead they rejected the representations out of hand on the ground that the N.M.B. dealt with such matters and the crew should make their grievance known to their representatives on the N.M.B., the N.U.S. As the board meeting had passed a vote of no confidence in the N.U.S. the outcome was obvious.

Just prior to sailing 500 of the Queen Mary's crew of 1,300 walked shore. The strikers' elation at their Southampton success was

short-lived, because an unexpected and ultimately fatal blow to their cause fell in Liverpool. The crews of the first strike-bound vessel received warning to be prepared for call-up for military service under the National Service Act. They were no longer Merchant Seamen and, therefore, no longer exempt. Since the majority of strikers were in the catering department, a department in liners where young men under 26 years of age predominated, they were eligible for military service. Despite the cries of intimidation, many seamen were conscripted. The Minister of Labour, answering questions in the House of Commons, stated this was normal practice, automatic once they had been notified by the Merchant Marine Establishment. No official reply was given to the persistent assertions that this process usually took three months, but in these cases it had been achieved in some weeks. In the long term, what is perhaps most unfortunate about the whole disquieting incident, is the N.U.S. attitude. As members of the Merchant Marine Establishment they could have made strong representations, hindering and possibly stopping their members being conscripted. This they failed to do. At a press conference, the General Secretary appeared positively relieved at having the embarrassing problem of a large section of his membership, who were publicly demonstrating their dissatisfaction, removed by this means, and its disciplinary influence on the remainder.

The fourth week of the dispute saw over half the Canadian Pacific and half the larger Cunard fleet strike-bound. Attempts to sail the Queen Mary by bringing 100 'loyal' men from other ports failed because it caused another 400 of her crew to walk ashore. Cunard in reply took a summons out against 49 of the Queen Mary's crew, under the Merchant Shipping Act for 'wilful disobedience to a lawful command'.<sup>37</sup> In addition, interim injunctions against five leaders of the strike were granted; they

were also to be sued for damages, thus worsening relations between the strikers and their employers and union. In Southampton, the strikers' failure to stop the Queen Elizabeth sailing marked the eventual collapse of the strike. While at Liverpool the conscription and threatened conscription of strikers was draining their reserve. On Saturday 25 June, a meeting attended by 400 strikers voted to return to work, but the dispute appears in both ports to have dragged on weakly for a few more days.<sup>38</sup>

There were, over the next few years, a number of minor incidents but the next major unofficial dispute did not occur until the summer of 1960. Again its beginning was haphazard, the spontaneous walk-off of a liner's crew over a minor incident. The speed at which it swelled into a major confrontation, not only with the employers, but also seriously challenging the union leadership, is some indication of the underlying dissent within the industry. The dispute was in two distinct stages, separated by three uneasy weeks, the first from 6 to 20 July and the second from 10 August to 26 September. It involved, according to the Ministry of Labour Gazette, 5,000 men in the first period and 4,000 in the second, with an estimated loss of 124,000 working days; it has been suggested that this is a considerable under-estimation.<sup>39</sup>

The strike began on the Cunard liner 'Corinthia' in Liverpool. On her previous voyage, four stewards had been disciplined for playing guitars to a group of colleagues in the early hours of the morning, some passengers complained. The four were dismissed on the ship's arrival in Liverpool. The vessel's evening departure was delayed due to high winds. At this time 200 of the crew, mostly from the catering department, walked ashore in protest against the dismissal of their four colleagues. It was decided to hold a quay-side meeting at 8 a.m.

the following day, some stewards remaining behind to feed the child passengers.<sup>40</sup> At this meeting the Master's decision to reinstate the four men was announced by the District Secretary of the N.U.S. His presence was perhaps the reason for the discussion broadening to take in the forthcoming N.M.B. negotiations. The perennial question of a 44-hour week was raised, but this the official refused to discuss.<sup>41</sup> The now familiar pattern occurred, the men walking on board the ship to collect their belongings. The expectation that after a 'cooling off' period of a few hours, they would return, was not on this occasion fulfilled. Instead another meeting was convened, attended by some of the crews of other passenger liners lying in Liverpool; it was unanimously decided to remain on strike, a committee being elected.

While throughout the dispute much of the activity was to be concentrated on Liverpool, within a few days it had spread to other ports. Within a week the press were conservatively estimating some 2,700 ratings from all departments were involved, and 45 vessels strike-bound, covering everything from small coasters to large passenger liners.<sup>42</sup> The extension of the dispute necessitated a reorganization of the committee, representatives being elected from all the ports involved. The committee provided the basis of the influential 'National Seamen's Reform Movement' which was soon to emerge.

Faced with the agitation by its members, the N.U.S. Finance and General Purposes Committee 'instructed all members of the union to carry out their contracts'.<sup>43</sup> The employers' organizations took a similar line. The Shipping Federation and the Liverpool Port Employers Association wrote a letter to each striker, stating that they had broken their contract and bringing to their notice the legal implications of their actions. Cunard took matters a stage further, being granted

injunctions against two strike leaders, restraining them from,

inciting or persuading and conspiring with one another and with others, and from doing any act or taking any step to incite or persuade seamen in the employ of the Cunard Shipping Company Limited to break their contracts of employment with them and/or to commit breaches of the Merchant Shipping Act (1894) whereby ships cannot proceed to sea or otherwise fulfil the contract of the company.<sup>44</sup>

Under such pressure, the feelings which had caused the initial eruption and ensuing spread of the dispute began to be formulated into a programme. General to this was dissatisfaction with the past performance of the N.U.S. and a belief that it operated in such a way as to frustrate the legitimate aims of the large mass of its members. Its structural reorganization was to be spearheaded by the introduction of ship shop stewards or delegates, and the election of all officials who were to return to sea after two years.<sup>45</sup> Some strikers believed the N.M.B. negotiations which were about to begin gave the N.U.S. officials their last opportunity to vindicate themselves, at its simplest by securing an agreement on a 44 hour week and £4 increase (ABs). The main aim of bringing pressure to bear on the forthcoming negotiations was by mid-June being recognized by all the speakers at the daily strike meetings. Having achieved this in common with other unofficial disputes the problem was how to return to work without appearing to concede. The problem was solved by the N.U.S. unexpectedly agreeing to meet the strike committee and to negotiate. After this, all that remained was for the committees to convince the strikers of the acceptability of the return to work. If the Liverpool men could be convinced, the other ports would follow their lead. After some confused meetings it was finally agreed in Liverpool to return to work on 20 July<sup>46</sup> and await the outcome of the N.M.B. negotiations. Other ports followed.

The dispute differed fundamentally from its predecessors in that it left an active and effective organization, the National Seamen's Reform Movement (N.S.R.M.), with members drawn from all the major ports. A policy statement, attached to its membership forms, stated that 'This organisation is a voluntary association of seamen whose declared aims are to organise and unite all British seamen. To bring about constitutional reforms into the N.U.S. by legal and constitutional means, to elect all national, district and branch officials and the immediate introduction of ships delegates and the recognition of those already existing'.<sup>47</sup> On 2 August 1960 it published 'An important message to the Merchant Seamen of Great Britain'. In addition to the previous claims, they wanted improved wage and overtime rates, and a shortening of working hours. These demands were eventually identical to those presented by the N.U.S. to the N.M.B. Where the difference lay was that the N.S.R.M. would accept nothing less whereas the N.U.S. in the actual negotiating situation was almost certain to accept some form of compromise. The recently knighted General Secretary of the N.U.S., Sir Thomas Yates, CBE, had rather prejudiced the negotiations in his closing speech at the union A.G.M. in May where he stated that 'if we are able to get adopted all the resolutions you have passed this week it would increase operating costs by at least 50 per cent. It would be foolish to say you will get a 44 hour week, a wage increase of £4 a month and a pension scheme all in one bit'.<sup>48</sup> Thus placing the N.U.S. negotiators at a disadvantage, although the dispute and the highly charged situation may have stiffened their resolve for on 28 July they rejected the employers' offer as inadequate. The negotiations resumed on 9 August, producing an agreement which by previous standards was a remarkable one. At its simplest it gave a 5½ day week and a fifty shilling a month increase.

The agreement failed, almost by definition, to satisfy the N.S.R.M. It called the men out on 10 August and the second stage of the dispute began. The response to the call took even the most fervent advocates by surprise, although it failed in its central aim, which was to have a short sharp stoppage of all U.K. shipping in port. It was to prove irrefutably the seaman's dissatisfaction with his employers and union. The majority of ports were affected, many seriously. Areas previously not involved came out, like the south coast ports, who participated during the first few days of the dispute.<sup>49</sup> It was fairly soon concentrated in the North, particularly Liverpool, and the North East ports between the Tyne and Wear.

The employers who, as the Daily Telegraph pointed out, had 'weapons in their armoury which other employers lost half a century ago'<sup>50</sup> began to use them. The Master of the 'Castilian', a Liverpool vessel lying in London, charged the members of the crew under Section 255 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894, with three offences; wilfully disobeying the lawful command, wilful disobedience and combining together to impede the progress of the voyage. All pleaded 'not guilty', claiming they were engaged in an industrial dispute called by the N.S.R.M. The 8 crew members over 21 years of age were sentenced to 1 month's imprisonment, the remainder forfeited six days' pay. The Council for Civil Liberties, after expressing its 'shock' over the case, noted that the prosecution was represented by a Queen's Counsel but the seamen were unrepresented. Cunard once again secured interim injunctions against the four strike leaders for 'inciting and persuading'. A week later the Chairman of the Strike Committee, Mr. Neary, was imprisoned for contempt of Court, in that he failed to stop his strike activities. In addition, two seamen from the Cunard liner 'Sylvania' were sentenced to

one month for disobeying a lawful command. The sentence was later quashed, although such convictions and sentences continued throughout the strike. The effect of these legal actions was, it appears, to stiffen the strikers' resolve. As The Times put it, 'The men are angered not intimidated by the threat of gaol and by the thought of seamen incarcerated as a result of their part in the strike'.<sup>51</sup>

Certainly, the General Secretary considered the arrest of the Chairman of the Strike Committee of prime importance. 'This strike had run its course after the first fourteen days and would have ended, but for Mr. Neary going to prison for Contempt of Court. This aroused public opinion and a certain amount of sympathy'.<sup>52</sup>

These convictions brought support for the strikers from numerous quarters. The reaction was greatest in Liverpool. There, on 16 August, much of the port was brought to a standstill by a token strike of dockers, and the crews of certain river craft, in support of those imprisoned.<sup>53</sup> Two weeks later a large demonstration was organized by the Trades Council, Labour Party and a number of trade unions, to protest against the imprisonment. These activities were presumably of minor significance to the employers, but their source and the amount of adverse publicity must have embarrassed the N.U.S. as much as it helped sustain their dissenting members. The employers' legal activity secured an even higher place on the strikers' lists of demands for the repeal of the Merchant Shipping Act. When two Liverpool MPs enquired about this the Minister of Labour, in reply, recommended the men return to work to speed up the joint examination of the Act.

The Shipping Federation and the Employers Association of the Port of Liverpool, who had previously contented themselves with rather mild statements, published on 25 August a statement couched in much stronger terms. This reiterated the main points of the N.M.B. agreement and after

castigating the strikers' '8' or '11' point programme, dealt with their four main points in detail. The suggestion of an American style union controlled hiring hall was dismissed on the grounds of the success of the Established Service Scheme. In general, they upheld the Merchant Shipping Act (1894) while being quite willing to discuss it with the N.U.S. 'But the maintenance of discipline on board ship and the honouring of contracts voluntarily entered into is as much in the interest of the seamen as the owners'.<sup>54</sup> The demand for ship shop stewards was denied because it was 'designed to undermine the authority of the Master and to ferment discontent among the crew'.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, the 'no victimization' demand was considered and it was pointed out that 'The unofficial strike has already victimized the loyal seamen, the shipping companies, the public and the national economy. Individual shipping services have been and still are dislocated and there can be no guarantee that all strikers will get back into the Merchant Navy in the same or similar capacity as previously. Some, by their conduct in the strike, have proved themselves quite unworthy members of the Merchant Navy and it is unlikely that they could be re-admitted to it'.<sup>56</sup> A minority was soon to be affected for all the strike leaders were dismissed from the Merchant Marine Establishment; on rejection of their appeals they were asked to surrender their seamen's identity cards.

With the enmity existing between the leaders of the strike and the N.U.S. officials, it is hardly surprising that the union did little to hinder their expulsion from the industry. From the outset of the second stage of the dispute, the verbal attack of the strikers on the N.U.S. bureaucracy, and its attack on the striking members and in particular the N.S.R.M., were among the most vituperative in recent trade union history, and they became increasingly more vitriolic. Sir Thomas Yates began with what might be termed the classic attack on

the Reform Movement, 'They do not represent anybody but themselves. We believe they are Communist dominated'.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps unique in strikes of that period the majority of the press dismissed the claim of Communist influence.<sup>58</sup> The second day of the strike, he told the press 'I have issued instructions today to my members not to be misled by outsiders. The strikers are flying in the face of union decisions'.<sup>59</sup>

The N.U.S. were in somewhat of a delicate position, particularly in the initial stages of the dispute. On the one hand it did not wish to be accused of shirking its responsibility to the N.M.B. and its members, in particular the Shipping Federation. Neither, on the other hand, could it take any specific action against the strikers, as that could cause a further deterioration in the situation by alienating sections of the loyal membership. Hence it limited its activity to statements urging the men to observe their contracts and return to work, and such things as flying out Assistant Secretaries to explain the new agreement to the crew of the Queen Elizabeth, thus successfully averting her involvement in the dispute. The N.S.R.M. and its leadership it refused to acknowledge in any way, and persisted in its accusations as to its political motivations. 'Leaders of the unofficial strike of seamen have attacked the National Union of Seamen and its chief officers as a union has rarely been attacked by its members'.<sup>60</sup> All the press were to point out to Sir Thomas Yates that to drive around in the latest model Bentley, as was his habit, was hardly the way to impress his membership, dissenting or otherwise. Whilst at virtually all the regular strike meetings caustic comments were made about 'Brother' Yates' ability to combine his activities as their General Secretary with those of the proprietorship of the Club Miremba in Dover, and of the source of funds enabling his son to own and run a hire car firm in the same

port. Accusations of nepotism were not confined to Sir Thomas, whose son was a Branch Secretary; other senior officers were also included.

In this atmosphere of acrimony it is not surprising that Sir Thomas instructed all his officials to have no communication or negotiations with the N.S.R.M. An instruction of some moment, denying to the unofficial leaders the method used in the first stage of the dispute, that of negotiating with the N.U.S., coming to some form of agreement on which there could be a return to work without loss of face. The denial of this avenue placed the N.S.R.M. leaders in a cleft stick. For by the middle of August the basic point, that of illustrating the extent of discontent within the industry, was made. The problem was where now to lead the supporters who were largely concentrated by this time on Liverpool and on the North East coast. These strikers, though dedicated, were alive to the scent of a 'sell out', but on the suspicion of the exercise becoming pointless would melt away like snow. The employers' legal activity with the Merchant Shipping Act had, of course, given the dispute leaders considerable ammunition but this was soon largely spent. The N.S.R.M. had as early as 18 August 'thrashed out' a set of proposals as a basis for a return to work. These included the suggestion of a TUC inquiry into the N.U.S., and were obviously totally unacceptable to the Union. It was at about this time speculation began concerning some form of mediation between the N.S.R.M. and the N.U.S. This combined with the realisation that N.U.S. officials were refusing to allow branch meetings was to be the basic ingredients of the last four weeks of the dispute.

The situation had become grave by early September, the strikers having, it appears, reached an impasse. Manchester strikers requested Gateskill, leader of the Labour Party, to intervene, but nothing came of this. A few days later the N.S.R.M. convened an emergency meeting

of delegates from all ports effected by the strike, to discuss the offer to act as mediators by the Liverpool Trades Council leaders, who were its President Alderman S. Mahon MP, Vice-President Councillor E. Heffer and Mr. S. Fraser, Secretary of the Trades Council and Labour Party. Their offer was accepted and the three had a number of preliminary meetings with James Scott, Assistant General Secretary and Treasurer of the N.U.S. Arrangements were then made for the mediators to meet Sir Thomas Yates in the Isle of Man, where he was attending the TUC. After a long meeting they emerged with a two point agreement:

1. that seamen on strike were to be invited immediately to attend a meeting addressed by Mr. Scott,
2. this would be followed by weekly branch meetings with a national officer present to go into a number of longstanding grievances.<sup>61</sup>

This appeared to be grounds for a speedy return to work until Sir Thomas Yates flatly denied the second point, stating that there would be no meeting before a return to work.

The agreement for Mr. Scott to address the strikers on 9 September stood. The Daily Telegraph remarked, 'Why did not Sir Tom Yates, take the opportunity to go to Liverpool himself? He has been accused of sailing exclusively on land, in fast and expensive cars, and of leading a union executive recruited from those who have cushy coastal jobs and are therefore quite out of touch with the bulk of union members who sail the high seas and find their grievances thereon. Since this strike has been primarily against unrepresentative union leadership it is, to say the least of it, odd that Sir Thomas will not be at Liverpool today'.<sup>62</sup> At this packed indoor meeting, many seamen were unable to

get in; it became swiftly obvious that the central bone of contention was to be the refusal to allow branch meetings. It was a point reiterated by every speaker from the floor, many pointing out that with the ending of the strike the men would be dispersed before the meetings took place. With Mr. Scott's adamant refusal to allow branch meetings, the meeting began to disintegrate; only the efforts of the Chairman, Mr. Heffer, kept it together. Eventually, after two hours, Mr. Scott capitulated, agreeing to the following:

branch meetings before the strike ended; 98% to 99% of seamen being re-engaged; that in future the N.U.S. would have a more militant policy and that its constitution was not sacrosanct.<sup>63</sup>

Conditions seemed, once again, set for a return to work when, inexplicably, Sir Thomas, two days later, countermanded Mr. Scott's promise of branch meetings before a return to work. The rule regarding this meeting was now being widely quoted; 'Rule 32(3). A special meeting of members in a branch may be held on a requisition signed by not less than 30 financial members'.<sup>64</sup> Union officials claimed the word 'may' left the decision to them and they saw no justification for a meeting. Strikers in some ports began to use writs against local officials for disobeying union rules, and there appeared to be every prospect of the N.U.S. having to defend its decision in the High Court. This was an element in the pressure under which Sir Thomas was now finding himself. The press was totally hostile, and of more importance the Shipping Federation, it has been suggested, were becoming restive and looking for a settlement. Such pressure may explain the unexpected arrival in Liverpool on 15 September of Mr. Scott and the N.U.S. National Organizer, and the immediate long meeting with N.S.R.M. leaders. Two days later, Sir Thomas agreed not only to meet the Liverpool Trades Council mediators again, but also two representatives of the men on strike,

making it clear that this afforded no recognition of the N.S.R.M. At this meeting, the N.U.S. leaders proposed no victimization, a 99 per cent re-engagement, wages due would be paid and there would be a policy of amending the 1894 Act. Most important, immediately the men agreed to return to work, branch meetings would be held; the first meeting would take place before work commenced. The meetings of strikers were far from unanimous in their desire to accept these terms. Many were angry, feeling that the question of branch meetings had sidetracked them from the main issue. After a number of indecisive meetings, the strike ended in Liverpool on 26 September, two days after an N.U.S. branch meeting; other ports followed Liverpool's lead. Both stages of the dispute had a total duration of somewhere in excess of nine weeks.

As a footnote to the tremendous controversy over the branch meetings, the first Executive Council meeting to consider the resolutions from those branch meetings was on 27 and 28 October. A number of resolutions calling for the resignation of the Executive Council, the General Secretary or national and local officers, failed to find a mover or seconder and consequently fell. The General Secretary commented that 'it was small wonder that branches had refused to allow union premises to be used to hold branch meetings to pass ridiculous resolutions'.<sup>65</sup> A composite resolution from twenty branches was put forward to 'request the Executive Council to consider the appointing of ships' delegates'.<sup>66</sup> The General Secretary said he was opposed to ships' delegates 'Unless the Union could control and have some say in the election of those who would represent the Executive Council on board ship'.<sup>67</sup> The resolution was unanimously defeated. Finally, there was a resolution from Dover, 'wishing to place on record our complete confidence in the General Secretary and the negotiating body of the Union responsible for our new agreement'.<sup>68</sup> This was unanimously adopted.

To sum up these three unofficial and unconstitutional disputes, spread as they were over nearly a decade and a half; they exhibit a number of surprisingly similar facets. There was a notable failure to achieve any success, each extensively repeated the previous dispute's demands. An exception perhaps being in the first stage of the 1960 strike when the N.M.B. negotiations were unquestionably influenced. The Government's willingness to use its influence, particularly in 1955, in suppressing the dispute with regular, never fulfilled, promises to seriously reorganize the Merchant Shipping Acts. Attempts by individual shipowners to solve the immediate industrial relations problem used the crudest of methods; mass dismissal and the law. The Shipping Federation, apart from ensuring that strike leaders were no longer employed in the industry, and making the occasional press statements, depended almost wholly on their fellow members of the N.M.B., the N.U.S., to control and discipline its wayward members.

Finally, this agitation indicates that at this time the impact of change was being experienced by individual, or small groups of, ratings rather than being anticipated by the N.U.S. A situation perhaps more likely in shipping than other industries since the employees' organizations and officials are somewhat divorced from everyday sea experience, that is the point of change. In the wider context the seafarer must have been increasingly aware of developments in shore-based industrial relations, such as the growth of plant level problem-solving, in which he had no part. As a result the N.U.S. was under increasing pressure from below for the union to recognize and react to changing circumstances. It appears that the N.U.S. was unprepared to respond and seemed to accept as a fact of life that a large section of its membership had no confidence in its union. The union's professional

officials, rather than making any sustained attempt to remedy the situation, merely rationalized it by accusing small politically motivated groups of fermenting discontent within the rank and file.

NOTES

1. C. Kerr and A. Segal, 'An Interindustry Propensity to Strike: An International Comparison', Industrial Conflict, eds. A. Kornhauser, R. Dubin and A. Ross (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959). H. Sasaki, The Shipping Industry in Japan, Strategic Factors in Industrial Relations Systems Report No. 3, International Institute for Labour Studies (Geneva, 1976).
2. Kerr and Segal, op. cit., p. 191.
3. Seamen are expressly excluded from the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act and therefore from the 1906 Trade Disputes Act.
4. B. Mogridge, op. cit.
5. R. Walton and R. McKersie, A Behavioural Theory of Labour Negotiations (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).
6. R.B. Peterson and L.N. Tracy, 'A Behavioural Model of Problem Solving in Labour Negotiations', British Journal of Industrial Relations, XIV, 2, p. 161.
7. See Appendix I(ili).
8. See below and Chapter 8.
9. National Board for Prices and Incomes, Pay and Conditions of Merchant Navy Officers, Report No. 35. Cmd 3302 (London: HMSO, 1967), p. 18.
10. For discussion of this high labour turnover see Final Report of the Court of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Shipping Industry (Pearson), op. cit., Part I, Section (7).
11. See any N.M.B. Year Book between 1947 and 1973.
12. *ibid.*
13. N.M.B. Year Book 1947, Section (8).
14. Liverpool Daily Post, 16 October 1947.
15. London Rank and File Committee Report 1947.
16. *ibid.*
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18. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, 9 to 13 August 1948, p. 68.
19. Liverpool Daily Post, 4 November 1947.

20. Daily Worker, 5 November 1947.
21. London Rank and File, op. cit.
22. *ibid.*
23. Report of Annual General Meeting, op.cit.
24. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, 16 to 20 May 1949, p. 3.  
E.g. the Queen Elizabeth was subject to an unofficial stoppage  
in New York in November 1948.
25. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, 23 to 26 July 1945,  
p. 103.
26. *ibid.*, p. 104.
27. *ibid.*
28. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, 12 to 17 August 1946,  
p. 10.
29. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, 1948, p. 121.
30. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, 1949.
31. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, 1951, p. 8.
32. Manchester Guardian, 7 March 1955.
33. Labour Gazette, May 1956.
34. J.H. Doxey, The Seamen's Strike 1960 (M.A. Thesis, University of  
Manchester, October 1961).
35. Liverpool Echo, 8 June 1955, and Daily Worker, 9 June 1955.
36. *ibid.*
37. Liverpool Echo, 18 June 1955.
38. *ibid.*, 25 June 1955.
39. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, May 1961, p. 187.
40. The Times, 7 July 1960.
41. Liverpool Echo, 7 July 1960.
42. *ibid.*, 14 July 1960.
43. *ibid.*, 13 July 1960.
46. *ibid.*, 21 July 1960.
47. Membership card N.S.R.M. (1960).

48. N.U.S. Report of Annual General Meeting, May 1960, p. 192.
49. Liverpool Echo, 10 August 1960.
50. 19 July 1960.
51. 16 August 1960.
52. Minutes of N.U.S. Executive Council Meeting, 27 October 1960, p. 2.
53. Daily Worker, 17 August 1960.
54. N.U.S. Press Release, 25 August 1960.
55. *ibid.*
56. *ibid.*
57. The Times, 10 August 1960.
58. N.B. see The Times, 14 and 15 August 1960.
59. The Times, 11 August 1960.
60. *ibid.*, 18 August 1960.
61. Daily Worker, 8 September 1960.
62. 9 September 1960.
63. The Times, 10 September 1960.
64. N.U.S. Rule Book 1957, p. 60.
65. N.U.S. Executive Council Meeting, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
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## CHAPTER 8

### THE NATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENT AND THE OFFICIAL STRIKE

The N.U.S. officials were not able to continue to dismiss the criticism of their membership as insignificant and politically motivated. The National Reform Movement gained permanent rank and file support which enabled its members to be elected to the Union National Executive Council in the early 1960s. Their influence and the more militant attitude of the membership was manifest in the N.U.S.'s more 'positive' attitude to N.M.B. negotiations, together with explicit recognition of the extent to which seafarers were not gaining the proper rewards from the increased productivity brought about by technological change. In addition the union became committed to achieving some form of plant level organization. With these radical changes in policy and an executive more representative of the seagoing members it could be argued that without modifications of attitude on the part of the employers some form of official industrial action was inevitable. The increasing pace of change and the contraction of job opportunities for ratings made this outcome more likely. While the intensity of the official strike in 1966 must be directly related to government policy and attitudes this does not deny that the potential had existed for a number of years.

Following the 1960 dispute many of the leading figures in the National Seamen's Reform Movement became active members of the Union's National Executive.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, Sir Thomas Yates, General Secretary since 1947, retired, making way for the newly elected James Scott. Scott, while having no truck with members of the Reform Movement, was acutely conscious of their influence with the union membership. He was faced with three main problems: the increasing rank and file response to organized

militancy in the form of the N.S.R.M., the need in the light of this for a more responsive and efficient union organization, and finally, the need for the N.U.S. to take some initiative to combat the implications for the ratings of technology change and competition. His recognition of the importance of these issues was reflected in his early speeches. He said, for example, addressing a meeting in South Shields, 'my task on taking over the responsibility for leadership was to unify the membership, build up a strong organization and set about removing the fundamental causes of the grievance felt so strongly by our seafarers'.<sup>2</sup> On the wider issue of changes within the industry, he pointed out that 'We also know from our own experience that new ships are continually coming into operation which are bigger, faster and more efficient than the ships they replace. They carry far more cargo per year and they carry less crews. We think that seafarers ought to share in the rewards of this increased productivity'.<sup>3</sup> One of his first actions as General Secretary was to take the unprecedented step of re-opening the N.M.B. negotiations within six months of the previous settlement. No doubt, this was at least in part an attempt to pre-empt further unofficial agitation, although he claimed they were 'not in any way influenced by the actions and opinions of the dissenting group on our flank known as the "Seamens Reform Movement"'.<sup>4</sup> In respect of the particular question of shipboard representation, his attitude appears to have been similar to that of the previous General Secretary since he saw them as providing the potential for undermining the official organization of the union.<sup>5</sup>

His death in 1962 after only a year in office provided a new impetus for the views of the N.S.R.M. for it was followed by a unique election. It included an ordinary member, as distinct from a union official, as a candidate, Mr. James Slater, who was a leading member

of the Reform Movement, and he took as the central issue of his campaign, the question of shipboard representation; a stand which induced the other candidates to seek a more popular platform. The leading contender among the three union officials was William Hogarth, in the interim, acting General Secretary. During the election period, the question of shipboard representation, a proposal only defeated in the AGM six months previously, was brought before the Executive by Hogarth for serious review. The union elects its General Secretary by postal ballot taking, by rule, six months to complete, in this case, March to September 1962. At that time, the N.U.S. was the only remaining British trade union with a gerontocratic voting system. This gave members of one year's standing one vote, over five years', two votes, over 10 years three votes, and members with fifteen years plus, including retired members, were entitled to four votes. True to expectations, William Hogarth was duly elected with 30,897 votes, a clear majority over his rival James Slater with 9,855 votes. Taking into account the voting system it is not unreasonable to suggest that many of the younger, presumably more radical members, possessing only a single vote gave it to Slater. Therefore, despite the severe setback suffered by the Reform Movement, who were also in financial difficulties, the pressure on the union hierarchy was greater than the election results would suggest.

The modified attitude of some leading union officials found a response in the Autumn AGM (1962) where no less than nine resolutions were submitted in favour of shipboard representation. Contrary to previous experience, the resolution was carried by 67 votes to 31. The union officials had presumably anticipated the decision for during the debate the General Secretary commented:

We might have to come back to next year's Annual General Meeting to decide what action we take if we do not get what we want. We will meet opposition, we know that already, when we have discussed this with officers and representative of the owners and the Maritime Board.<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the year the General Secretary's view had changed to one of mild optimism.

I anticipate it will be at least six months before the first ship's representatives can be elected under the union scheme.<sup>7</sup>

Events were to support his original pessimism, since from the N.M.B. Meeting of January 1963 came clear indications that neither the officers' organizations nor the employers were convinced of the value of such representation. Mr. Hogarth wrote,

We are all disappointed at the shipowner's dislike of our scheme to introduce union representation. But it was not unexpected! At the same time we can congratulate ourselves that our arguments have had sufficient force to persuade those Victorian-era ship bosses that the subject is one worthy of further examination.<sup>8</sup>

The owners did concede the need to investigate human relations within the industry: so a joint working party, including representatives of employers, officers' associations and the N.U.S., was set up. Its brief was to examine the whole question of officer-ratings relationships and discipline, and to formulate some scheme to deal with complaints. The outcome was the announcement of such a procedure in July 1963. It set out the rights of individual seamen to make complaints through their departmental head up to the ship's master; if still dissatisfied, to the union and employers ashore, and finally to the N.M.B. A feature of the procedure and a comment on the nature of relationships within the industry, was the inclusion by the Committee of the following clause:

It must be clearly understood that no-one making a complaint in good faith in accordance with the foregoing procedure will be penalised in any way for making the complaint.<sup>9</sup>

The introduction of the procedure was regarded as suspect by many union members who saw it as a substitute for, or a means of retarding the

introduction of, shipboard representatives; a suspicion confirmed by national press comment, necessitating a strong formal denial from the union. The membership's grave concern was highlighted by a number of strongly worded resolutions to the AGM of 1963 and 1964, where shipboard representation was equated with union unity and 'giving the union back to the membership'. The union's negotiators, thus fortified, continued to press the N.M.B. for some form of shipboard representation. Eventually in May 1965 there was something of a breakthrough, the N.M.B. agreed to recognize the union scheme.

A pilot scheme was inaugurated on board a passenger liner, the 'Empress of England' out of Liverpool. The venture succeeded in persuading the officers' associations and shipowners to agree to a gradual adoption of the scheme. The union had earlier begun training courses specifically for such representatives. The necessary qualifications for the post were lengthy and stringent, while as their title 'Liaison representatives' suggests their role is in no way analogous to that of a shop steward. They have no rights to handle either individual or collective grievances, their function being merely one of consultation, cooperation and communication, particularly between the shore-based union and its membership. Despite this rather anaemic version of the rank and files' original concept, it must be seen as a major departue in maritime industrial relations.<sup>9a</sup>

During the period of pressure and negotiation for shipboard representation, the presence of leading figures from the Reform Movement on the National Executive was a factor in radicalizing union policy. The first illustration of the extent of radicalization within the N.U.S. came early in 1964. During the N.M.B. negotiations, the employers made their final offer, an increase in basic and overtime rates, some

important fringe benefits and a reduction in working hours, to 43 from January 1965 and to 42 the following January. Accepted by the N.U.S. negotiating committee, it was rejected by the full Executive Council, 29 votes to 18, the Shipping Federation and the Ministry of Labour being advised that a state of dispute existed and of the seamen's refusal to sign articles from 16 February 1964. The N.M.B.'s half a century of immunity from official dispute appeared to be coming to an abrupt end, when a third party, in the form of the Ministry of Labour's Chief Conciliation Officer, was introduced into the N.M.B. negotiations for the first time. This was a development on which the recently retired Director of the Shipping Federation commented with disappointment; 'the breakdown in negotiations between the shipowners and the National Union of Seamen in January of this year leading to a threatened official strike and to the use of the conciliation machinery of the Ministry of Labour, means that a proud tradition of half a century had been irretrievably destroyed, or was it a display of "brinkmanship"'.<sup>10</sup> The tradition was not destroyed, nor does it appear to have been a 'display of brinkmanship'; for the preparations undertaken by the N.U.S. indicated a firm commitment to industrial action had no satisfactory solution been found. In the event, with the assistance of the conciliator, an improved offer was made which included the introduction of a 42 hour week on 1 April 1965. This was accepted by the N.U.S.

A further indication of the degree of change within the union and the industry came in the General Secretary's Presidential Address to the AGM in the same year (1964). This was unique in its extensive criticism of the shipping industry and suggested a committee be established, on similar lines to other industries, with government sponsorship under the National Economic Development Council, for 'British seafarers and,

indeed, the British people, are entitled to know what is wrong with this vitally important industry, and to demand that it be put right. If private enterprise cannot, or will not, fulfil its obligation to the nation, then State enterprise may have to step in before British shipping's relative decline becomes absolute'.<sup>11</sup> The suggestion proved unacceptable to the shipowners, but an informal N.U.S./Owner committee of inquiry was set up to report on the sixteen points put forward by the union. This presumably met with little success, for two years later the union was to repeat their call for a National Economic Development Council for shipping.<sup>12</sup>

At the same AGM, resolutions were passed committing the union to a 40 hour week by mid 1965, with substantial additions to basic rates. During the months that followed the union negotiated a new agreement on this basis which was to prove highly contentious. It brought a flat increase for A.B.s of £1.10.0d. consolidated with the 16 hour overtime that might be earned during weekends, bringing the basic rate up to £59.7s.6d. a month (£13.18s.5d. a week). The aim of the agreement so far as the union was concerned was to increase the basic rate and, therefore, allow a substantial increase in the incomes of seamen's families, for allotment to wives and mothers was taken from basic rates. This they achieved, for allotment could be increased by £3 per week. The union had been pressing for improvement here, as it was claimed that the amount many ratings could allot to their families was below the government Supplementary Benefit subsistence level. The previous December (1964), the 'ceiling' for such allotment had been raised from 80 per cent to 90 per cent of basic wages, not including overtime and other additional payments, and after statutory deductions had been made.<sup>13</sup> During the negotiations the N.U.S. had been conscious of the government's intention to introduce an incomes policy, hence they

wished to increase the basic rate before this was established. The new agreement also effected working hours, these were limited to 40 in port, and the General Secretary claimed 'It even means more than the achievement, at long last, of the 40 hour five day week principle'. The 'principle' meant that weekend work was to be confined to watch-keeping and essential duties. He continued 'another thing; let's have no talk about "going" back to the 56 hour week...' 'it is the forty hour, five day week which has been recognized'.<sup>14</sup>

This element in the agreement, as the union expected, brought an immediate response from the more militant section of the membership, and the cry of a return to the '56 hour' week did go up. What the union did not foresee was the extent and intensity of the opposition. The Executive Council which had voted twice on the agreement, found themselves picketed by groups of seamen outside the union headquarters. At branch meetings some 40 per cent of those attending voted against the agreement, the remainder being 'for' or 'don't know'. With such a reaction the union was forced into an intensive campaign explaining the situation; for example, a leaflet was produced entitled 'The Proof of the Pudding'. All this did not stop minor unofficial action in some ports. Executive Councillors, leading figures in the N.S.R.M. and the 1960 unofficial dispute, were despatched to those ports to convince mass meetings of the futility of unofficial action. It is perhaps ironic that those who had previously challenged the union now represented it in urging caution on its more militant members. Absorption of the leadership of the early 1960s and the resultant more 'aggressive' policies of the union had failed to neutralize rank and file discontent. The union's insistence appears to have allayed many fears and a 'wait and see' attitude to the new agreement emerged.

It soon became obvious that a large number of shipping companies and Masters were ignoring the spirit of the agreement and instituting a 56 hour week. The 'Members Write' column in The Seamen increasingly bore witness to the infringement of the agreement, some accusing ship's Masters of unreasonable use of Sunday for non-essential and even 'manufactured' work. Discontent was particularly evident in vessels spending long periods at sea, tankers for example, and among those in the Catering Department who had special problems. This disregard of the agreement was largely conceded by the Shipping Federation who found themselves increasingly requesting companies to honour the agreement reasonably and not expect men to work for extremely long periods without let up. This acceptance of the situation by the Federation was illustrated during the new round of N.M.B. negotiations when they put forward as part of their offer a preparedness 'to make an agreement confining weekend work to necessary duties where a ship is at sea for two or more weekends during a sea passage',<sup>15</sup> presumably intrinsic to the previous agreement.

The extent of the dissent within the N.U.S. membership was reflected in the Presidential Address to the 1965 AGM where the General Secretary took the unusual step of conceding that 'some of our policies may be unpopular with some members'.<sup>16</sup> After a discussion of the agreement, the General Secretary put it to the AGM as a matter of confidence. The vote of 44 to 21 endorsed the agreement and the actions of the negotiating committee and Executive Council, seagoing members only voting. Since the agreement had been in operation since March, there was little to be gained at that juncture in rejecting it. The General Secretary had already said he considered the agreement as a 'springboard from which we could go forward to really do something for our members'.<sup>17</sup>

Following recommendations from the AGM, the Executive Council in July 1965 brought a twelve item list for negotiations to the N.M.B. The most important item dealt with weekend work, wages, hours at sea and leave; some lesser items were discussed informally with the ship-owners. At the first joint Ratings Panel meeting of the N.M.B. in November, the Shipping Federation, whilst willing to negotiate on the minor issues, refused to discuss the two main points on hours and wages so soon after concluding the March agreement. The next N.M.B. meeting in January 1966 saw the shipowners asking for clarification of the union proposals. Increased dissatisfaction among the union members over the question of hours, and the threat of unofficial action necessitated the newly elected Executive Council adopting, by a substantial majority, at their meeting in January, a strongly worded resolution. 'That this Executive Council instructs the Negotiating Committee to go forward on 1 February and negotiate on the basis of £60 per month for an A.B., and a 40 hour week at sea worked in five days out of seven, with a maximum of eight hours in any one day. The Executive Council recommend the use of strike action to achieve these aims'.<sup>18</sup>

The Shipping Federation at the next N.M.B. meeting on 9 March, refused to consider any reductions in the working week, but proposed an additional £1.12s.6d. for A.Bs, pro rata for other ratings, to compensate for weekend work, overtime rates were to be increased by two pence an hour. On the acceptance of these, improvements in fringe benefits would be considered. With no reduction in hours the Executive Council were bound to reject it. Later the same month the Shipping Federation put forward four alternative proposals at the N.M.B. Basically:

1. a return to the previous agreement, a 40 hour week with a cut in the basic rate of £8.2s.8d. and eight pence per hour overtime. If accepted, they would then renegotiate some unspecified increase in basic rates
2. reducing the working week in four yearly stages of four hours
3. a three stage reduction, with some loss of leave
4. a proposal slightly modifying number 3.<sup>19</sup>

The Executive Council considered only the third proposal as a basis for further negotiations, but once again the claim was for £60 per month for A.B.s and stress was laid on the aim of a 40 hour week which was regarded as the central issue. At the following N.M.B. meeting on 6 April, the Federation improved their third proposal. Briefly, this consisted of a reduction in the working week at sea to 40 hours in three yearly stages, without any reduction in the basic wage, but with a withdrawal of leave based on Sundays at sea, compensated for to some extent by an increase in annual leave allowances raised from 20 to 36 days. The owners calculated the cost to the industry would be 5 per cent in the first year and 4 per cent in each subsequent year, later to be proved a somewhat high estimate. The Federation stressed that this was their final offer, particularly as 'we shall be taking on, too, this year, as the first of three annual increases, an increase in costs well above what we contemplated when we began these negotiations, and well above the Government's norm',<sup>20</sup> and was to cover a period of three years, until the middle of 1969, unless there was 'some dramatic change in the circumstances such as extraordinary increases in the cost of living'.<sup>21</sup>

The union negotiating committee recommended acceptance of this final offer. To the Executive Council it proved unacceptable, on the grounds that there would be 37 days loss of leave in the three years

delay before the 40 hour week, and the clause delaying further wage increases until 1969. Unofficial Rank and File Committees, which had sprung up prior to the 1965 agreement and whose unofficial action had failed the previous March, were, with their prediction of a return to a 56 hour week largely justified, gaining considerable influence. The Executive Council was endeavouring to limit this influence, being acutely aware of the growing discontent within the membership. With the rejection of the owners final offer on 14 April, the Executive Council instructed all members to withhold their labour from 16 May.<sup>22</sup> There was a meeting between union officials and Mr. Gunter, Minister of Labour, on 18 April to report on the situation; nothing emerged from this.

It was, perhaps, fortuitous that the N.U.S. held its Annual General Meeting on 2 May, so that the union's supreme authority could approve the Executive Council's decision. From the wide-ranging debate came a firm commitment to strike action. The N.U.S. had, by the first week in May, been through all the procedures, and was heading for industrial action, while insisting the door was still open to any further offers from the shipowners. None was forthcoming and at midnight on 15 May 1966 a dispute, which was to last six weeks, began. Immediately some 6,500 seamen walked ashore, and 123 vessels were held up. These were in the main coasters or short sea traders, but with each tide the number of strike-bound ocean-going vessels, particularly liners, increased. The efficiency of the strikers organization, and their quiet resolution became obvious at once. As did the firm stand taken by both sides, which was only to be broken by some minor incidents. On the one hand, it was calculated that 11 small vessels including two colliers had broken the strike, all being manned by deck and engine-room officers. A form of activity on the part of a minority of officers

which was to be a feature of the whole dispute. On the other hand, some shipping companies, and the number was to increase as the strike progressed, made approaches to the N.U.S. accepting their claim and offering to make private agreements. Principally these were short sea ferry companies who were particularly vulnerable to a dispute at the height of the holiday season.<sup>23</sup>

Any analysis of the 1966 strike cannot be confined merely to the relationship between the N.U.S. and the Shipping Federation nor to the shipping industry itself, since the situation was complicated by external economic and political factors. In the first instance, the Labour Government had implemented an incomes policy during the previous year (1965) under which 3½ per cent was regarded as the 'guiding light' for any pay increase.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the Government was anxious at the time of the strike to impress the International Monetary Fund and the international banking community with their firm attitude to trade unions, particularly as an IMF mission was expected in May and a meeting of the OECD was scheduled. Had the strike taken place in a different political and economic climate, it is impossible to speculate how long it would have lasted or indeed whether it would have taken place at all. The importance with which it was regarded is perhaps indicated by the considerable government activity in the period leading up to the strike and it encouraged the TUC to intervene; its General Secretary, George Woodcock, urged the 'seamen's leaders for over two hours to reconsider their decision - but to no avail'.<sup>25</sup>

The anxiety of the government was also reflected in the Minister of Labour's attempt to persuade the Executive Council to accept not the owners final offer but their previous one and the spurious advantage of a government sponsored enquiry into their grievances. Whilst the

seamen's claim was clearly in excess of the 3½ per cent, the White Paper on Prices and Incomes Policy (April 1965) gave the government sufficient manoeuvrability had it wished to avoid the strike or bring it to a rapid conclusion. The White Paper listed four classes to which exceptional pay increases should be confined, these clauses had been used to justify recent generous increases to doctors, judges, senior civil servants, MPs and government ministers. The third clause 'where there is general recognition that existing wages and salary levels are too low to maintain a reasonable standard of living'<sup>26</sup> could have been used with some justification in respect of the seamen's case. Suspicion of the government's motives were highlighted early in the strike, for example, by the New Statesman when it asked:

Is it true, as many trade unionists believe, that the government has been looking around for a sacrificial victim to impale on the altar of the policy - and has selected the seamen?<sup>27</sup>

The idea of the government seeking a sacrificial lamb was confirmed, obliquely, by Harold Wilson, in his book on the period:

I believe that it was essential if we were to make a reality of prices and incomes policy, that the whole country including members of other unions, should know what was involved. This was the confrontation which in January I had recognised must one day be faced; the tragedy was that it had to be done in an industry where a strike was so damaging to the nation.<sup>28</sup>

On the evening of the first day of the strike, in an action possibly unprecedented in trade union history, a Labour Prime Minister appeared on television and radio to denounce the strike. While making some attempt at impartiality, 'the government has not taken sides', Mr. Wilson spoke of the 'ludicrous' Merchant Shipping Acts of 1894; and the 1965 N.M.B. agreement which 'Unfortunately, some of the ship-owners, proceeded to interpret in a stupid and provocative way...'.<sup>29</sup>

'Some employers broke the spirit of the agreement by requiring the men to take on extra weekend duties, and virtually insisted on a full seven day week'. This played a 'major part in creating the feeling of exasperation which has driven a union notable for over a generation for industrial peace to take the action they have now taken'. He went on to point out that the shipowners offer had been rejected, and it is 'the duty of the government, indeed of any government, to resist the action taken, because this would be a strike against the state, against the community. But this is not all. What is at issue here is our national prices and incomes policy. To accept this demand would breach the dykes of our prices and incomes policy..... To abandon prices and incomes policy would mean the end of our hopes of solving our national economic problems on a basis of maintaining full employment'. Mr. Wilson's overriding concern with the international impression was made plain, 'But what is at issue is this. Our determination to insist on these principles when the cost is so great will be taken by everyone, here and abroad, as a proof of our determination to make the policy effective'.<sup>29</sup> In conclusion, Mr. Wilson confirmed that the government had contingency plans to deal with the situation and the Royal Navy was standing ready. Any lingering belief in the government's impartiality was swiftly and firmly put aside. The speech also put the employers into a subsidiary role and Wilson made it clear that he, unlike the previous administration, would not lean on the employers. The N.U.S. was now confronted by a combination of the employers and the might of the State.

Harold Wilson's admonition appears to have stiffened the strikers' resolve, for after a week the Minister of Labour was informed by both employers and seamen that the situation remained deadlocked. On the

same day, 23 May, the Government declared a state of emergency under the Emergency Act of 1920. Its aim, the Prime Minister stated, was 'to ensure the essentials of life to the country'.<sup>30</sup> At the same time an announcement was made of the intention to set up a 'powerful, thorough and independent enquiry into all the complex issues affecting the terms and conditions of seagoing employment'.<sup>31</sup> In the later debate, some confusion arose as to the extent of the Inquiry's independence. A Labour MP, after expressing his welcome to the Inquiry and the pledge that it was not to be restricted by the Prices and Incomes Board, stated 'the union was clear about this. This was why he had asked the Minister of Labour to give an undertaking that the outcome of the inquiry would not be subjected to the review by the Board. I think many members clearly understood the Minister to say "yes"'.<sup>32</sup>

The terms of reference of the Court of Inquiry were as follows:-

To enquire into:

1. The immediate causes and circumstances of the dispute;
2. the terms and conditions of service of seamen, taking into account the national interest, technological change and the need for an efficient and competitive shipping industry;
3. relations between shipowners, officers and seamen;
4. the law, including the Merchant Shipping Act 1894, relevant to paragraph 2 and 3 above.<sup>33</sup>

The Chairman of the Committee was a judge, Lord Pearson, Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, a Life Peer and Chairman of the Restrictive Practices Court, who had previously chaired an inquiry into a dispute within the electrical supply industry. The employers' interests were represented

by A.J. Stephen Burn, President Elect of the Confederation of British Industries. The Trade Union representative was Joe O'Hagen, Chairman of the TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee. Finally came Hugh Armstrong Clegg, a member of both the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and the Prices and Incomes Board, an appointment which immediately raised the question of the Independence of the Inquiry from the Board.

Lord Pearson made a final appeal to the N.U.S. for resumption of work, to enable the committee to sit in a more tranquil atmosphere. This was, of course, unacceptable, as E.P. Thompson has pointed out. 'A seamen's strike, more than any other industrial dispute, must be carried through decisively. Once the men have put to sea once more, the possibility of solidarity on a national scale may not recur for a year or decades. Hence it is in the interest of the employers to parley, to procrastinate, to offer courts of inquiry, interim and partial resolutions and it is in the logic of their situation that the men will be intransigent demanding a maximum settlement'.<sup>34</sup>

Lord Pearson and his committee set feverishly to work leaving the strikers in a state of limbo. Within ten days its first short interim report was published, which illustrated the impossibility of its task, to satisfy three sides in the dispute, the government, the shipowners and the union. The report was mildly critical of the shipowners, but made, particularly in the circumstances, a rather odd statement, which was seen to equate the shipowners interest with that of the nation. 'The owner's side stood firm on their last offer. In our view this was in the circumstances not an unreasonable attitude, because they had already made or offered so much, and also they had to bear in mind the national interest'.<sup>35</sup>

The N.U.S. appeared to hold a sincere, if somewhat naive conviction of the rightness of its case, and was surprised when the

report failed to vindicate them. Rather it chastised them for beginning the strike, then conceded some validity in their case, without actually discussing their aim of a 40 hour week. The chastisement was not only for engaging in industrial activity, but in the union's failure to make a counter offer to the owner's final offer. The argument recurs and in Pearson's conclusion the following confused statement appears. 'The Executive Council were, however, calling a strike, on the assumption that they would get their own way - that the owners, after all the concessions which they had made and offered, would eventually, under pressure from the strike threat, offer more. That was not a safe assumption as the owners had said their final offer was final, that they might take their stand on that. In our view the Executive Council were not justified in using the strike weapon without further attempts to resolve the position, because there was nothing to call for the use of this dramatic and dangerous remedy. There was no remaining issue of principle; there were only questions as to the terms of the offer'.<sup>36</sup> A contradictory conclusion approving the employers' stand on their final offer, which Pearson improved, implicitly supporting the Executive Council's contention that to make a counter offer was not their prerogative. Finally the strike was condemned on the grounds that principles were presumed to be satisfied, the 'terms of the offer' being all that was left to discuss.

The Pearson interim analysis rested on figures supplied by the shipowners. On these figures was based the revised estimate of the respective cost of the claim and the final offer. This was needed because the owners' original assessment had been related to foreign-going shipping only, not to the whole industry. The result was the cost of the claim declined from 17 per cent to 15½ per cent and the three stage offer from 15 per cent to 12½ per cent.<sup>37</sup>

In analysing the cost structure Pearson expressed surprise at the exceptionally high levels of overtime worked. Using 1965 census figures, 'seamen on foreign-going ships averaged 66 hours work a week and those on home trade averaged 73.6 hours'.<sup>38</sup> In other words, an average 15½ hours a week overtime foreign-going and 26 hours in home trade vessels. Pearson in these figures perceived an opportunity to make substantial cost savings. 'A saving of an hour a week overall both at sea and in port would cut labour costs by about  $\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. We think a saving of two hours a week over the next twelve months is well within the industry's capacity'.<sup>39</sup> They went on to point out that 'General Purpose Manning' would cut it even further. On the question of overtime 'the evidence which we heard was in conflict. The owners believed that no more than marginal savings were possible'. 'From their point of view, a good deal of maintenance can be carried out in these hours more economically than on land'. 'The representatives of the seamen thought the reorganization of work could yield substantial cuts in overtime'.<sup>40</sup> The union argument, later amplified, pointed out that Pearson's analysis was based on a census of working hours taken in 1965, when the working week stood at 56 hours. Had the census been taken in 1964, when the standard week stood at 44 hours, the average number of working hours would have been substantially lower. It followed from this that the claim was considerably less than Pearson asserted and cuts in overtime could be achieved with relative ease. The N.U.S. went further suggesting that Pearson had indirectly recognized this argument, in its comparative discussion of some European fleets; it stated that 'if their shipping industries remained competitive in spite of this the explanation must be that either their manning scales are lower, or they keep overtime under better control. Although no figures are available the owners think that the latter is

the probable explanation; and it is supported by the well-established fact that the level of overtime on the Continent is in industry generally, except France, one below that of Britain'.<sup>41</sup>

Pearson, on the basis of the reassessment of costs and the potential saving, attempted to make the owners' offer more acceptable without materially increasing its cost. The main element in the recommendations was the introduction of the 40 hour week in two yearly stages instead of three. The first reduction to 48 hours meant all Sunday work would be overtime. Stage two coming into force a year later with overtime for all work at sea on Saturday. Pearson also felt that the loss of leave was excessive. Prior to the strike the seamen received on average 37 days paid annual leave, an average total including Sundays at sea of 53 days. The shipowners final offer resulted in 36 days leave, this Pearson increased by 3 days. The 12s.6d. increase in effective pay of A.B.s after five years service demanded by the union was omitted on the grounds of it being offset against the increased cost in the other section of the offer. The cost of the first stage was calculated to be a little under 5 per cent, the amalgamation of stages two and three originally estimated as costing 8 per cent now became 4½ per cent. The estimated total cost thus fell substantially, despite the removal of stage three. 'The total cost of introducing the full 40 hour week at sea, therefore, became 9½ per cent over two years'.<sup>42</sup>

There was an immediate acceptance of the Report by Government, and a little later by the Shipping Federation. The government went further than mere acceptance; they made it plain that aside from some small adjustment of individual cost items, consistent with the same total cost, the Pearson findings were not negotiable, set up as it was under the Industrial Courts Act of 1919, there was no requirement of

prior acceptance of the Court's report on either side. It was customary for the disputing parties to accept, often with considerable reluctance, such reports, but for the government to insist on such an acceptance was unprecedented. Pearson, it seems, was to be an imposed settlement.

The hardening of attitudes as the strike progressed and Pearson's failure to offer the seamen their rallying cry of '40 hours a week now', increase leave, or £60 a month ensured the rejection of its offer. The N.U.S. General Secretary at a press conference criticized Pearson for failing to consider the seamen's poor working conditions, the shipowners' hidden profits, and for having more thought for the prices and incomes policy.

With the report's publication the N.U.S. began a campaign to question its accuracy. This had two central themes, the apparent equating of the shipowners' and the national interests and the acceptance of the owners' assessment of the industry's low profitability. The basis of the union's argument was the Jenkins Report on Company Law (1962) which questioned the special 'exemption' position of shipping companies:

Para. 413 '..... They claim that these exemptions are essential and that disclosure of the full facts about the size of their inner reserves and their annual profits would cause serious injury to their interests and therefore to the national interest....'

Para. 414 '..... The exemptions are criticized on the ground that shareholders are deprived of knowledge which would enable them to form a fairer view of the value of their investments, that they prejudice the bargaining position of employees, and that they can make it possible to conceal inefficiency of management. We cannot accept the argument advanced by the spokesmen of the shipping companies in oral evidence that shareholders are not prejudiced by the lack of full disclosure.

The question is not whether they are prejudiced, but whether the prejudice they suffer must be accepted in the national interest'.

Para. 415 'The shipping companies have based their case on the national interest. Their argument, however, is that disclosure would harm the national interest by harming the commercial interests of the shipping companies'.

Para. 416 'We recommend, on the case presented to us, that the Board of Trade should revoke the Companies (Shipping Companies Exemption) Order 1948'.<sup>43</sup>

Two days before Pearson was published the N.U.S. full Executive Council met for the first time since the commencement of the strike on 7 June. The organization of the strike had been overseen by a small national coordinating committee, each district having its own committee consisting in the main, of lay members. The Executive Council was attempting to harden the strike to counter 'strike-breaking tactics by British owners and foreign owners in alliance'.<sup>44</sup> Three resolutions to this end were passed unanimously. That all affiliates of the I.T.F. ... 'place an embargo on all British flag ships in Britain and throughout the world'. Secondly; '....all member unions of the TUC to place an embargo on all foreign flag ships trading on the British coast'. Finally '....declares black all tankers arriving in and departing from the UK carrying oil normally carried by British ships...' <sup>45</sup>

In the initial stages of the strike the ITF General Secretary had written:

On behalf of millions of transport workers throughout the world, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) declares its unequivocal support for the striking British seamen of the N.U.S. The seafarers' and dockers' affiliates of the ITF have expressed their support and solidarity in an unprecedented fashion; ...This is concrete evidence of what international solidarity means when an affiliate has chosen to use the ultimate weapon in the hands of labour.

Make no mistake when I say to you that the seamen of the entire world are united in the struggle to put you, the British seamen .... on an equal footing with your fellow workers ashore.<sup>46</sup>

In Britain the main burden of this support had fallen on the Transport and General Workers Union (T. & G.W.U.) with other unions, for example, the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers, the Watermen's Union etc., taking a minor role. While the T. & G.W.U. at an official and unofficial level assisted the N.U.S., they did not come out on strike, on the simple expectation that within a few weeks the dispute would cause the choking of the docks with 'dead' ships and the dockers, unable to work, would go on 'fall back' pay.<sup>47</sup> This did not occur for two main reasons; firstly shipowners, where possible, diverted their vessels away from British ports, often transferring cargo to foreign flag ships. Secondly, because of the agreement between the N.U.S. and the T. & G.W.U. to work normally. The T. & G.W.U. posted a circular letter instructing its members that 'Shore gangs and riggers will continue to move vessels within the port systems where this is normal practice, but will not carry out this function or any other work if it was previously done by the N.U.S. members'.<sup>48</sup> Thus it became possible to prevent blockage of the docks by double and triple banking ships or moving them to 'lay-up' berths, unless the vessel was specifically blacked. In the initial stages of the dispute, in London at least, the N.U.S. members assisted in this process. The Guardian reported, 'The astounding thing is that the N.U.S. is cooperating in this work. Its members are doing so because 'we are not at war with the public or the State and we do not want to see the public suffer'.<sup>49</sup> At this early stage at least it would appear from the T. & G.W.U. circular that the N.U.S. had no wish to involve other unions. Such a policy avoided eventual dock congestion and the movement of dry-cargo continued virtually undisturbed. In the other area of transportation, oil, the companies were particularly

astute, as a shipping journal was later to comment:

The oil companies pulled off a feat of insulation from the effect of a stoppage only equalled by some of the grand strategies of the Battle of the Atlantic. Plans were carefully laid well in advance, British tankers re-routed and foreign-owned tankers chartered for UK voyages. The oil continued to flow inwards and British tankers continued to trade almost without interruption. It was not so much the immobilisation of British ships which was feared - though that would have had unpleasant, financial consequences - as the immobilisation of tanker berths should British vessels be discharging there when the strike order came. As successful as the re-routing exercise, was the blanket of silence which descended over the whole operation. Co-operating in this was the Government, anxious about our most vital of imports  
.....50

The success of these operations by the shipowners impelled the N.U.S. to stronger action. The Executive Council passed its resolutions to this end, but the only way these could be converted to positive action was through the TUC and ITF. Two bodies from which, with their affiliates, the N.U.S. needed also to enlist financial aid.

On the rejection of the Pearson recommendations, the full Executive Council was summoned before the TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee, many of whose members had been recalled from holidays abroad in an attempt to alleviate a now critical situation. The meeting began a period of intense activity on the part of the TUC 'inner cabinet' and a small sub-committee of nine Executive Councillors specially constituted to meet them. Senior officials of the TUC were also to visit the N.U.S. headquarters on numerous occasions during the ensuing weeks. In addition to this the central figure was the TUC General Secretary, George Woodcock, who had immediate access to the Minister of Labour and was a confidant of the Prime Minister. George Woodcock was eager to act as a conciliator, or in a liaison capacity, in the circumstances a task of some magnitude. For, on the one hand, the Labour Government,

with the tacit support of the Shipping Federation, refused to contemplate any solution beyond the boundaries set by Pearson. On the other hand, the N.U.S. clung with equal tenacity to their original claim.

While the TUC was anxious not to lose the confidence of the N.U.S., they were keen to achieve a swift settlement. The tone of the relationship appears to have been established during the early meetings. An N.U.S. pamphlet, discussing the role of Joe O'Hagan, Chairman of the TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee for 1966, commented, 'It was an astute political move to include him on the Pearson Inquiry, since it was obvious that if the seamen rejected the Report they would have to appeal to the TUC for support. Since the Report failed the seamen, it was rejected, and in their approach to the TUC met Joe O'Hagan in the Chair at the meeting. The seamen's delegation objected and asked for an independent chairman. This was overridden by the TUC Committee and most of their arguments were then put by either O'Hagan or Woodcock'.<sup>51</sup> Harold Wilson had no illusions about the TUC role. 'A major struggle began between the Government - aided by the TUC - and the N.U.S. ....'.<sup>52</sup>

As matters stood, the TUC had little room to manoeuvre; they believed the only way of resolving the matter was for the N.U.S. to make concessions. Their efforts were focussed on gaining such concessions. Mr. Woodcock stated, when addressing the N.U.S. Executive Council on 10 June, 'this strike had reached the absolute limit of futility and he asked that serious consideration be given towards making a move of some kind to relieve this futile position'.<sup>53</sup> To this end, the TUC advised its affiliates to ignore both the appeals by the N.U.S. for financial assistance and the boycotting of all British and certain foreign vessels lying in UK ports. The latter appeal was directed mainly at

the T. & G.W.U. but their Assistant General Secretary was a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and he ensured that there was no escalation of support for the seamen from his union, although this failed to stop some of his members joining a one-day unofficial strike, in sympathy with the seamen, in the port of Hull.<sup>54</sup> Neither did the TUC deter the Boilermakers Union's provision of a loan to the N.U.S. of £50,000 nor the Bakers Union issuing a statement of solidarity.

The TUC offered similar advice to the I.T.F. as the 10 unions in the British section of the I.T.F. included a number of General Secretaries who also sat on the TUC General Council. On meeting, they naturally accepted the TUC advice and acted on it. The I.T.F. was also irritated by the N.U.S. action of cabling appeals directly to foreign unions, rather than going through their agencies, and took steps to see that these were negated. The I.T.F. General Secretary told the press 'It is our attitude that the British strike should not be spread as long as there is hope of a settlement, which now exists'.<sup>55</sup> The I.T.F. went on to instruct the few foreign unions boycotting British vessels, for example the Finnish Union, to allow the vessels to continue trading. So within a few days of the rejection of Pearson the N.U.S. found itself without any significant allies. As the Observer commented, 'Much will depend on the continued ability of the TUC to isolate the seamen and to maintain pressure on them to climb down'.<sup>56</sup>

These external pressures on the Executive Council were matched by internal pressures in the union. The membership, particularly in the major ports, was calling for 'no compromise' and for an intensification of the strike. There was, however, a dissenting voice coming from some of the minor railway ports on the South Coast. Where the men had been on strike from the first day, over a month before, and if there was no

swift settlement, they would lose much of the extra work associated with the high summer season of cross channel traffic. Further these men worked all the year round and were not interested to the same extent as their deep sea colleagues in the increased leave allowances. Even so, in these ports resolutions were never stronger than a request that Pearson should be a basis for negotiations. The importance of these symptoms of strain is not so much in themselves but in their massive press coverage, and the accompanying claims of these resolutions as evidence of the strikes' imminent disintegration.

Such pressure for the ending of the dispute while cumulative was insignificant when compared with that emanating from the government and the TUC. Evidence of its bearing fruit came after the first visit of George Woodcock to the N.U.S. when there was a small movement within the Executive Council. This was the suggestion of a non-recurring 1 year government subsidy being given to the shipowners to cover the immediate cost of a 40 hour week.<sup>57</sup> The TUC saw little prospect in such a suggestion but felt perhaps it could break the existing stalemate. To the Executive Council it had much virtue, and on its strength they had put forward a resolution indicating their belief that 'they have a solution to the present dispute and that this will necessitate the bringing together of the four interested parties, the government, the shipowners, the Trade Union Congress and the National Union of seamen'.<sup>58</sup>

As anticipated, the government refused to consider the suggested subsidy, re-affirming its commitment to Pearson. At this juncture the TUC considered there was little more they could do immediately and suggested that Harold Wilson met the nine man N.U.S. committee. A series of separate meetings were arranged between the N.U.S. committee and the Prime Minister and between him and the Shipping Federation

over the next few days, 14 June to 17 June. The Executive Council claimed that an easily achievable reduction in overtime would in cost terms allow for increased leave. Dismissing this, the Prime Minister put forward the suggestion of leave in lieu of overtime payments, or a 'copper bottomed' commitment on productivity. The Executive Council rejected the former but, perceiving an impasse, decided to make an important concession to satisfy the latter. The General Secretary

felt the only way out of the present situation was to give something away. He felt they all realised this. He had a proposal to make where he felt they could give something away without losing much and possibly gaining something on leave.<sup>59</sup>

The suggestion, based on the wide use of automatic steering within the industry, was that the standard sea watch of three be cut to two sailors. Thus allowing the transference of one man to day work and reducing the amount of overtime necessary on Sundays. They calculated a saving of some five hours a day, an annual saving of nine hundred hours per man no longer standing a sea watch. It is difficult to understand why the Prime Minister and his advisers failed to grasp the significance of this offer, and the 'copper bottomed' immediate guarantee of increases in productivity it contained. Perhaps the explanation of such a failure lies in their preoccupation with gaining acceptance, and hence vindication, of Pearson with which to impress the international monetary authorities' imminent meeting at Basle. Had a suitable response been made to what was eventually to be the basis of a return to work, the termination of the dispute was presumably assured. This failure ended the period of intensive Ministerial activity, the only tangible result was what the press termed a 'tit-bit' for the seamen, a commitment to set up a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole industry.

With the rejection of what they considered as a substantial concession, the Executive Council re-assessed their situation. They, if not the majority of the strikers, had concluded, that the aim of an immediate 40 hour week was no longer feasible, and had lowered their sights to minimizing the loss of leave. A ballot of the membership was discussed, but this would have taken some time and an immediate decision was needed. There was, in fact, little choice, either they allowed the strike to continue, capitulated, or stiffened their resistance. They chose the latter. The I.T.F. was again approached; it felt itself to be in an invidious position, conscious of the Labour Government's stance, combined with the TUC's strong advice for restraint, whilst the N.U.S. were pressing for immediate assistance. While persisting in its refusal to recommend to the member unions the blocking of all British ships, agreement was reached on an appeal for financial aid. The N.U.S. hoped this would come quickly.

On the Monday (20 June) following the unsuccessful intervention of the Prime Minister, one of the most remarkable episodes in contemporary labour history began. The Prime Minister chose to make a statement on the seamen's strike and the government's intention to seek a renewal of its Emergency Powers. What transpired was a denouncement of shipping's industrial relations and in particular of the Executive Council. Wilson summarized developments and said he believed that at the onset of the strike the seamen had gained considerable public support. But 'Public sympathy has been progressively alienated, firstly by their brusque rejection of the Pearson Report, secondly by their continuing refusal to follow the course urged upon them by the Trade Union Congress and the government'.<sup>60</sup> 'This union has had an unhappy history and, as I told the owners on Friday, the owners bear a heavy responsibility for

this by the cynical way in which for so many years they were content to transform the union into a creature of the companies'.<sup>61</sup> Having thus chastised the shipowners, Wilson turned to the problem of the union. 'A few individuals have brought pressure to bear on a select few on the Executive Council of the National Union of Seamen, who in turn have been able to dominate the majority of that otherwise sturdy union. It is difficult for us to appreciate pressures which are being put on men' ... 'by this tightly knit group of politically motivated men who, as the last election showed, utterly failed to secure acceptance of their views by the British electorate'.<sup>62</sup> An obvious reference to the Communist Party. When asked by the leaders of the Opposition to press for a union secret ballot, Mr. Wilson pointed out some problems here; for example, were all the members to be balloted or just those participating in the strike, and the time such a ballot would take. Mr. Wilson was also apprehensive; what 'If the ballot were in favour of continuing the dispute, it might be appealed to by those who felt it right to appeal to it for several weeks thereafter'.<sup>63</sup>

Apparently taking their cue from the Prime Minister, the Shipping Federation sent a strongly worded letter on the implications of the strike to all ships and as many seamen as possible. Signed by Ford Geddes, the Chairman, it was the first initiative the Federation had taken for some time. Quoting Harold Wilson's speech extensively, it appealed to seamen to use their democratic rights. His main points being:

The men of whom the Prime Minister spoke will destroy our industry - your industry - unless you make your views heard....

Unless the strike stops quickly some British ships will never sail again, others will not be replaced and so there will be fewer jobs for seamen'....

The Executive Council are not your masters, they are your servants'.....

Use your democratic rights to speak out loudly enough for the Executive Council to hear and take notice'.

The attitude of the Labour movement in general appears to have been summed up by the Prime Minister's confrère George Woodcock. 'The fact that the Communist Party is interested in the strike is something I am prepared to spend a lot of time not bothering about'.<sup>64</sup>

Wilson's denouncement, and the additional pressure this placed on the Executive Council, came at a time of a new initiative on the part of the TUC. The idea was to re-open negotiations under the chairmanship of Lord Pearson, and within the cost structure of his report recommendations. The Prime Minister encouraged the shipowners to participate; their acceptance was conditional on the meeting being purely explanatory and unconditional. With this assured, the TUC approached the N.U.S. They affirmed their continuing willingness throughout the dispute to negotiate, referring to their resolution of a week earlier. Once it was made explicit that Lord Pearson would act solely as an independent chairman, negotiations began, a meeting being arranged in the Ministry of Labour the same afternoon (24 June), which was used by both sides simply to present proposals. The union presented two, a radical lowering of overtime, and the reduction of sea watches to two men, both were to facilitate increased leave. The owners' proposals were that some additional leave be taken in lieu of overtime payment, and that only essential work be performed on public holidays, anything urgent to be treated as overtime. None of the proposals increased costs appreciably. The meeting broke up to allow each side to consider these proposals, a further meeting being arranged for the following morning. Here the shipowners claimed the union suggestion of reducing overtime was impractical, while the union refused to consider the system

of leave in lieu of overtime payment. The negotiators concentrated on the union's proposal of reducing watches by a sailor. The amount of cost saving here was dependent on the number of vessels possessing automatic steering systems. The shipowners inquired if the vessels already operating two man watches could be also cut by one. The union replied in the negative, and a meeting was arranged for the following afternoon. At this meeting shipowners produced tentative figures suggesting that something in the region of 90 per cent of vessels above 2,500 tons possessed automatic steering. Unlike the government earlier, the Shipping Federation was convinced of the important nature of the N.U.S. proposal, and as a quid pro produced a new offer, of an increase in leave of 9 days, bringing total leave to 48 days and a clear definition of essential work on public holidays. The Executive Council met to consider the new proposals in a complex situation.<sup>65</sup> There were obvious signs of weariness among the Councillors, due to the long period of intense activity. Political and other pressures for a return to work were now enormous. Having just returned from their branches they were also acutely aware of continuous pressure from a large section of the rank and file to intensify the strike. Such ardent support caused apprehension about how to advise a complete and orderly return to work, when a settlement was reached. There was a discussion of a ballot of the membership or a delegate conference. For while the strike had been called by the Executive Council, its decision had been confirmed by the union's Annual General Meeting. The more militant of the Executive were for making the decision or any settlement a democratic one decided on by the membership. Another important problem was finance, the TUC had actively inhibited any substantial outside assistance, and there were estimates of the cost of the strike being as high as

£400,000. Unless the I.T.F.'s recent efforts bore fruit fairly quickly, the situation would deteriorate rapidly. The Prime Minister's speech also made its influence felt. There was some conviction that no settlement could be considered until his accusations were proved. The speech appears to have been a factor in prolonging the strike, for when the Executive Council met on 24 June, there could possibly have been an acceptance of the owners' offer, instead it was resolved 'as a basis for negotiations'. But the Prime Minister's efforts to divide the Executive Council were having some effect, for the vote was 26 for, 17 against, voting figures which brought considerable press speculation. The division appeared to be between union officials and lay members, for there were 17 professional officials and trustees, not including the chairman, on the Executive Council. A group, as with most unions, inherently more conservative, and sensitive to external pressures, not only conscious of its responsibility to the community at large and the membership, but also heavily committed to the continuation of a strong organization. They were, therefore, disposed to an acceptance of the owners' offer.

A further indicator of the delaying influence of the Prime Minister's speech was the decision to convene a meeting of the N.M.B. on the day announced for his next explanatory speech. This meeting, like the previous negotiations, was overshadowed by the expected denouncements. The employers presumably believed or hoped it would bring an end to an extremely costly dispute by causing a split within the Executive Council. While the Council appeared to be determined to illustrate their unity despite Ministerial slurs on their ability. In such circumstances the meeting could only be marginally fruitful, but it made the negotiations official and within the N.M.B.

Harold Wilson's second speech on the seamen's strike on 28 June

came in the opening of the debate to confirm the continuance of Emergency Powers under the 1920 Act. The prime aim was to enlarge on his previous 'tight knit group' allegations and to name names, yet a proportion of the speech was taken up by a largely accurate summary of the situation. Speaking of the need to curtail the abnormal amount of overtime worked, compared with foreign shipping, and how this was indicative of the inefficiency, and one of the reasons a Royal Commission was being set up. After some criticism of the Shipping Federation and the 'pathetic admission' that it could not speak for all its members and so guarantee an increase in productivity, he went on to recognize the problems of democratic control and communication in seafarers' organizations.

Turning to what was to be the most highly publicised section of the speech, the accusation of Communist intervention. He claimed that 'The whole formidable power of the Communist Party's industrial apparatus has for some time been directed towards this end (a take-over of the N.U.S.) and the seamen's strike with all its background of justification for industrial action has provided the ground'.<sup>66</sup> The spearhead of this, Mr. Wilson claimed, was Bert Ramelson, and two other Communist Party industrial organizers. Wilson made it clear that they had done nothing illegal in the pursuance of these aims.<sup>67</sup> He also conceded that they had achieved little obvious success for there were 'no Communists on the Executive Council of this union and that the number of Communists among the membership of the union was extremely small'.<sup>68</sup>

Discussing the evidence for this, one author suggests that the Communist industrial organizer, B. Ramelson, did attempt to influence the Executive Council, but in a totally different direction to that put forward by Mr. Wilson. 'In fact, on the occasion when Ramelson

visited Coward's flat, (J. Coward was a member of the Victoria and Albert Dock Strike Committee, London) he surprised his hosts by advocating an immediate return to work',<sup>69</sup>

The immediate product of the speech was to give more publicity to the Communist Party, in one week, than it could normally hope for annually, with large well attended press conferences. Here its General Secretary took an arrogant somewhat superior stance. The Morning Star, 29 June, reported 'The Prime Minister, a member of the Labour Party, should search his own conscience on the role he has played in this strike'. The press at the opposite end of the political spectrum remained unconvinced. The Daily Telegraph; 'The result is something of a damp squib'. The Daily Mail; 'The Prime Minister tried hard. But the gravy just did not thicken. It was a professional exhibition, but it soon became obvious that he didn't have enough facts to back up his allegations of last week'. On the evidence presented there is little to justify Wilson's later comment; 'The fact was that the moderate members of the seamen's executive were virtually terrorised by a small professional group of Communists or near Communists...'.<sup>70</sup>

Even I.R.I.S., the industrial research body, whose raison d'etre has been seeking out and proclaiming Communist or near Communist influence within the trade union and labour movement, did not endorse Wilson's accusation, quite the opposite. 'There was no subtle fantasy about the seamen's strike. For decades the men have been exploited up to the hilt. No shore-based group of workers would have accepted such conditions passively. Frustrated workers are bound to rebel, and the more honest and sincere they are, the more fierce the struggle for what they believe is right and true. This has been clearly illustrated by the seamen who, far from being bounced by anybody, have almost to a man been solidly behind their union from the start'.<sup>71</sup>

The Pearson Committee, set up by Wilson, had earlier assured the public of the absence of any malevolent influences. 'There is no need to infer that the Executive Council wished to have a strike for the sake of having a strike or from any sinister motive'.<sup>72</sup>

The Opposition leader pointed out that Wilson had failed to make it clear how the Communists and the two militants named had controlled a 48 man executive. E.P. Thompson commented 'Even Edward Heath was unconvinced by this taradidole, or thought it politic to pretend to be unconvinced. This distressed Wilson far more than the manifest and caustic scepticism of the entire non-communist labour movement'.<sup>73</sup>

An omission from the speech, and one central to its argument, was the failure to analyse the support given to the Executive Council and its decisions, by the strikers. On the day of the 'tight knit group' accusations a secret ballot of strikers in South Shields was held, asking 'Do you support the decision of your Executive Council in rejecting the Pearson Report' with Guardian reporters acting as independent scrutineers. The vote, with few abstentions, was 609 in favour and 43 against. On the same day a meeting in Liverpool of 1,500 members produced a unanimous vote in favour of the Executive Council decision. Similar meetings in Glasgow produced 1,100 votes in favour, Hull 600, Southampton 400, Sunderland 400 and in Manchester 300. The majority of branches showed similar results.<sup>74</sup>

The Prime Minister's speech was to have further ramifications, for the question arose whether the Executive Council should discuss the negotiations before making some arrangement to seek an explanation from Mr. Wilson for his apparently groundless allegations and unfortunate interference in the internal affairs of the union. Only the General Secretary's personal persuasion to discuss the official negotiations

avoided the speech being the justification for further extending the strike. The N.M.B. meeting had affirmed the earlier unofficial negotiations under Pearson's chairmanship, more closely defining the proposals, for example, essential work on public holidays was specified in detail, and the following clause added 'The agreement must not be interpreted to allow work to be done and classed as essential where such work can be carried out at other times and if not immediately necessary for the safe operation of the ship'. What the Executive Council had to consider as its most simple was a 48 hour week immediately, and 40 hours a year later, a leave of 48 days a loss at its highest, in the tanker trade, of 16 days. Acceptance of this offer had to be placed against what could be gained by the continuation of the dispute. There was apprehension about the financial situation, estimates of the cost of the strike, although later to prove high, worried the Councillors. The fear, by some, of financial collapse, was combined with one of the union's disintegration, particularly with the South Coast railway ports breaking away, if the strike continued much longer.

A few days earlier an agreement accepting all the union's demands had been made with 'Townsend Ferries' who with other companies had been pressing for one since the strike began. This failed to bring the expected easing of the situation in the Southern ports, neither did it bring pressure on the Shipping Federation, for Townsend were not members. There was also apprehension about the continuation of the strike unofficially in many ports should the offer prove unacceptable there. In this situation while there appeared to be some inclination to accept the offer, the method of acceptance became the central problem, either by ballot, delegate conference or Executive Council decision. While there never appears to have been a formal decision, the latter was in

fact decided upon, by the proposing of the following resolution, 'That this Executive Council, being aware of the hardship caused to the citizens of the United Kingdom, accept the shipowners improved offer of 28 June. Therefore, in the knowledge that a Court of Inquiry will fully investigate our other grievances and so allow further negotiations to take place, we adjourn strike action for a period of twelve months, to allow the Inquiry to proceed'.<sup>75</sup> After considerable discussion this was put to the vote, and the strike ended 29 votes to 16, with the elected seagoing members divided 17 to 16 in favour of the decision.<sup>76</sup> The press knowledge of this decision was to cause confusion in many ports for it was not clear how the return was to be organized. Eventually, a press statement made it clear, that the return was not for two days, until Friday 1 July, to allow time for branch meetings to take place.

The purpose of these meetings was for N.U.S. officials and Executive Councillors to explain to the membership the terms of the 'victory' and above all to convince them of the paramount need for an impressive return to work. In nearly all the port meetings, the decision to return to work was met with hostility, strongly worded resolutions being passed requiring the resignation of the whole Executive Council, of the union officials on it, or of the General Secretary. At the same meetings, the union officials were met with varying degrees of contempt. The members, having vented their disapproval and general disappointment, made an orderly return to work. For the N.U.S. the strike had finally exorcised the ghost of their industrial pacifism. In such circumstances, a strike which had lasted 45 days ended. It had affected 26,500 seamen, about one third of the N.U.S. membership and cost the union between £300,000 and £400,000. Some 882 vessels were held up, placing an extra burden on the balance of payments of approximately £17½ million. That the commercial and economic effects were not

more serious or nearly as significant as those forecast early in the dispute, is a comment on the declining importance of the shipping industry within the UK economy.

The most notable aspect of the dispute was the government mis-judgement of the situation and of the course events would take. They were convinced of the need to bolster a wavering incomes policy with an example to impress the trade unions, the general public and in particular, international monetary interests. The N.U.S. seem to have been chosen with little or no inquiry into the circumstances or attitudes prevailing among the disputants. A choice widely interpreted as an attack on a group of lower paid workers to support, when considering other more privileged groups, a wildly inconsistent incomes policy. Harold Wilson felt the need to take the unprecedented step of making explicit on the first day of the strike that the seamen were to be used as scapegoats. Thus transforming it from a simple industrial dispute, which by all the signs would be swiftly and amicably settled, into the strike to make or break the incomes policy.

The government attitude and policy subjugated the Shipping Federation. Had they been allowed to engage in normal collective bargaining the estimated loss to the industry of £50m would have been considerably reduced. The Federation failed to recognize the potential danger in the situation during the early 1966 negotiations. Placing their trust, perhaps understandably, in the N.M.B. As one of the industry's journals put it:

With its 'unique record of industrial relations' the N.M.B. could cope with this little problem quite easily. The complacency and traditional self-satisfaction of the Shipping Federation was in for a shock from which it may be hoped those particular characteristics may never recover.... How far back should one go to find the true lessons of the 1966 seamen's strike? Perhaps to the end of the last war, when many shipowners were surprised at the moderation of the post-war wage settlement for men and

officers. Perhaps to the later period of union 'boss-  
manship' which was notable for various things other than  
strong partisanship of the cause of the working man at  
sea. Perhaps to that very same 'unique record of good  
industrial relations' the Shipping Federation was always  
talking about. After all, the Prime Minister gave it a  
different interpretation. Over the years, he said,  
owners had tried to transform the union into a 'creature  
of the companies'.<sup>77</sup>

While few would now disagree with this analysis, there is also little  
doubt that had the Shipping Federation wished to take any positive action  
they were unable to do so because of government policy.

Nevertheless, there was certainly no immediate evidence that the  
strike caused the Federation to question the effectiveness of the  
industry's industrial relations. The Chairman, Ford Geddes, wrote at  
the end of 1966

I believe that if there were faults in the events leading  
up to the strike, the fault was not that our industrial  
relations were bad or outdated. They were in fact in  
advance of those of many other industries.<sup>78</sup>

This view was seriously challenged by the Final Report of the  
Pearson Inquiry<sup>79</sup> which criticized the industry's rigid centralisation  
in respect of manpower and highlighted the need for flexibility and a  
fresh approach in the face of change. The report pointed out that there  
was a tendency for both sides 'to judge industrial relations in terms  
of the absence of overt conflict'<sup>80</sup> and since in these terms the  
institutions had been successful for almost half a century there had  
been a failure 'to comprehend the very strong tendency to seek standard-  
ised solutions for new problems as for old'.<sup>81</sup>

This failure had been perceived by the major oil companies,  
although perhaps with hindsight, since they gave evidence to the Inquiry  
'that they now take the view that the National Maritime Board has not  
paid enough attention to their special problems' and the report

commented 'It would seem that for many years the needs of the tanker companies went unrecognised because it did not occur to them that the prevailing centralisation could be challenged'.<sup>82</sup>

Pearson recognized that the industry had begun to be aware of the need for modification and cited the grievance procedure and liaison representatives as examples of movement in that direction. Nevertheless, 'The recent dispute, however, was a tragic demonstration that reform had been too slow and too limited'.<sup>83</sup> The important point being that the economic, technological and social environment in which the industry operated had undergone and would continue to undergo dynamic change. It was insufficient, therefore, merely to think in terms of reforming the existing structure or of replacing it with one which would have a similar rigidity. Any alteration to the industry's industrial relations had to embody a degree of flexibility which would allow for continual adaptation to change at both an industry and sectional level. This necessitated a fundamental change in attitude; 'As much as a change in the institutions the industry needs a change in attitude. This change has begun, but only begun. The old centralized agreements of the Board tended to deter companies from facing up to their personnel problems. As yet there is still a real danger than any reformed system of negotiations at the centre would have a similar effect'.<sup>84</sup>

The Merchant Shipping Acts were also criticized on the grounds that 'They had outstayed their utility in a number of respects, and by reason of their rigid and restrictive character they have become an obstacle to progress. They need to be drastically revised.... Moreover, the system is so firmly built into the industry and so deeply founded in tradition, that an effort of mind has to be made in order to see that large parts of it are no longer necessary or desirable'.<sup>85</sup> The

need to challenge traditional views was highlighted in reference to the seamen's Contract of Employment. 'The system of Articles of Agreement, however ancient and well established it may be, is not part of the unchangeable order of nature',<sup>86</sup>

The main recommendations made in the Final Report stem from two basic conclusions; firstly that

The most urgent need in the field of industrial relations is for Companies to plan, develop and implement effective personnel policies. They must have latitude to do so and must not be restricted by, or rely on, the rigid centralised arrangement of the past'.<sup>87</sup>

and secondly, in relation to the Merchant Shipping Act, 'There should be a newly-drafted Act, not merely amendments of the existing provisions',<sup>88</sup> drawing particular attention to the provisions governing manning contracts of employment and discipline.

The two conclusions question the basic premises of maritime industrial relations with its centralized collective bargaining and joint supply system and a legal framework regarded as essential to the proper and safe functioning of the industry. Although they had been reached following an examination of the grievances of the ratings, they made it clear that the impact of change could no longer be the concern of one representative organization. By the end of 1966 the shipping industry had no choice but to recognize that issues had been raised which necessitated a fundamental reappraisal of maritime industrial relations structure and manpower policy.

NOTES

1. N.B. Later Jim Slater said 'with the retirement of the old guard from the Union Executive in 1962 there was a new influx of serving seamen. I was elected.' R.A. Leeson, Strike: A Living History 1887-1971 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 211.
2. Draft of speech at Town Hall, South Shields, on 26 May 1961.
3. Strictly confidential report for General Secretary pre N.M.B. negotiations, March 1961, p. 3.
4. *ibid.*, p. 1.
5. Report of Annual General Meeting of N.U.S., 1961, pp. 19 and 21-71.
6. Report of Annual General Meeting of N.U.S., 1962, p. 146.
7. The Seaman, November/December 1962, p. 196.
8. *ibid.*, March/April 1963, p. 7.
9. Shipboard Handbook N.U.S., p. 21, para. 15.
- 9a. See Chapter 9 and Appendix. Also H.A. Clegg, The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979).
10. Sir R. Sneddon, 'Labour Relations in British Shipping', Institute of Transport Journal, July 1964, p. 381.
11. The Seaman, July 1964, p. 133
12. *ibid.*, February 1966, p. 30.
13. N.M.B. Year Book 1964, p. 122, para. 14a.
14. The Seaman, March 1965, p. 47.
15. *ibid.*, May 1966, p. 84.
16. *ibid.*, June 1965, p. 121.
17. *ibid.*, May 1965, p. 81.
18. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 19 January 1966, p. 8.
19. *ibid.*, 10 March 1966.
20. Minutes of the N.M.B., 6 April 1966.
21. *ibid.*
22. *op.cit.* N.U.S. Minutes, 14 April 1966, p. 12.

23. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 11 May 1966.
24. White Paper Prices and Incomes Policy, 1965.
25. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 7 May 1966, pp. 11 and 12.
26. op.cit. para. 15.
27. 20 May 1966.
28. H. Wilson, The Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record. 1971, p. 230.
29. Financial Times, 17 May 1966.
30. The Times, 26 May 1966.
31. *ibid.*, 24 May 1966.
32. *ibid.*, 27 May 1966.
33. First Report of the Court of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Shipping Industry. London: HMSO, 1966 (Cmnd 3015).
34. New Society, 29 July 1966, p. 201.
35. Pearson, op.cit., para. 40.
36. *ibid.*, para. 39.
37. *ibid.*, para. 30.
38. *ibid.*, para. 33.
39. *ibid.*, para. 36.
40. *ibid.*, para. 34.
41. *ibid.*, para. 36.
42. *ibid.*, para. 45.
43. Report of the Company Law Committee. London: HMSO, 1962 (Cmnd 1749).
44. The Times, 8 June 1966.
45. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 7 June 1966, p. 4.
46. The Seaman, No. 1, 20 May 1966.
47. N.B. 'The members of one dockers' union covering the Royal group of docks were anxious to withdraw their labour immediately.'  
N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 8 June 1966.

48. Guardian, 26 May 1966.
49. ibid.
50. The Syren and Shipping Illustrated, 4 January 1967, p. 10.
51. Not Wanted on Voyage, N.U.S. Hull pamphlet, 1966.
52. H. Wilson, op.cit., p. 233.
53. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 10 June 1966, p. 23.
54. ibid., p. 21.
55. Sunday Times, 12 June 1966.
56. 12 June 1966.
57. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 10 June 1966.
58. Guardian, 11 June 1966.
59. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 17 June 1966.
60. Hansard, 20 June 1966, p. 41.
61. ibid., p. 42.
62. ibid., pp. 42-3.
63. ibid., p. 44.
64. Guardian and Daily Telegraph, 23 June 1966.
65. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 23, 24 and 25 June 1966.
66. Hansard, 25 June 1966, p. 1615.
67. ibid., p. 1614.
68. ibid., p. 1612.
69. P. Foot, 'The Seaman's Struggle' in R. Blackburn and A. Cockburn (eds.), The Incompatibles, 1967, p. 193.
70. H. Wilson, op.cit., p. 236.
71. I.R.I.S. Bulletin July 1966, quoted in P. Foot, op.cit., p. 192.
72. Pearson, op.cit., para. 39.
73. New Society, op.cit.
74. Guardian, 30 June 1966.

75. N.U.S. Executive Council Minutes, 29 June 1966.
76. *ibid.*
77. The Syren and Shipping Illustrated, *op.cit.*
78. 'A View of our Industrial Relations', Lloyds List Annual Review, 30 December 1966.
79. Final Report of the Court of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Shipping Industry. London: HMSO, 1967 (Cmd 3211). (Pearson)
80. *ibid.*, para. 10.
81. *ibid.*, para. 11.
82. *ibid.*, para. 9.
83. *ibid.*, para. 133.
84. *ibid.*, para. 142.
85. *ibid.*, paras. 158 and 159.
86. *ibid.*, para. 226.
87. *ibid.*, para. 444 Part I(1).
88. *ibid.*, para. 444 Part II(1)(a).

## CHAPTER 9

### REAPPRAISAL AND REFORM

In the late 1960s all sides of industry, and the government, recognised the necessity of re-assessing maritime industrial relations at all levels. The need was not only to deal with the contemporary problems but also to be equipped for future eventualities. The continuing rapid technological change, foreign competition, and uncertain economic trends made this imperative. The events of the 1970s were to highlight and compound the complexity of the task.

This reappraisal was to be against the wider background of the need for reorganization of the industry as a whole. To this end, and as part of the settlement of the 1966 strike, the government set up a Committee of Inquiry into shipping, in July 1967, under the chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. the Viscount Rochdale. Its terms of reference were:

To review, in the light of current commercial and technological development, the organisation and structure of the United Kingdom shipping industry, its methods of operation and any other factors which affect its efficiency and competitiveness and to recommend what action should be taken by shipowners, seafarers and Government, to bring about changes which would improve the position of the industry in these respects.<sup>1</sup>

While the Rochdale Report, which was published in 1970, was concerned with wider issues than industrial relations, it reinforced the Pearson recommendations. The emphasis was put on legislative reform and the introduction of a more flexible personnel policy with special attention given to training. The need to prepare evidence for these two inquiries meant that the employers and employees had both to question and justify their traditional assumptions and proposals for the future. The 'shock' of the 1966 strike and this need to crystallise their ideas on industrial relations must have been important factors in the changes which occurred to the Shipping Federation, the N.U.S., and the officers' organizations.

This is not, of course, to deny that there had already been signs of modification to individual organizations and industrial relations practice;<sup>2</sup> these modifications continued during the second half of the 1960s. For example, the oil companies, which had expressed their dissatisfaction with N.M.B. negotiations during the Pearson inquiry, continued to explore ways of developing their own policies, particularly in relation to ratings, through direct negotiations with the N.U.S. By July 1967, Esso, 'while remaining a member of the Federation, was able to conclude a productivity agreement with the National Union of Seamen which marked the introduction of a new marine personnel policy'.<sup>3</sup> This was despite the previously stated disapproval of the Federation who regarded such individual action as detrimental to the introduction of general purpose crews as a matter of central policy.

Thus by solving the problems presented individually, the companies were threatening the central organization of the shipowners since their labour policy had always been based on a presumption of an over-riding homogeneity of interest. In order to remain a viable representative body, the organization had to embrace the new attitudes which the changing industry demanded. In 1967 the Federation had become the sole employers personnel organization when it merged with the Seafarers Committee of the Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool, at the same time changing its title to the British Shipping Federation. It then represented 200 shipping companies, or virtually the total ownership of vessels over 200 tons.

At about the same time, the BSF reorganized its constitution and structure following a report by a team of management consultants from Booz, Allen and Hamilton.<sup>4</sup> The members of the BSF were divided into seven regions, and each company with its head office in a particular region was represented on that Area Committee. The elected chairman of

each Area Committee automatically became a member of the executive committee of the BSF. Thus, although the centralized nature of the Federation remained, the channel for communication with members was improved. However, the new structure also reflected an important change in policy. The decision-making structure previously based on departmental committees, i.e. deck, engineroom, etc., reflected in the organization of the N.M.B., was replaced by trades committees. The areas elected representatives on these committees, the amount of representation being dependent on the area's share of tonnage in each type of trade. In forming trade committees, such as foreign-going passenger liners, foreign-going tankers and short sea traders, the B.S.F. reflected the changing needs and structure of the industry perhaps more than the established bargaining pattern in the N.M.B.

The N.U.S. had already recognized the need to modify its organization not least in reaction to the militancy of its members of the early 1960s. Furthermore, it realised that the altered employment and manpower situation necessitated a more flexible approach than that permitted under the uniform wage negotiations of the N.M.B. The officials therefore attempted to broaden the basis of their negotiations outside the collective bargaining structure, as the officers were able to do with company negotiations. The General Purpose Manning or interdepartmental flexibility agreements are an example of this. However, this method of adaptation has not been entirely successful. This is perhaps due more to the fact that General Purpose Manning may not be the answer to the problems posed by the technological advances rather than the inappropriateness of company bargaining at rating level.

The experience of the N.U.S. has been that in addition to reassessing its relationship with the other participant organizations and its own place in the system it has had to recognise the need for a

restructuring and reassessment of its own organization in order to cope adequately with the dynamics and pressures produced by a changing and developing industry.

Effective communication with the rank and file had assumed great importance, prior to the 1966 strike, with increasing demands for some form of shipboard representation. Initially it was hoped that shore based union practice would be extended to the maritime industry. The scheme eventually negotiated within the N.M.B. did not provide the type of work-place representation envisaged by its original proposers which is perhaps indicated by its title the 'Shipboard Liaison Scheme'. Unlike the shop steward, the liaison representative has no point of reference, no work-place rules exist, even on such matters as safety or normal overtime working. This omission leaves him without the capability to influence orders from above or ameliorate dissatisfaction from below. Furthermore, living in a close knit community renders him liable to experience feelings of alienation. Therefore, in the context of a discussion of the shop stewards' movement, whatever the initial intention may have been, the Shipboard Representative does not, and indeed cannot, fulfil the role of a shop steward. This may explain why after the initial impetus of the scheme being set up there has been a decline in the number of vessels in which it operates.<sup>4a</sup>

Another movement towards democratization took place in 1967 with the abolition of the union's gerontocratic voting system. This was due largely to the pressure from the more militant sections of the Executive Council and the adverse publicity the system had received. It was replaced by a single non-transferable vote after a year's membership.

The following year the union decided to embark on a thorough reappraisal of its whole structure. The Executive Council established for this purpose a 'Streamlining Committee' with wide terms of reference:

To enquire into the subject of re-organising the structure of the union at all administrative levels for the purpose of streamlining the organisation to better meet the changing pattern of the shipping industry and to maintain an efficient service to members, keeping in mind declining income, increasing costs and the need to make constructive recommendations compatible with good trade union practice.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the Council made it clear that the committee's work should take the long view and be designed to anticipate circumstances prevailing within the next five to ten years. The committee produced a series of interim reports which were submitted to the Annual General Meeting of 1974. With minimal modifications these recommendations were accepted and acted on. The most important being the contraction in the number of union branches, the replacement of districts by larger regions, which were also electoral regions, the reduction in Executive Council members, and the abolition of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

There has been a continuing recognition of the need to adapt to changing circumstances. In 1974 the union stated that part of its policy was:-

- a) To obtain five groupings by trade for the purposes of negotiations, one of which must allow for a national container agreement.
- b) To maintain individual company and individual ship bargaining procedures where applicable.
- c) To allow local committee negotiations to operate with head office approval. Local port committee to be regarded as negotiating bodies rather than advisory bodies to the union secretary.<sup>6</sup>

These were very similar conclusions to those arrived at by the employers and to some extent incorporated in the Federation reorganization in 1968/9.

The officers organization, although they had not been directly involved in the conflict of 1966, were concerned with the changes in the industry and the need for modification and adaptation. For, in addition to the scrutiny of both Pearson and Rochdale, they had to justify their position to the Prices and Incomes Board.<sup>7</sup> Any changes taking place in industrial relations would have implications for the officers and they would, of course, be anxious to be able to press their own case. The MMSA underwent a major rules revision in 1968 which endeavoured to make the Council more representative of the younger sea-going members and to establish a balance of representation between trades.<sup>8</sup>

The MNAOA in the same period attempted to improve its communication with members by broadening the role of the sea-going councillors with the introduction in 1967 of the Correspondents Scheme. The Correspondents number about 150 and they are volunteers whose function is in no way comparable with the position of shop stewards. They are merely, as their title implies, two-way communicators; conveying to officials the opinions of the membership, receiving and distributing circulars, pamphlets, questionnaires and the like, a task made easy by the Association's monthly journal 'The Telegraph'.

The position of the officers in the 1960s was to some extent a reflection of the general trend in respect of white collar unionization and concomitant militancy, but it was also a more specific reaction by merchant navy officers to changes within their own industry. The question increasingly being raised was whether the MNAOA should regard itself as a professional association or a trade union. It was suggested in 1967 that 'whereas the great majority of members look upon the MNAOA as a professional association, the officials are probably evenly divided as to whether it is that, or a trade union. Indeed most officials, in my experience, style themselves "trade union officials"'.<sup>9</sup> In this respect

it is perhaps significant that the MNAOA negotiated a pre-entry and re-entry closed shop in 1969, which came into operation in April 1971.<sup>10</sup>

The movement in the early 1970s was certainly towards more overtly 'trade union' activity with the unions first official strike taking place in August 1973. While limited to the Cross Channel Ferries and only called for 24 hours in support of the re-establishment of differentials, it was successfully concluded. Insignificant by any numerical calculation, it is in its unique nature that its importance lies. The trend towards methods of open confrontation has continued during the 1970s.

In addition to the efforts of the individual organizations to adapt to a changing social, technological and economic environment, there were continued efforts to improve industrial relations. Action was, however, being taken to commence a review of the Merchant Shipping Acts, with Pearson's recommendations as a basis. The Board of Trade, the British Shipping Federation and the unions commenced negotiations early in 1968.

There was very little disagreement over wages and the Articles of Agreement but the stumbling block was the disciplinary clauses. A Bill was introduced in the House of Commons in July 1969<sup>11</sup> but lapsed due to the ending of the session. The discussions continued therefore and a new Bill containing a number of changes, was introduced in November.<sup>12</sup> Much of the Victorian minutiae from previous legislation was removed and the new Act achieved a degree of codification concentrated on central principles of seamen's rights rather than on detailed regulations. These were left in the hands of the Department of Trade.

The general principles are not as far removed from previous legislation as some had hoped. As one author caustically put it:

The Merchant Shipping Act (1970) has dragged the employment conditions of merchant seamen ... kicking and screaming into the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

This is perhaps too drastic an assessment. For example, in respect of the seaman's Contract of Employment, there was a significant attempt to bring the Articles of Agreement into line with shore-based practice. The Act does away with 'articles' and removes the statutory provisions as to their content. These were replaced by 'crew agreements', although the provision for signing of the agreement and government supervision remain. Furthermore, the Act took account of the comment made by the Pearson Court of Inquiry that

Section 113 [of the 1894 Act] gives the impression that the master is the contracting party; contracting on his own behalf as the employer of seamen ... We think this is out of date and unrealistic for modern conditions. In the great majority of cases the employers are a large company employing both the master and the crew as their 'servants'.<sup>14</sup>

The 1970 Act in Section 1(1) makes it clear that the crew agreement is a Contract of Employment between the seafarer as a workman, and the person employing him who is not necessarily the ship's master. A similar up-dating took place in respect of wages; a provision was 'included for seamen to sue for recovery of wages through the County Court in the same manner as shore-based workers.'<sup>15</sup>

In providing for the implementation of the Act to be largely through regulations, some of the rigidity which the law had had previously was removed. This was, of course, in line with the general recommendations of the Pearson Inquiry, that the industry needed a more flexible attitude if it was to adapt successfully to continuing change. However, the use of regulations also enabled the legislators to evade the issue of discipline which is directly related to and reflects the quasi military structure of the ship. It was the penal clauses of the Act which were the most contentious; the B.S.F. and the officers' organizations accepted the Pearson Report in this respect but the N.U.S. wanted the question of discipline removed from the ship to the shore. They felt that there was

really no change in the attitude towards discipline. One member of the N.U.S. asked:

Why must seamen always be a race apart? Why must we be somebody different to everybody else? ... If we accept these penal Clauses in the Merchant Shipping Act, why not go a step further and bring back corporal punishment and hanging from the yardarm?<sup>16</sup>

There was certainly no doubt that the N.U.S. were extremely unhappy with the disciplinary provisions under the Act. They did, however, extract a promise from the Prime Minister that these Clauses would be reviewed in three years' time. In addition, the flexibility of a system of regulations ensured discussion of these issues would continue.

An opportunity for further legislation came in 1974. This new Act did not fundamentally alter the principle of discipline; it repealed some penal clauses and modified others to the extent that they only applied when the ship was at sea. On the other hand, fines were increased, particularly where they were concerned with safety. The most important outcome of the Act was that during the debate the government announced the intention to set up a Working Group 'to examine in depth the disciplinary needs of seagoing employment in merchant ship'.<sup>17</sup>

One of the first tasks which the Working Group had to undertake was to define the problem. It was faced, as previous inquiries had been, with a lack of objective facts and statistics, on this occasion about the nature and frequency of offences committed at sea.<sup>18</sup> The Department of Trade undertook to provide statistical information, whilst the Tavistock Institute was commissioned to carry out a special study of the sociological implications of the existing disciplinary procedures. In addition, the group collected information informally on board ship and at meetings ashore. From all this evidence, the group concluded that there was no consensus of opinion as to the most satisfactory method of discipline and that in any event 'only a small minority of seafarers actually undergo any form of disciplinary action'.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore,

There is no clear evidence to show whether or not the present masters' fining system is a general deterrent, but if it is, it is probably confined in its effect to occasional or minor offenders who would probably regard formal warnings by the master, backed by action ashore, as an equally effective deterrent'.<sup>19</sup>

The Group's main recommendations were that persistent or serious offenders should suffer either temporary or permanent exclusion from the industry and that

The present system of shipboard fines should be abolished and a new system of discipline should be instituted consisting of recorded warnings, reprimands and dismissal from the ship after the offence and action ashore by joint disciplinary committees.<sup>21</sup>

This disciplinary procedure was incorporated in the Established Service Scheme.<sup>22</sup>

The E.S. Scheme had already been modified in 1968 with a tentative movement in the direction of decasualisation. The contract was now offered to a wider group of seamen, requiring a time qualification of only 11 months at sea; furthermore, the contract was to be continuous and not to be limited to two years as previously. In addition the Established Service Scheme benefits were increased.<sup>23</sup>

The complete decasualisation of the scheme took place early in 1973. This new scheme abolished the 25 year old distinctions between the established and unestablished seafarer both in respect of allocation to employment as well as entitlement to cash benefits. The classification established and unestablished ceased to exist and were replaced by the concept of a registered seafarer.<sup>24</sup>

The N.M.B. itself did not reflect the movement by both the Federation and the NUS away from the hierarchical structure of the ship as the pattern for their organization towards trade panels. It would perhaps be unrealistic to see such changes occurring at the same time or directly after they were taking place in the individual organizations.

The N.M.B. concerned itself more immediately with the problems appertaining to the concept of long-term manpower planning. The Pearson committee had highlighted the concern felt in the industry at the degree of wastage compared with shore based industry 'particularly as new entrants require extensive and costly training and adequate experience can only be gained after a good many years at sea'.<sup>25</sup> The Final Report also made the point that seafaring was regarded by many as casual employment before settling down to more regular employment on shore, or at any rate transferring to shore jobs.<sup>26</sup> The N.M.B. established a wastage sub-committee but it soon became obvious that there was insufficient well-researched information to consider the advisability of any remedial action.

In order to rectify this position, the Centre for Applied Social Research of the Tavistock Institute was invited in 1968 to undertake the necessary research. Unfortunately, the project took four years to complete and their Report was not available to be submitted as evidence to the Rochdale Inquiry. The latter did, however, commission a survey to investigate the attitudes of the seafarer to his work and also to attempt to discover the causes for high labour turnover in the industry. The report of the survey did recognise that the maritime labour force presented special problems in that a high proportion only went into the industry for a limited period; and many left the industry only to return later,<sup>27</sup> and further, that family ties put a strain on the seagoing employee. Their evidence convinced Rochdale 'of the importance of continuing the current trend to better social and living conditions on board ship ... and the need to get rid of unnecessary differences in the treatment of officers and ratings'.<sup>28</sup> However, until the Tavistock Institute completed its study little could be achieved.

In any event further modifications or reforms of the central institutions of the industry were pre-empted by the 1971 Industrial

Relations Act and the establishment of the National Industrial Relations Court. A central tenet of the Act was the abolition of the closed shop which was to be replaced by Agency Shop Agreements.<sup>29</sup> By this time, of course, both officers and ratings were operating a closed shop and the system of supply operating in the industry depended heavily on a closed shop for ratings.

Faced with the threatened loss of the closed shop agreement, the N.U.S.'s first, and perhaps instinctive ploy, was to seek exception from the Act on the grounds of what it considered were its unique problems of recruiting and serving its members. This tactic had, after all, gained for the industry, over time, exemptions from numerous other Acts; for example, the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875, Trade Disputes Act, 1906, the Race Relations Act, 1968, and the Sexual Offences Act 1967.

The government refused to make an exception of the N.U.S. but was impressed by the industry's argument that one of the objectives of the Act, free and responsible collective bargaining, had in fact been achieved.

It is probable that this line of argument, backed up with evidence that the Union would collapse financially due to the Bill, and thus obviate its ability to negotiate credibly with the shipowners, that prompted the Government to present on March 14, 1971, the amendments to the Bill that as Section 17 and 18 and Schedule 1 of the Act were to become the approved closed shop provision. Taken in connection with the amendment that a union would negotiate directly with an employers' federation (an amendment which the British Shipping Federation were consulted on and actively supported, although they took no part at all in pressing for the approved closed shop provisions) although they were undoubtedly introduced to cater for the seamen's union.<sup>30</sup>

The attitude of the B.S.F. to applying an approved closed shop to the shipping industry was not uniform. While they were not only prepared, but anxious to facilitate the approval of a closed shop for ratings by the National Industrial Relations Court, they were not prepared to do so

for the officers. As the General Secretary of the MNAOA stated in his opening speech to the Association's Biennial Meeting of 1971, in respect of the recently negotiated pre-entry and re-entry closed shop for officers:

The Shipowners wasted absolutely no time at all in withdrawing from that Agreement because the new Act made it 'unenforceable'. There are a number of agreements which are legally unenforceable but we do not rush to denounce them. I think their action in this respect was much too precipitate.<sup>31</sup>

This division of support of the closed shop in the industry, illustrates the importance the BSF placed on the supply of ratings. The employers saw the maintenance of the institutionalised supply system as vital to their main concern of getting the ship to sea.

It is not difficult to understand the concern which the N.U.S. felt at the threat to the existing closed shop. The General Secretary wrote in 'The Seaman':-

The disunity implicit in the abolition of the existing membership agreement could therefore very well spawn splinter organisations and company unionism, thus exposing unionists and non-unionists alike to the deterioration of their conditions of employment as well as endangering the capability of all seamen to combine effectively for their own advancement.<sup>32</sup>

This implied that such a spawning would mean the loss by the N.U.S. of its authority and perhaps eventually its position within the N.M.B. as the sole representative of ratings' interests. It would follow from this that the N.U.S. would also lose its position in the N.M.B.'s satellite organizations, in particular the M.N.E.S. This is the central element in the joint supply scheme, the N.U.S. absence would mean the single control of the B.S.F. and perhaps the abandoning of the whole structure by some shipowners. Hence 'control over entry would have been entirely within the hands of the (M.N.E.S.) Administration, which is staffed by the Federation, and the union would not have been able to take effective counter-measures if an individual employer sought to recruit casual workers

from outside the scheme'.<sup>33</sup> Such a situation would be full of potential danger for the union. It would cause further financial difficulties with the loss of much of the shipowners supervised 'check off' system. In addition, it raised the persistent and basic union fear of an alternative labour force and, in particular, an increase in the number of vessels signing non-U.K. Articles, recruiting crews in Africa and Asia, or perhaps a movement towards the signing of Spanish and Portuguese crews at lower wage rates.

A further example of the importance with which the NUS regarded the closed shop is the fact that when they were faced with the choice of seeking approval of the closed shop or remaining within the labour movement they had little hesitation in choosing the former.<sup>34</sup> As a result they were expelled from the T.U.C. and were ostracised by the wider labour movement. On the other hand, the officers' organizations, apart from the MMSA, were prepared to support the T.U.C. Whilst the REOU and the AUEW did so enthusiastically, the MNAOA were under some pressure from a vociferous section of its membership to comply with the Act.<sup>35</sup> The main criticism being that any opposition was a political act and therefore against the Association's constitution.

With the threat of their closed shop becoming illegal,<sup>36</sup> the N.U.S. swiftly entered into informal talks with the BSF, presumably with the hope of gaining some form of unofficial agreement on similar lines to those which appear to have been made in other industries.

The British Shipping Federation was of the opinion that no informal arrangements could be made to stick - a challenge was bound to be made since the whole joint supply system depended on an open acknowledgement of the Union's role. And they were not going to 'break the law' or encourage any individual shipowner to 'break the law'. It was after these meetings that the Union discreetly, but formally, asked the British Shipping Federation to join with the Union in a joint application for an approved closed shop. On December 9, 1971, the British Shipping Federation's Council decided to support such an application and circularised its member companies of its decision. Not one British shipping company dissented from its Federation's decision.<sup>37</sup>

It was essential under the Act for both the union and the employers to apply jointly for an approved closed shop. The main reason why the shipowners and their Federation cooperated appears to have been their apprehension about the lack of closed shop facilities, forcing the N.U.S. into an amalgamation with the much larger T. & G.W.U. This had been mooted during the late 1960s when some shipowners had publicly expressed their fear of such a merger with, what they considered, the more militant T. & G.W.U. Alternatively, now without the protection of the Bridlington Agreement the T. & G.W.U. would simply recruit seamen. The Shipping Federation's reasons were more basic. It had a vested interest in preserving a closed shop since failure to do so could not only result in fragmentation for the union but also in disunity and sectionalism among the employers. It was not just the case of a closed shop but a closed shop with the 'responsible' N.U.S. The B.S.F. were also perturbed in case the presence of non-unionist ratings in a vessel's complement caused discontent which could erupt into some form of industrial dispute. Further, the loss by the N.U.S. of its authority and influence among all ratings would place in jeopardy the Industry's Joint Disciplinary System on which the Federation placed a high value.

The final stage of the approved closed shop procedure was an application to the National Industrial Relations Court, which referred it to the Commission of Industrial Relations (C.I.R.).<sup>38</sup> The Federation's submission to the C.I.R. was similar in many ways to that of the N.U.S., but the latter was a much more substantial document. The basic argument was that the democratic nature of the union, which gave its members at least a de jure access to decision making and thus gained the respect and support of the seamen, could only continue within an approved closed shop situation. An agency shop, available to all registered unions, was unsuitable. The basic main difference in the

two arrangements was that in addition to being a normal union member an individual may elect, in an agency shop, to pay a sum equivalent to a union contribution to the union, but still decline to join and so remain a non-unionist. The other course open to him was to pay the same amount to a charity on the grounds of conscientious objection. This was the only alternative available in the approved closed shop situation. In no case was it possible to avoid payment. The N.U.S. argued that the presence of non-unionists, allowed under an agency shop would, in the enclosed and isolated community of a ship, create social discontent and dissent. This would destroy the Liaison Representation Scheme, and undermine the union's position in the shipping industrial relations structure. It was further pointed out that the presence of non-unionists would necessitate a permanent recruiting system, which was completely beyond the financial capacity of the union. All these points substantiated their central theme: the casual nature of employment within the industry created unique problems which could only be solved by an approved closed shop.

The C.I.R. published a report<sup>39</sup> of its findings with reference to the Act. It is difficult to escape the impression that the findings, set out in a rather repetitive report, in favour of the approved closed shop agreement, were not a foregone conclusion. It discussed at length the casual nature of the industry and the difficulties of recruiting, and pointed out that recruitment and collection of contributions were outside the function of the Liaison Representatives; should these be included in their function, serious strain would be placed on the harmonious relationship between crew members. This reflected the N.U.S. view, of the problems of ships as closed communities.

The N.U.S. and the closed shop agreement in operation until February have also been influences in favour of social stability and cohesion among crews. The fact that membership or non-membership of the Union was not an issue meant that a possible focus of dissent was absent. The fact that the Union has played a full part

in building much of the institutional framework of the industry - the N.M.B. agreements, the M.N.E.S.S. and the registration and disciplinary procedures - and that its services have been available within that framework to represent all seamen individually and collectively has also been a factor of stability.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, since the N.U.S. were contravening the T.U.C. policy, both the B.S.F. and the N.U.S. were jeopardising the operation of the N.M.B. and its ancillary organizations since the officers' associations were instructed to ostracise the N.U.S.

Thus the opportunity for contributing non-members under the agency shop agreements was seen to hold potential dangers not only on board the individual ship, but for the whole industry. Further, the N.U.S. was worthy of an approved closed shop, having shown itself to be a 'responsible organization' capable of securing observance by its members of collective agreements. This element was combined with the union's disciplinary role, which, presumably much to the union's embarrassment, the report extolled.

The C.I.R. saw this function in two overlapping areas. Firstly, where one or more ships' crews had threatened or begun some form of industrial action, the union had served as a 'de-fuser' of these 'potentially critical situations'.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, the union's involvement in the industry's joint disciplinary arrangement gave it an impartial authority since all offending ratings were automatically members of the union.

Without the closed shop the Union's position would become more exposed and vulnerable. A member dissatisfied with the outcome of disciplinary proceedings or with a merely general objection to the disciplinary code might feel reluctant to continue in membership of the Union which in his eyes is identified with the disciplinary arrangements. He would be free to leave the Union without this affecting in any way his future prospects of employment in the industry. For seamen who were non-members there would be little reason for compunction about attacking the disciplinary system and the Union for taking part in it. This would hardly encourage N.U.S. officials to approach their duties under the industry's joint disciplinary procedure with judicial detachment, a sense of responsibility and a feeling of freedom from outside pressure.<sup>42</sup>

The report also emphasised the strength, authority, and stability which the closed shop gave, not only to the N.U.S. and through it to the N.M.B. and its satellite organizations, but also to the B.S.F. by preventing particular sections of employers seceding from it because of the problem it would cause them in recruiting labour.

Among the report's omissions, there are two which stand out as being of particular importance. The first and most difficult to justify is the virtual absence of any discussion of the Merchant Shipping Act, and its extensive influence on maritime industrial relations at all levels. The second is the failure to analyse the seagoing member's attitude to the union, or the reasons for his participation, or lack of it, in union policy making and elections. Both these omissions can, perhaps, be best explained by the political situation which gave rise to the appearance of the approved closed shop. The government had, after all, contravened its own Act's central principle by introducing the approved closed shop amendment specifically for seamen.

The approved closed shop agreement came into operation on January 1st, 1973. Despite all the interesting and enlightening manoeuvring, which in particular revealed the extremely high value the union places on the joint control of labour supply, what could not be foreseen was the series of events which would end the agreement just over a year later. The most important of these was the sudden death of the union's General Secretary, William Hogarth, in May 1973, precipitating a six-months' long election for his successor. One of the three candidates, James Slater, committed himself to compliance with the T.U.C. ruling. How far this was an influence in his victory it is impossible to estimate. He took up his new post in February 1974. A snap General Election in the following month returned a minority Labour Government, committed to repealing the Industrial Relations Act as one of its first priorities. Although the Act had a matter of weeks of existence left, the N.U.S. went through the

now academic, if symbolic, process of de-registering. Once the Act was finally removed, the union re-negotiated its closed shop agreement with the B.S.F. on very similar lines to those existing before the approved closed shop. The union's re-affiliation to the T.U.C. may be seen as a return to its previous position within the wider labour movement.

The repeal of the Industrial Relations Act allowed the industry to return to the problem of the adequacy of maritime industrial relations to meet the changed and changing circumstances. If anything, the problems had become more acute. For ratings, the decline in job opportunities continued, not only in terms of a reduction in the crew requirements of the U.K. fleet but also because of the increasing movement towards crews of convenience. The officers were experiencing a smaller but still important reduction in job opportunity, particularly if they wished to remain within the U.K. fleet. In addition, there was pressure from the employers for changes in the certificates of competency. Both these issues must have influenced the officers' decision to re-negotiate the closed shop<sup>43</sup> since this would not only increase membership but greatly strengthen their negotiating position and influence and make sure their voice was heard.

The need to have a strong voice in order to influence changes affecting the industry, was also felt by the employers. The amalgamation of the B.S.F. with the Chamber of Shipping may be seen in this light.

We have been finding that the interests of the two separate bodies are beginning to overlap and the single organisation in place of two is a more efficient way of running the industry... The merger will enable shipping to present a united front to the Government and demonstrate the value of shipping to the national economy.<sup>44</sup>

The employers' position had also been adversely affected by the downturn in freights following a long boom from 1968 to 1973 and they were, therefore, in 1974 increasingly conscious of anything that influenced costs.

By this time the emphasis had changed from a desire to re-shape industrial relations to meet a new and dynamic situation to a concern with efficient manpower planning. The general conclusion had been reached, especially by the G.C.B.S., that the ideal solution to what was now regarded as the manpower problem was to create a well-trained, stable, career-orientated labour force. However, the report of the Tavistock Institute showed how unrealistic this was without major changes in social attitudes and conditions of work at sea.<sup>45</sup>

To this end the Sealife programme was initiated in March 1975 by the employers, the unions and Department of Trade,

To examine ways in which life at sea in the U.K. shipping industry can be made more attractive to the U.K. seafarer, from which the effective use of manpower can be developed.<sup>46</sup>

Although the programme was jointly controlled it was funded by the Ship-owners. The programme was designed to last for five years, and its main conclusion appears to have been that individual companies should be encouraged to develop their own manpower policies based on three essential principles. These principles were: direct employment, that is labour being directly employed by individual companies rather than through the central pool; crew stability, that is to reduce changes in crew membership; and ship autonomy, increased shipboard involvement in day-to-day management and control of ship requirements.

This emphasis on individual action would not, however, obviate the need for a central supply system. Quite apart from the vested interest in centralized supply which had been illustrated by the reaction of all sides to the 1971 Act, the system ensured the retention of the casual labour on which the industry ultimately depended. The 1973 changes to the Established Service Scheme had decasualised the labour force at industry level but for the individual employer it ensured that he could still take on and discard labour at will.<sup>47</sup>

The programme was unable to offer any solution to the dual problem of the need to have flexible manpower planning, which required individual action, and the necessity and desire to maintain central joint control of supply. As the Chief Executive of Sealife pointed out:

Whether there will ever be an irresistible case for wholesale change of the centre piece of impermanence which holds together the whole set of manpower systems this industry has built up is difficult to judge. The author used to think it was self-evident but experience in Sealife has chastened his conviction about the U.K. industry's need, or indeed its ability to transform its central employment philosophy ... No-one can thus expect wholesale change in the industry's overall practice over other than a very long time-scale. These practices are there because they fill a need for the majority of those they represent and are necessarily characterised by a higher level of inertia because of the various representative structures which control them and the number of people involved.<sup>48</sup>

The failure to grasp the opportunities offered by Sealife for a restructuring of the central industrial relations institutions is perhaps less a lack of an irresistible case than because for the majority of the industry, the practice still filled a need. It is only in the last two or three years that the balance of advantage has moved away from the subjugation of individual freedom in centralised bargaining and towards company or small group bargaining, of which the North Sea oil rig supply ships were a first example.

This movement, brought about by commercial pressure and increasing emphasis on the quality and cost of labour, has challenged the central tenets of the collective bargaining structure; joint supply and the uniform wage. As far as joint supply is concerned, the Merchant Navy Establishment Scheme no longer fulfils the same need for all shipowners. The companies who contribute most are the large operators such as oil companies and container lines, yet it is this group who use the pool facilities least as they have individual manpower policies and employ their own company contract men. The small and medium sized companies in

the coastal and tramp trades depend more heavily on the centralised supply. These companies release crews when they return to the U.K., only retaining senior officers on their permanent staff; new crews are recruited from the pool just prior to sailing. These companies reap two advantages: they save the cost of retaining crews, which has become increasingly expensive as levels of pay have risen, and the cost per individual supplied from the central pool is lower. An analysis of this cost showed that over the whole industry, costs ranged from '£45 to £776 per individual supplied. The lower figure was the cost to a frequent user of the pool who employed many registered seafarers for seasonal work. The higher figure was the cost per individual supplied to a company that made relatively infrequent use of the pool, and which had a high proportion of permanent seafarers'.<sup>49</sup>

There is a dislike of cross-subsidisation on the part of the large companies and, therefore, no longer an industry-wide commitment to centralised joint supply by the employers. While a section of the industry is still anxious to retain joint supply and casual labour because of the cost advantage to them, there is no such commitment to the necessity to maintain a uniform wage for ratings through central bargaining. The uniform wage has never been a reality for officers, and for the ratings the loss of job opportunity has made security of employment a more important concern than wage levels or indeed joint supply. In spite of the diversity of interest and labour cost within the industry, there is almost general agreement that little is now to be gained by the uniform wage. The companies with large, technologically sophisticated capital, and in percentage terms low labour cost, recognise that the importance of retaining staff with high levels of skill justifies high wages, certainly above what would be negotiated within the N.M.B. On the other hand, companies with high labour costs such as cruise liners,

vessels engaged in the coastal, middle and ferry trades, are concerned that the level of the uniform wage will be influenced by the companies whose labour costs are low, as happened in the N.M.B. negotiations in the summer of 1981. Each company, therefore, tends to see the level of wages as an individual problem, requiring an individual solution. The N.U.S. are prepared to consider the individual company's situation and perhaps concede separate negotiations, because this approach is likely to result in a greater gain for security of employment than loss in terms of wages. The N.U.S. has for example, agreed to give consideration to the individual situation of the hard pressed shortsea and coastal companies who have sought exemption from the latest N.M.B. 8 per cent pay award.<sup>50</sup>

The principle of industry-wide negotiations has become increasingly unwieldy now that different parts of the industry face varying financial prospects. Furthermore, the uniform wage no longer achieves the industrial peace which was the aim when the N.M.B. was created, now the problems of establishing a uniform wage are such that its maintenance is more likely to encourage disputes than avoid them. The recent agreement between the Esso Company and the N.U.S. that the company should not be bound by national pay agreements, and should be exempt from strike action involving other companies, illustrates this point.<sup>51</sup> This appears to be a trend which is likely to continue, and which is being encouraged by the N.U.S. as a National Secretary commented:

The Esso deal is a model of agreements which other shipping companies can work out with the union.<sup>52</sup>

During the decade and a half since the 1966 strike, the shipping industry has become increasingly aware of the need for change in its industrial relations and manpower policies. The process which was begun as a result of the Pearson and Rochdale inquiries has continued to emphasise, particularly through Sealife, the need for modifications in order to meet the challenge of the U.K. fleet's loss of competitiveness.

It has now become obvious that the benefits to be gained from centralised bargaining, so important following the First World War, are rapidly diminishing for a large part of the industry.

NOTES

1. Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Shipping, Cmnd 4337 (HMSO, 1970), p. xv [Rochdale].
2. See Chapters 7 and 8 and Appendix I.
3. Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' associations 1965-1968, Report, Cmnd 3623 (HMSO, 1968), para. 734 [Donovan Commission].
4. See Guide to the New Consultative Machinery of the B.S.F., enclosure to BSF Circular 92/68, dated 29 November 1968.
- 4a. See Appendix VII.
5. Executive Council Minutes, May 1968..
6. The Seaman, May/June 1974.
7. National Board for Prices and Incomes, Pay and Conditions of Merchant Navy Officers, Cmnd 3302 (H.M.S.O., 1967), Report No. 35.
8. See Report of Annual General Meeting 1968.
9. A.D. Lane, 'The Officials on Shore', New Society, 11 May, p. 689.
10. The N.M.B. Year Book, 1971/2, pp. 43-4.
11. H.C. Debates, vol. 737, col. 896 (17 July 1969).
12. H.C. Debates, vol. 791, col. 1818 (19 November 1969).
13. N. Lewis, 'The Merchant Shipping Act 1970', Modern Law Review, vol. 24, January 1971, p. 55.
14. Final Report of the Court of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Shipping Industry, Cmnd 3211 (H.M.S.O., 1967), para. 229 [Pearson Report].
15. Repeal of s. 164 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894.
16. Minutes of the Proceedings of the A.G.M. of the N.U.S. 1970, p. 112.
17. Report of the Working Group on Discipline in the Merchant Navy, November 1975, p. iii.
18. *ibid.*, para. 20.
19. *ibid.*, p. 18, para. 1.
20. *ibid.*, para. 2.
21. *ibid.*, para. 3.

22. The N.M.B. Year Book, 1976/77, p. 40, paras. 53-8.
23. The revised Merchant Navy Establishment Scheme came into force on 7 October 1968. See N.M.B. Year Book, 1969.
24. The new agreement was effective from 5 March 1973. See N.M.B. Year Book, 1974.
25. Pearson Report, para. 81.
26. *ibid.*, Part 1, Section 7.
27. Report submitted to the Committee of Inquiry into Shipping by Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) Limited. London: Board of Trade, 1970.
28. Rochdale Committee, para. 83(ii).
29. Agency Shop Agreements made it a condition of employment for those covered by it to (a) belong to the registered trade union concerned, or (b) make an appropriate contribution to that union unless they have a conscientious objection both to belonging to the union and to contributing to it.
30. J. Lloyd, 'Conscripts or Volunteers? The N.U.S. and the Industrial Relations Act'. Unpublished manuscript, July 1973, p. 11.
31. M.N.A.O.A. Telegraph, June 1973, p. 2.
32. December 1970.
33. Commission on Industrial Relations, Approved Closed Shop Agreements: British Shipping Federation/National Union of Seamen, Report No. 30 (H.M.S.O., 1972), para. 78.
34. The TUC had issued instructions that its members should not co-operate in any way with the implementation of the Industrial Relations Act.
35. M.N.A.O.A. Telegraph, 1971, letter columns.
36. February 1972.
37. Lloyd, *op.cit.*, p. 28.
38. 14 March 1972.
39. Commission on Industrial Relations, *op.cit.*
40. *ibid.*, para. 54.
41. *ibid.*, para. 47.

42. *ibid.*, para. 85.
43. The 1970 pre-entry re-entry agreement was reinstated and the closed shop for officers was finally achieved in 1977.
44. Lloyd's List 7th March 1974 - statement by the President of the new General Council of British Shipping.
45. J.M.M. Hill, The Seafaring Career, Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1972.
46. Sealife Bulletin No. 1, 1976.
47. Sealife Intermediate Report on Central Manpower Supply to the Merchant Navy 1978.
48. P. Sharpe, U.K. Merchant Navy Manpower System and the Case for Change, November 1979, pp. 11-12.
49. Sealife Second Report and Recommendations, December 1978, Fig. 10 and page 31.
50. Lloyd's List, 5.2.1982.
51. *ibid.*
52. *ibid.* N.B. Cunard and P. & O. cruise operators have previously been separated from national settlements. Also see The Telegraph, vol. 13, no. 9, September 1981; vol. 14, no. 1, January 1982.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSION

The N.M.B., core of shipping industrial relations and a product of the reconstruction period and a commitment to Whitleyism following the First World War, is shaped by the industry it serves; its structure reflects the structure of the labour force, the nature of the workplace and the technology of the period. Apart from the political considerations the Board was established to meet a number of needs, the most important one being to avoid the economic and social consequences of a return to the pre-war experience of industrial relations by confrontation. The setting up of the bi-partite N.M.B. had advantages for both sides. For the ratings it provided the opportunity to consolidate the position of their main representative organisation, the N.S.F.U. (later the N.U.S.) and so improve the pay and conditions of their members. The officers' organisations recognised the possible advantages of national bargaining and therefore also participated. In the case of the employers the establishment of a uniform wage and the joint control of the supply of ratings, central elements of the N.M.B., meant they were prepared to sacrifice the advantages of individual national competitiveness in order that they could pursue their own commercial business and concentrate on the increasing international competition.

The initial success of the N.M.B. was in part due to the economic climate of the inter-war years and only small modifications were made to meet post second world war needs. The Established Service Scheme extended and strengthened the principle of joint supply institutionalising the degree of casualty on which the industry depended, and for the next two decades, industrial relations in the industry remained virtually

unchanged. These two decades were, however, ones which saw the industry undergo major changes both nationally and internationally as a result of a redefinition of the patterns of world trade, particularly with reference to bulk cargoes and the opening up of new markets, together with the emergence of fleets belonging to countries not regarded as being traditionally maritime nations. The U.K. lost her maritime supremacy despite the growth in world seaborne trade. This appears to have been due to her inability, or unwillingness, to take early advantage of technological change or venture into new trade areas apart from the development of containerisation, thus allowing competitors to usurp her position.

The result has been a decline in the demand for labour and an increasing concern with labour unit cost exacerbated more recently either by U.K. shipowners taking the benefits of economies of scale or by their moving to cheaper crew flags. Furthermore, the need to respond to increasing specialisation has brought a greater diversity of interest with a number of companies merely seeing shipping either as part of a production process or one element in a broad spectrum of company interests, providing less common ground on which to bargain nationally. This individualistic approach is, to a large extent, due to the fact that change has not affected all sections of the industry equally. For example, although all shipowners felt the impact of the new technology, the implications in terms of capital costs was greater, say, for the liner companies than for coastal shipping, and the interests of the employers have become increasingly diverse. In the case of the employees, it was the ratings who bore the brunt of change with drastic loss of job opportunity, while the officers were much less seriously affected. They have been concerned with maintaining their traditional position, whilst attempting to reconcile it with a more militant approach to collective bargaining. This latter attitude owes as much to changes in the wider society, such

as the growth of white collar unionism, as it does to causes within the shipping industry itself.

It is perhaps to the credit of the N.M.B. and the participant organizations that the industry has undergone these changes and the pressures they have created with only one major dispute, the official strike of 1966. Nevertheless, to judge the success of the N.M.B. in a period of change merely on the criteria of the lack of official strikes, denies the pressure on and dynamics within the other industrial relations organizations. An examination of the experience of the ratings illustrates the existence of underlying discontent for at least a decade before its culmination in the official strike. In part, the spasmodic unofficial agitation was against the N.U.S. itself, as the rank and file felt the shore-based officials were unprepared to recognise the extent to which they were out of touch with the membership. There was also a discontent with the general conditions and status of the seamen, which were not keeping pace with the changes ashore. Throughout the period three main issues regularly re-emerged; the 56 hour week, low wages and the discipline imposed by the Merchant Shipping Acts. While the 1966 strike was a culmination of long run discontent with the N.U.S., complicated by the existence of an incomes policy, it also highlighted the wide range of problems all sectors of the industry were facing. It could be argued that the peace experienced within the industry until that time, was harmony by default. The Pearson Inquiry and the Rochdale Report confirmed the extent to which the industry was being challenged and the strains this had created for the existing industrial relations organizations.

The industry, and to some extent the government, were forced to recognise that the traditional concept of the seaman, and the centralised and uniform solutions of the N.M.B., were not necessarily suited to the demands of the 1980s. This is perhaps epitomised by the modifications

to the Merchant Shipping Acts. There is no doubt that the upheavals in the industry in the second half of the 1960s gave the impetus for the Acts of 1970 and 1974; they also reflect the contemporary attitude of the wider society that seamen should be awarded similar rights to shore workers. The industry attempted to resolve some of its problems by setting up the Sealife programme and its demise may be seen as an indication of the industry's unpreparedness at that stage to accept the challenge and make radical changes in the industrial relations structure. In the mid-1970s it seemed likely that continuing technological change and foreign competition would result in substantial changes to the structure of the workplace and would in turn require a reorganization of the N.M.B. based as it was on a steam technology. However, this 'evolution' has been pre-empted by the commercial realities of a national and international recession.

The central position of the N.M.B. and joint supply have remained unchallenged until recently. It is only with the incontrovertible evidence of the differing and to a large extent unattractive financial prospects of individual companies, and the continuing loss of job opportunities, that new approaches have become imperative. This appears to be resulting in a positive movement away from central to company bargaining rather than attempting modifications to the N.M.B. The joint supply scheme which married reliability to casualty is no longer of prime importance with the establishment of all seafarers and the increase of all grades on company contracts, and, of course, the availability of a cheap alternative labour force. The same is true of wage levels; the advantages offered by uniformity in 1921 no longer apply to shipping operating in the international economy of the 1980s. The growth in capital cost has emphasised the importance of flexibility and the need for priority to be given to individual operating and consequently labour costs. The question of manpower policy in respect of both recruitment and reward

becomes therefore an individual rather than a collective concern. The principles of joint supply and a uniform wage on which the N.M.B. was founded and which solved the problems existing following the First World War no longer achieve the commercial freedom which is necessary for survival in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

## APPENDIX I

### DETAILS OF THE MAIN PARTICIPANTS IN THE NATIONAL MARITIME BOARD

#### THE EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATION

##### General Council of British Shipping

(formerly known as the British Shipping Federation)  
( " " as the Shipping Federation Limited)

Until 1975 the employers had two main national representative bodies, the Chamber of Shipping and the Shipping Federation. The former was created in 1878 in order to coordinate the view of shipowners on important matters of policy and to provide a channel to make these known to the government and the general public. The Shipping Federation was established in 1890 to combat the emergence of New Unionism among seafarers and in particular to indemnify owners involved in labour disputes. It has formulated and implemented the shipowners' manpower policy ever since. The Federation has been influenced extensively by its relationship with the N.M.B. The establishment of a uniform wage scale for ratings removed the opportunity for competitive, individual wage bargaining and therefore, the ability of individual shipowners to dissent from Federation policy.

Whilst the Federation represents the majority of shipowners, there are some exceptions. For example, they do not represent some short sea traders, in particular the British Rail Ferries. But the most important group outside the Federation until 1967 was the Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool, an association formed for a similar purpose but one which in the main preferred to pursue its own independent course. However, in 1967 the two associations amalgamated in the British Shipping Federation.

The basis of the original organization of the Federation was in the local Protection and Indemnity Associations, and even in 1949 when 12.4M tons were entered into the Federation, 64 per cent were still entered through club membership, the remainder being entered direct by individual companies. The method of finance was the same for both groups, a levy on tonnage entered. Until its reorganization in 1968, after it became the British Shipping Federation, its authority came from twenty-three district shipowner committees. The committees were consulted on the issues under consideration by the Federation. In addition to this, the chairmen of the principle Federation districts were members of the main administrative body, the General Purposes Committee. The ultimate policy maker, the Executive Council, had 140 members, 49 appointed by the Protection and Indemnity Clubs, 9 by the District Committees and 42 from the individually entered companies. In 1968 the membership was grouped into five geographical areas, each of which has its own committee and elects representatives to the five national trade committees. The Chairman of each area committee, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each trade committee, make up the 28 members of the Central Executive Committee. This is now the main decision making body but it is responsible to the Annual General Meeting.

In 1975, the Chamber of Shipping and the British Shipping Federation amalgamated into the General Council of British Shipping.

Since the First World War, the Federation has been involved directly with the training of ratings related to its concern for controlling supply. For example, in 1918 the Gravesend Sea School for deck and catering boys was established. It was administered by the Federation with substantial financial support from the Treasury, and the Board of Governors had representatives from the ratings union and the Board of Trade. Within a short time this school supplied two thirds of the trained ratings entering the industry. The introduction

of a statutory 'Lifeboat Certificate' necessitated the opening of additional seamanship schools under Federation administration. The first was established in London in 1927, others being opened later in five major ports. The function of these schools was broadened by the government's belated ratification of the Seattle Convention (1946) which insisted that in future any seaman wishing to become an Able Seaman must first be successful in a practical examination, known in the U.K. as the Efficient Deck Hand's Certificate. A rating would serve as an Efficient Deck Hand until he had sufficient sea time (4 years actually at sea) to qualify as an A.B. They were also indirectly concerned with apprenticeship and cadet schemes for potential officers although their recruitment was generally carried out by individual companies. In 1934, the Federation set up an Advisory Committee to study and develop a basic system of apprentices and cadets training. The outcome was establishment of the Central Board for the Training of Officers for the Merchant Services which in 1942 became the Merchant Navy Training Board. In 1947, the Federation widened its functions to include the Administration of the newly implemented Established Service Scheme.

#### EMPLOYEES ORGANIZATIONS

##### Officers' Organizations

Whilst there is some overlap in the areas from which membership is drawn, the officers' organizations attempt to satisfy what they regard as their particular field of concern and recruitment. What is evident, to differing degrees, within these organizations, is the largely unresolved conflict as to whether they are merely professional bodies or trade unions. The problem is one of ideological duality between being equated with professionals in terms of the quasi-military

hierarchy, yet being an employee with a status not necessarily accepted outside the industry. Superficially at one extreme is the Mercantile Marine Services Association (M.M.S.A.) considering itself purely a professional body with the massive Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (A.U.E.W.) unquestionably a trade union standing at the other extreme.

#### The Mercantile Marine Services Association

The Mercantile Marine Services Association was formed in 1857 and in 1942 it entered into an agreement to limit its areas of recruitment to Masters to minimize competition between the various officers' organizations. It is not affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, therefore long term figures of membership are not easily accessible. In 1975 their potential sea-going membership was 1,900 plus some 1,500 'retired' members making an estimated possible membership of 3,400. On this basis it may be assumed that their potential membership, during the period under consideration, was in the region of 4,000 to 5,000.

The Association's general administration is conducted by a professional General Secretary and a small staff of officials. The governing body is the Executive Council, with one-third being nominated, and, if necessary elected, each year. Elections take place by way of a postal ballot but this is a very rare occurrence. The membership of the Council falls into two categories, sea-going and retired members, and it is difficult to achieve a balance between them, by the nature of their profession the sea-going members are hard to attract. The Association dedicates a substantial part of its Annual Report and its quarterly journal The M.M.S.A. Reporter, to encouraging them to become Council members, emphasising that whilst it may be impossible for them to attend all but a minority of Council meetings, their use as

correspondents and as a line of communication is of foremost importance. The campaign has achieved some success for since the early 1960s the majority has been reversed from one overwhelmingly of retired members to a Council containing somewhere in the region of 75 per cent seagoing members. Nevertheless, this percentage may belie the actual influence of these members within the Council because of their irregular attendance, while the admittedly now smaller group of retired members would be able to attend the Council's ten meetings a year providing a consistent element and presumably a strongly conservative influence. It is interesting to look at the age range of the councillors; taking 1973, for example, there were none under 43 years of age and out of a Council numbering 43, no less than 26 were over 53, of those four were in excess of 75 years of age. An age distribution further emphasising the traditional outlook of the M.M.S.A.

The retired members of the Council have a particularly important role in that they occupy the vast majority of seats on the independent Welfare Branch Committee. This Committee controls the extensive philanthropic element of the M.M.S.A.'s work, which includes a number of pension funds, residential and other properties in Mariner's Park, Wallasey, and until 1968 it was responsible for the educational role of the Association through the training school H.M.S. Conway. The Association's function as protector of its members professional status remains important; indemnity is paid to members whose certificate are cancelled or suspended, legal aid is also provided.

While the Association's representations to government and other seafaring organizations has been adequate, its collective bargaining representation has been seriously limited. For while the Association was represented at the infrequent meetings of the whole National Maritime Board, the Masters' Panel itself was only rarely convened. Hence when the Association wished to negotiate on the expansion of Masters

clerical work and other matters it was confronted with substantial difficulties. The M.M.S.A. 115th Annual Report in 1962 commented on the Masters' Panel:

This Panel comprises twelve members on either side, and of the Shipmasters twelve representatives only six come from the M.M.S.A. and other interested officers' organisations. The remaining six must be serving shipmasters elected by seagoing shipmasters by means of a ballot conducted by their colleagues 'in accordance with a system to be mutually agreed' between the shipowners and the shipmasters' and officers' organisations. The difficulties confronting any who wish to convene a meeting of the Shipmasters' Panel explains why no meetings were held between 1921 and 1943, and no meeting has been held since 1945.

The Shipmasters' Panel was reconstituted in 1964 giving the M.M.S.A. similar negotiating rights on the Board as are enjoyed by other representative organizations. Not only did the lack of a specific Masters' Panel meeting inhibit collective negotiations as directly related to the officers, but it must be remembered that it also impaired the societies ability to make its views felt on general questions particularly important when they impinged on what might be regarded as the Masters' prerogative, for example, the desire of the National Union of Seamen to introduce shipboard representation in 1963.

The Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association

(formerly known as The Navigation and Airline Officers' Union  
" " " The Navigation and Engineer Officers' Union)

This Association developed out of the N.E.O.U. which was formed in 1935 by the Navigators' and General Insurance Company, which was established in 1921 to provide insurance and legal defence for officers against the cancellation and suspension of certificates of competency and which soon developed wider interest in the welfare of its members, necessitating the formation of a union. It became known as the Navigation and Airline Officers' Union when a group of officers employed by the British Overseas Airways Corporation became members in 1946.

The N.A.O.U. remained one of the officers' representative organizations until 1956 when it amalgamated with the Marine Engineers Union and it then became known as the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association. The daily administration of the M.N.A.O.A. is under the control of the General Secretary and his national assistants based in London. There are also eleven district offices situated in the major ports, and an office in Rotterdam, all combined with the N.M.S.A. The supreme authority within the association is the Biennial General Meeting, which elects the General Secretary on a permanent basis, although he can be dismissed by a 75 per cent vote of the Executive Council. All members are invited to the meeting with some 70 volunteers having their expenses paid. Between Biennial Meetings, the Executive Council is the controlling body and the only one with the right to call an official strike. The Council consists of a President (when one is appointed) and thirty-six members, four, the General Secretary and three trustees, being non-elected. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected by the Council from its membership. The Council is composed of 24 national members, these are formed into sections in a manner suitable to provide for the representation of Navigation, Engineers and Air Section officers and pursers and catering department officers. There are also a maximum of 8 area members, these represent overseas areas and their function is to secure as far as possible equalization of representation. In addition to the non-elected members, officials of the Association can be elected to the Council. The Association, like its predecessor, has no political affiliation and collects no political levy and no union rule exists for the creation of such a levy. Membership of the T.U.C. does not interfere with this aim for delegates are expressly prohibited from participation in, and of the political debates. Since the amalgamation, the M.N.A.O.A. has stressed its position as a professional association without jeopardising its efficiency as a trade union.

The Association affiliated to the T.U.C. 10,320 members in 1948 and 35,050 in 1980. For details see Appendix below.

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (A.U.E.W.)  
(formerly known as the Amalgamated Engineering Union)

The Amalgamated Engineering Union, since known as the A.U.E.W., represents seagoing engineers which are a small proportion of their total union membership. The number of seagoing engineers in the union is, extremely difficult to estimate since records of this specific group are not maintained. Members are deemed to be working or residing in the branch or district where contributions are paid, and this may well be an inland branch. Seagoing members do have special benefits in that there are facilities for the payment of changes of contribution due to absence at sea, shipwreck benefits and unemployment benefit while sitting for a Department of Trade certificate of competence. However, the provision made for seagoing members is limited; there is no provision for insurance nor is the A.U.E.W. a member of the officers' international organization.

The basic difference between the A.U.E.W. and the other maritime unions and associations is that whilst the latter perceive themselves firstly as guardians of a unique group of members, seafarers, and secondly as protectors of a grade or group within the industry, the A.U.E.W. consider their members' professional positions as engineers pre-eminent and the fact that they happen to be in the seagoing section as of minor importance. An element emphasised by the main line of communication members are encouraged to use, which is to write to their home branch or district secretary. There is no special newsheet or publication specifically for seagoing members.

Radio and Electronic Officers Union

(formerly known as the Radio Officers' Union)

(formerly known as the Association of Wireless and Cable Telegraphists)

The Radio Officers' Union came into being in 1938 and was formerly known as the Association of Wireless and Cable Telegraphists. It did not join the reconstituted National Maritime Board until 1942, when a Radio Officers' Panel was established. In 1967 the union changed its title to the Radio and Electronic Officers' Union. The union's basic strength lies in the legal requirements that the majority of vessels must carry radio operators. To qualify for membership, an individual must hold a Department of Trade Certificate of Competency or its equivalent. The governing body of the union is an elected Executive Committee, consisting of 18 members representing different areas of the union's activity; of these 12 are full members from the Marine Section, one member each from the Trawler Fishing section and the Civil Service section, with two members each coming from the Air section and the Inspectors and Technical employees section.

Executive elections are held annually, members being allowed to hold office for a period not exceeding three years, except in certain circumstances when a further two years can be added. Candidates must be nominated by at least ten members of good standing. In the Marine section difficulties are experienced in securing enough candidates to fill the vacancies and elections in this section are often foregone. This is despite official encouragement, assistance being offered to secure the necessary ten signatures for nomination, since a single deep sea operator may find the problem of procuring these an insuperable task.

The Executive Council, in addition to the 18 elected members, has a number of union officials as ex-officio members, these are the General Secretary, the Treasurer and the three Assistant Secretaries,

with the four district secretaries being co-opted when necessary. The voting power of these officials is at the discretion of the lay chairman at each meeting. Both Chairman and Vice-Chairman being elected annually from their own number, and these are positions which paid officials cannot occupy by rule. The Council is notable in possessing full power to alter, amend or rescind rules without reference to any other body. Such authority over the rules is unusual.

The administration of the union is under the control of the General Secretary and his assistant in the London headquarters, the needs of the other major ports being catered for by their own District Secretaries. It is affiliated to both the British and the Scottish T.U.C. but has no political affiliations. Internationally, it is an affiliate of the I.T.F. and the International Federation of Radio Officers.

The union does not appear to suffer from the conflict of attitudes evident in the other officers' organizations, as to whether they are a professional association or a trade union; their first rule states its objective is 'To promote and extend the adoption of trade union principles, and to affiliate with such other Trade Unions and Federation of Trade Unions as in the opinion of the Executive Committee may appear desirable'. Another unusual feature of an officers' union, or any maritime union in the U.K., was the very early introduction (1920) of a scheme of maintaining contact between the central office and the widely dispersed membership, known as the honorary delegate scheme. The duties of these delegates are to assist and recruit members and to facilitate a two-way flow of information. A process assisted by the publication in the same year of the Radiograph, in the following year renamed the Signal, a bi-monthly journal. In addition, honorary delegates receive monthly and special bulletins. Contact with the membership is also possible through the occasional General Meeting and the regular

monthly district meetings. In the Autumn of 1971, a collective call sign for the N.M.B. was allocated and while costs are still high it is now possible to communicate swiftly on matters of immediate interest to the membership of all the industry's unions while at sea.

The union affiliated to the T.U.C. 5,291 members in 1948 and 3,691 in 1980. For details see Appendix below.

#### THE RATINGS

##### The National Union of Seamen

(formerly known as the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union)  
( " " " the National Amalgamated Sailors' and Firemen's Union)

The National Union of Seamen has had a continuous existence since the N.A.S.F.U. was formed in 1887. It achieved permanent national status during the 1914-1918 war and became known as the N.U.S. in 1926. The union has a long standing pre-entry closed shop agreement with the employers negotiated through the N.M.B. in the 1920s. The union represents all ratings, although the catering department was not completely organized until 1942.

The branch is the focal point of union activity and it is at branch meetings that resolutions formulated and delegates elected to the General Meeting. The General Meeting is the principal policy making body and the supreme authority within the union. Since 1974, the meetings have been biennial; prior to that they were held every year. The branches, through their regions, elect 66 delegates, 51 seagoing members who are eligible if they have three or more years sea service, the remaining 15 being union officials. The Executive Council are allowed to determine the number of officials attending within an upper limit of 30 per cent of the total delegation from an electoral region. Every third biennial meeting possesses the power to alter, amend, rescind or introduce new rules, a special meeting may be constituted in the interim should it prove necessary.

Between General Meetings, the Executive Council is the management and policy making body within the union. The Council is elected every two years and consists of 17 seagoing members, representing the three departments chosen by ballot of each region, and five senior officials. The whole membership only directly elects one official, the General Secretary. This is a permanent appointment, although dismissal is theoretically possible by the Executive Council convening a special meeting.

Since the Second World War the union has experienced a severe contraction in membership, see Appendix below. This has resulted in a contraction in the number of union branches and the professional officials necessary to administer them. In 1966, the number of these officials was 160 or one official to every 340 members; by 1974 it had declined to 93 officials, 1 to every 480 members. This is still an exceptionally high ratio when compared to the average of all U.K. trade unions of one official to every 3,800 and is, of course, a reflection of the difficulties of organizing seafarers. In the early 1960s there were 50 branches, 40 of them in Britain; by 1978 this has contracted to 25.

The union affiliated to the T.U.C. 55,000 members in 1948 and 47,040 in 1980. For details see Appendix below.

TABLE A.1

AN INDICATION OF MEMBERSHIP OF SEAFARERS' UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS  
AS AFFILIATED TO THE T.U.C. 1948 TO 1980

| Year | <u>National Union<br/>of Seamen</u> | <u>Merchant Navy and<br/>Airline Officers'<br/>Association</u> <sup>a</sup> | <u>Radio and Electronic<br/>Officers' Union</u> <sup>b</sup> |
|------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1948 | 55,000                              | 10,320  | 5,291  |
| 1949 | 55,000                              | 11,000  | 5,300  |
| 1950 | 60,000                              | 11,000  | 5,300  |
| 1951 | 60,000                              | 11,000  | 6,023  |
| 1952 | 60,000                              | 12,000  | 4,461  |
| 1953 | 62,500                              | 12,000  | 4,331  |
| 1954 | 62,500                              | 12,000  | 4,434  |
| 1955 | 62,500                              | 12,000  | 4,499  |
| 1956 | 62,500                              | 12,000  | 4,528  |
| 1957 | 62,500                              | 14,500  | 4,482  |
| 1958 | 62,500                              | 14,500  | 4,403  |
| 1959 | 62,500                              | 14,500  | 4,332  |
| 1960 | 62,500                              | 15,500  | 4,029  |
| 1961 | 62,500                              | 15,500  | 3,890  |
| 1962 | 62,500                              | 16,000  | 3,854  |
| 1963 | 62,500                              | 16,000  | 3,521  |
| 1964 | 62,500                              | 17,000  | 3,504  |
| 1965 | 62,500                              | 18,300  | 3,489  |
| 1966 | 62,500                              | 20,000  | 3,354  |
| 1967 | 62,500                              | 20,000  | 3,070  |
| 1968 | 62,500                              | 20,000  | 2,959  |
| 1969 | 56,000                              | 20,000  | 2,823  |
| 1970 | 56,000                              | 20,000  | 2,716  |
| 1971 | 54,000                              | 21,000  | 2,963  |
| 1972 | 54,000                              | 21,000  | 3,214  |
| 1973 | (43,136) <sup>c</sup>               | 25,024  | 3,188  |
| 1974 | 43,386                              | 25,024  | 3,151  |
| 1975 | 43,300                              | 26,100  | 3,441  |
| 1976 | 43,300                              | 30,050  | 3,548  |
| 1977 | 41,919                              | 36,005  | 3,600  |
| 1978 | 44,400                              | 42,200  | 4,360  |
| 1979 | 40,000                              | 43,750  | 3,926  |
| 1980 | 47,040                              | 35,050  | 3,691  |

a. Including some airline personnel and after 1970 some employees of shipping companies. See Appendix I Table A.2.

b. Including some shore radio operators.

c. Expelled in that year.

N.B. The M.M.S.A. is not affiliated. The A.U.E.W. affiliates its total membership of over 1 million and therefore is meaningless in seafaring terms.

TABLE A.2

M.N.A.O.A. MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

|  | 1969          | 1973          | 1975          | 1977              | 1979              | 1981              |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Navigating Officers<br>(Masters)             | 10,200        | 10,000        | 9,252         | 11,023            | 13,056<br>(970)   | 10,760<br>(1,349) |
| Engineer Officers<br>(Electrical)            | 9,000         | 10,000        | 10,883        | 14,960<br>(1,694) | 17,935<br>(2,458) | 14,363<br>(1,805) |
| Deck Cadets                                  | 1,800         | 2,000         | 3,334         | 4,613             | 5,275             | 2,793             |
| Engineer Cadets                              | 600           | 750           | 984           | 1,551             | 2,057             | 1,630             |
| Pursers, Catering Etc.<br>(Medical Officers) | -             | 1,000         | 1,040         | 1,778<br>(12)     | 2,158<br>(16)     | 1,778<br>(28)     |
| Air  | 600           | 1,000         | 793           | 827               | 888               | 779               |
| Shore Staff                                  | -             | 400           | 298           | 539               | 707               | 486               |
| Fishing Officers                             | -             | -             | -             | -                 | 58                | 106               |
| Associate - Retired<br>(Reduced Rate)        | 2,500         | 1,000         | 1,506         | 1,540             | 1,624<br>(137)    | 1,507<br>(77)     |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>24,700</b> | <b>26,150</b> | <b>28,090</b> | <b>36,831</b>     | <b>43,758</b>     | <b>34,202</b>     |

SOURCE: Rochdale, Privately supplied information, M.N.A.O.A. and M.N.A.O.A. Council's Report to the General Meeting 1975, 77, 79 and 1981.

APPENDIX II

TABLE A.3

U.K. FLEET TONNAGE AND % OF WORLD TONNAGE FOR  
SELECTED YEARS 1919 - 1979

100 Gross Registered Tons and over (000)

| Year<br>(Dec) | Non Tankers      |                       | Tankers          |                       | Total            |                       |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
|               | <u>U.K. Tons</u> | <u>% of<br/>World</u> | <u>U.K. Tons</u> | <u>% of<br/>World</u> | <u>U.K. Tons</u> | <u>% of<br/>World</u> |
| 1919          | 15,300           | 34.0                  | 1,000            | 34.5                  | 16,300           | 34.1                  |
| 1929          | 17,800           | 30.0                  | 2,200            | 31.0                  | 20,000           | 30.2                  |
| 1939          | 14,936           | 26.2                  | 2,955            | 25.5                  | 17,891           | 26.1                  |
| 1949          | 14,328           | 21.6                  | 3,765            | 23.4                  | 18,093           | 21.9                  |
| 1959          | 14,368           | 16.5                  | 6,389            | 16.9                  | 20,757           | 16.6                  |
| 1969          | 13,659           | 10.2                  | 10,187           | 13.2                  | 23,844           | 11.3                  |
| 1979          | 14,638           | 6.1                   | 13,312           | 7.6                   | 27,951           | 6.7                   |

SOURCE: Lloyds Register.

APPENDIX III

TABLE A.4

TOTAL SEAMEN, RATINGS AND OFFICERS 1949-1980

(Total in 000s)

|               | <u>All Seamen</u> | <u>Ratings</u> | <u>Officers and Cadets</u> |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Jan 1949      | 140.56            | 93.35          | 44.84                      |
| 50            | 143.44            | 95.62          | 45.22                      |
| 51            | 144.77            | 95.40          | 46.55                      |
| 52            | 145.70            | 95.81          | 47.03                      |
| 53            | 144.69            | 94.02          | 47.66                      |
| 54            | 144.54            | 93.22          | 48.35                      |
| 55            | 149.01            | 95.48          | 50.12                      |
| 56            | 151.19            | 97.09          | 50.38                      |
| 57            | 152.18            | 96.94          | 51.51                      |
| 58            | 151.52            | 94.84          | 53.18                      |
| 59            | 143.08            | 87.75          | 52.02                      |
| 60            | 141.45            | 86.51          | 51.74                      |
| 61            | 144.81            | 89.83          | 51.71                      |
| 62            | 146.71            | 90.51          | 52.98                      |
| 63            | 133.31            | 79.27          | 51.29                      |
| 64            | 125.28            | 73.17          | 49.56                      |
| 65            | 122.83            | 71.81          | 48.49                      |
| 66            | 119.09            | 68.97          | 47.38                      |
| 67            | 113.38            | 64.77          | 45.97                      |
| 68            | 107.18            | 59.33          | 45.47                      |
| 69            | 99.41             | 54.62          | 42.71                      |
| 70            | 98.48             | 53.77          | 42.57                      |
| 71            | 98.93             | 52.62          | 44.17                      |
| 72            | 95.90             | 49.49          | 44.37                      |
| Dec 72        | 89.58             | 44.67          | 43.09                      |
| 73            | 89.97             | 39.81          | 47.67                      |
| 74            | 88.72             | 40.54          | 46.74                      |
| 75            | 88.98             | 39.16          | 48.68                      |
| 76            | 81.81             | 34.81          | 45.96                      |
| 77            | 78.12             | 32.60          | 44.62                      |
| 78            | 76.70             | 32.50          | 43.07                      |
| 79            | 72.06             | 31.63          | 39.47                      |
| 80            | 69.16             | 30.32          | 37.29                      |
| X Change 1980 |                   |                |                            |
| 1949=100      | 49.2              | 32.5           | 83.2                       |
| 1957=100      | 45.4              | 31.3           | 72.4                       |

SOURCE: Register of Seamen and G.C.B.S.

TABLE A.5

TOTAL OFFICERS AND BY DEPARTMENT (INCLUDING CADETS AND APPRENTICES)  
1949-1980

(Total in 000s)

|        | <u>All Officers</u> | <u>Masters and Deck</u> | <u>Engine Room</u> | <u>Radio</u> |
|--------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Jan 49 | 44.84               | 20.14                   | 21.58              | 3.12         |
| 50     | 45.22               | 19.96                   | 22.14              | 3.12         |
| 51     | 46.55               | 20.37                   | 22.94              | 3.24         |
| 52     | 47.03               | 20.47                   | 23.35              | 3.21         |
| 53     | 47.66               | 20.67                   | 23.77              | 3.22         |
| 54     | 48.35               | 20.87                   | 24.12              | 3.35         |
| 55     | 50.12               | 21.06                   | 25.55              | 3.51         |
| 56     | 50.38               | 20.94                   | 26.00              | 3.44         |
| 57     | 51.51               | 20.97                   | 27.12              | 3.41         |
| 58     | 53.18               | 21.39                   | 28.44              | 3.35         |
| 59     | 52.02               | 21.10                   | 27.46              | 3.46         |
| 60     | 51.74               | 20.72                   | 27.58              | 3.44         |
| 61     | 51.71               | 20.74                   | 27.54              | 3.43         |
| 62     | 52.98               | 20.75                   | 28.73              | 3.50         |
| 63     | 51.29               | 20.36                   | 27.50              | 3.44         |
| 64     | 49.56               | 19.97                   | 26.27              | 3.37         |
| 65     | 48.49               | 19.55                   | 25.57              | 3.37         |
| 66     | 47.38               | 18.88                   | 25.23              | 3.27         |
| 67     | 45.97               | 18.16                   | 24.65              | 3.16         |
| 68     | 45.47               | 17.45                   | 24.91              | 3.11         |
| 69     | 42.71               | 16.51                   | 23.28              | 2.92         |
| 70     | 42.57               | 16.27                   | 23.34              | 2.96         |
| 71     | 44.17               | 16.48                   | 24.73              | 2.96         |
| 72     | 44.37               | 16.70                   | 24.73              | 2.94         |
| Dec 72 | 43.09               | 16.74                   | 23.47              | 2.88         |
| 73     | 47.67               | 16.12                   | 25.02              | 3.02         |
| 74     | 46.74               | 15.90                   | 25.71              | 3.01         |
| 75     | 48.68               | 17.00                   | 26.28              | 3.24         |
| 76     | 45.96               | 16.52                   | 24.34              | 3.01         |
| 77     | 44.62               | 15.99                   | 23.68              | 3.00         |
| 78     | 43.07               | 15.59                   | 22.73              | 2.84         |
| 79     | 39.47               | 14.93                   | 20.36              | 2.50         |
| 80     | 37.29               | 14.17                   | 16.87              | 2.33         |

% Change 1980

|          |      |      |      |      |
|----------|------|------|------|------|
| 1949=100 | 83.2 | 70.4 | 78.2 | 79.7 |
| 1957=100 | 72.4 | 67.6 | 62.2 | 68.3 |

TABLE A.6  
TOTAL RATINGS AND BY DEPARTMENT 1949-1980  
 (Total in 000s)

|                      | <u>All Ratings</u> | <u>Deck</u> | <u>Engine Room</u> | <u>Catering</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Jan 49               | 93.35              | 39.90       | 23.94              | 36.50           |
| 50                   | 95.62              | 33.14       | 23.03              | 39.44           |
| 51                   | 95.40              | 33.02       | 21.42              | 40.96           |
| 52                   | 95.81              | 33.46       | 20.32              | 42.04           |
| 53                   | 94.02              | 33.08       | 19.43              | 41.51           |
| 54                   | 93.22              | 32.96       | 19.00              | 41.27           |
| 55                   | 95.48              | 33.11       | 18.86              | 43.51           |
| 56                   | 97.09              | 33.16       | 18.74              | 45.20           |
| 57                   | 96.94              | 33.65       | 18.57              | 44.72           |
| 58                   | 94.84              | 33.27       | 17.81              | 43.77           |
| 59                   | 87.75              | 31.30       | 16.12              | 40.32           |
| 60                   | 86.51              | 30.99       | 15.72              | 39.80           |
| 61                   | 89.83              | 31.94       | 15.95              | 41.94           |
| 62                   | 90.51              | 31.95       | 15.40              | 43.16           |
| 63                   | 79.27              | 28.68       | 13.58              | 37.01           |
| 64                   | 73.17              | 26.46       | 12.41              | 34.30           |
| 65                   | 71.81              | 25.77       | 11.55              | 34.49           |
| 66                   | 68.97              | 24.92       | 10.78              | 33.27           |
| 67                   | 64.77              | 23.66       | 10.02              | 31.09           |
| 68                   | 59.33              | 21.73       | 9.44               | 28.16           |
| 69                   | 54.62              | 20.14       | 8.87               | 25.61           |
| 70                   | 53.77              | 19.60       | 8.73               | 25.44           |
| 71                   | 52.62              | 19.01       | 8.38               | 25.23           |
| 72                   | 49.49              | 18.10       | 8.05               | 23.35           |
| Dec 72               | 44.67              | 16.74       | 7.35               | 20.58           |
| 73                   | 39.81              | 14.35       | 5.42               | 18.01           |
| 74                   | 40.54              | 14.61       | 5.77               | 18.83           |
| 75                   | 39.16              | 14.59       | 5.50               | 17.28           |
| 76                   | 34.81              | 13.32       | 4.87               | 14.80           |
| 77                   | 32.60              | 12.62       | 4.43               | 13.73           |
| 78                   | 32.50              | 12.80       | 4.27               | 13.66           |
| 79                   | 31.63              | 11.78       | 3.96               | 13.40           |
| 80                   | 30.32              | 11.23       | 3.62               | 12.93           |
| <br>                 |                    |             |                    |                 |
| <b>% Change 1980</b> |                    |             |                    |                 |
| 1949=100             | 32.50              | 34.13       | 15.12              | 35.43           |
| 1957=100             | 31.30              | 33.37       | 19.49              | 28.95           |

APPENDIX IV

TABLE A.7

ATTRIBUTABLE TO CHANGES IN FLEET SIZE (i.e. assuming constant manning)

|                | Tanker<br>(+ 10 ships) | Passenger<br>(-22 ships) | Dry Cargo<br>(-185 ships) | Specials<br>(+22 ships) | Total<br>(-175 ships) |
|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Officers       | +141                   | -719                     | -2,315                    | +164                    | -2,729                |
| UK Ratings     | +140                   | -2,918                   | -2,131                    | +196                    | -4,713                |
| Non-UK Ratings | +140                   | -2,126                   | -2,688                    | + 27                    | -4,647                |
| Totals         | +421                   | -5,763                   | -7,134                    | +387                    | -12,089               |

TABLE A.8

ATTRIBUTABLE TO FACTORS OTHER THAN CHANGES IN FLEET SIZE (i.e. reductions or changes in manning)

|                | Tanker | Passenger | Dry Cargo | Specials | Total  |
|----------------|--------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------|
| Officers       | -134   | +147      | +106      | -        | +119   |
| UK Ratings     | -717   | -317      | -1,771    | -        | -2,805 |
| Non-UK Ratings | -627   | +438      | +156      | -        | -33    |
| Totals         | -1,478 | +268      | -1,509    | -        | -2,719 |

TABLE A.9

NET CHANGES IN FOREIGN-GOING JOBS AT SEA

|                | Tanker | Passenger | Dry Cargo | Specials | Total   |
|----------------|--------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------|
| Officers       | +7     | -572      | -2,209    | +164     | -2,610  |
| UK Ratings     | -579   | -3,235    | -3,902    | +196     | -7,518  |
| Non-UK Ratings | -487   | -1,688    | -2,532    | +27      | -4,680  |
| Totals         | -1,057 | -5,495    | -8,643    | +387     | -14,808 |

SOURCE: Sea Life.

## APPENDIX V

TABLE A.8

NATIONAL MARITIME BOARD AND SELECTED COMPANIES ANNUAL 'BEGIN AT' RATES 1974  
(Before and After N.M.B. Negotiations) (b)

|                     | N.M.B.<br>£                   | Silver<br>Line<br>£  | C.P.<br>Ships<br>£ | Houlder<br>Bros.<br>£ | Ben<br>Line<br>£  | Bibby<br>Line<br>£ | Mobil<br>£  |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Chief Officer       | 2,736<br>(3,029)              | 3,629<br>(4,230)     | 4,132<br>(4,654)   | (4,440)               | (4,545)           | (5,037)            | (4,884)     |
| 2nd Officer         | 1,954 <sup>a</sup><br>(2,417) | 2,590<br>(2,860)     | 2,638<br>(3,056)   | 2,496<br>(3,456)      | 2,424<br>(3,528)  | (3,387)            | (3,888)     |
| 3rd Officer         | 1,710 <sup>a</sup><br>(2,073) | 2,170<br>(2,600)     | 2,306<br>(2,754)   | 2,200<br>(2,832)      | 2,010<br>(3,204)  | (2,708)            | (3,180)     |
| Chief Engineer      | 3,411<br>(3,985)              | 4,558<br>(5,200)     |                    |                       |                   |                    | (6,180)     |
| 2nd Engineer        | 2,527<br>(3,029)              | 3,369<br>(3,910)     | 3,758<br>(4,255)   | 3,250<br>(4,440)      | (4,545)           | (4,503)            | (4,563)     |
| 3rd Engineer        | 2,080<br>(2,546)              | 2,205<br>(3,085)     | 2,854<br>(3,286)   |                       | (3,384)           | (3,105)            | (3,630)     |
| Month<br>Advertised |                               | March<br>(September) | May<br>(September) | February<br>(October) | May<br>(November) | (November)         | (September) |

SOURCE: N.M.B. Year Book 1973/74 and 1974/75.  
The Telegraph (M.N.A.O.A.) 1974.

## NOTES:

- ( ) Denotes the improved scale  
 a. These are 'fixed' not 'begin at' rates.  
 b. These negotiations commenced in the Spring but the outcome was delayed by the ending of the Prices and Incomes Board and the final settlement was not effective until November.

APPENDIX VI  
TABLE A.9  
SOME ESTIMATES OF A.B.'s BASIC MONTHLY RATES IN CERTAIN FLEETS 1951-1980

|                        | 1951                     |          | 1958                   |          | 1960                     |          | 1968                         |          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|
|                        | National<br>Currency     | \$ Index | National<br>Currency   | \$ Index | National<br>Currency     | \$ Index | National<br>Currency         | \$ Index |
| U.K. (£)               | 24                       | 67.2     | 33.25                  | 93.1     | 40                       | 112      | 56.25                        | 135.0    |
| Japan<br>(Yen)         | 5,424                    | 15.07    | 23,400                 | 81.7     | -                        | -        | 50,968                       | 141.6    |
| Norway<br>(N.K.)       | 370                      | 51.8     | 788                    | 111.0    | 825                      | 115.5    | 1364                         | 191.0    |
| Greece<br>(Dr. or £)   | £28                      | 78.4     | 1733                   | 57.8     | £38                      | 106.4    | £59.50                       | 143.0    |
| Germany<br>(West) (DM) | 210                      | 50.0     | 325<br>(300/)<br>(350) | 77.5     | 364.5<br>(320/)<br>(400) | 86.78    | 647<br>(510/)<br>(784)       | 160.4    |
| Italy (L)              | 33,660                   | 53.8     | 77,000                 | 123.1    | -                        | -        | 120,000                      | 102.0    |
| Netherlands<br>(FL)    | 231.5<br>(219/)<br>(244) | 60.0     | 360.5                  | 96.8     | 396.4                    | 104.3    | 713.3<br>(663.1/)<br>(763.5) | 196.7    |
| U.S.A.                 | -                        | 248.4    | -                      | 353.3    | -                        | 373.8    | -                            | 443.7    |
| Liberia                | -                        | -        | -                      | -        | -                        | -        | -                            | -        |

SOURCE: I.L.O. (1) I.L.O. (1) I.L.O. (1) I.L.O. (1)

N.B. Official exchange rates have been used. ( ) Indicate the existence of a maximum/minimum rate.  
(1) See sources for numerous qualifications.

TABLE A.9 (continued)

|                        | 1970                           |                              | 1972                  |          | 1975                         |          | 1976                       |          |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|
|                        | National<br>Currency           | \$ Index                     | National<br>Currency  | \$ Index | National<br>Currency         | \$ Index | National<br>Currency       | \$ Index |
| U.K. (£)               | 68.0                           | 163.2                        | 87.15                 | 227.5    | 118.15                       | 342.0    | 147.3                      | 426.5    |
| Japan<br>(Yen)         | 44,802                         | 124.5                        | 57,114                | 178.0    | -                            | -        | 158,948                    | 573.4    |
| Norway<br>(N.K.)       | 2145.5<br>(1941.5)<br>(2350.0) | 300.5                        | 2042                  | 307      | 3050                         | 535.5    | 3106.5<br>(2855/<br>(3538) | 561.1    |
| Greece<br>(Dr. or £)   | £59.50                         | 148.7                        | £71.1                 | 185.0    | £125.4                       | 363.1    | £120.9                     | 376.15   |
| Germany<br>(West) (DM) | 630<br>(600/<br>(660)          | 172.1                        | 872<br>(840/<br>(940) | 270.6    | 1172<br>(1135/<br>(1020)     | 439.1    | -                          | -        |
| Italy (L)              | -                              | -                            | -                     | -        | 180,777                      | 354.4    | -                          | -        |
| Netherlands<br>(FL)    | £96.5<br>(£87/<br>(£106)       | 231.6                        | 925.0                 | 289      | 1,442.4<br>(1,305/<br>(1579) | 535.5    | -                          | -        |
| U.S.A.                 | -                              | 484.4<br>(470.3)<br>(498.5/) | -                     | 528.5    | -                            | -        | -                          | 769.0    |
| Liberia                | -                              | -                            | -                     | -        | -                            | -        | -                          | -        |

SOURCE:

I.T.F.(1)

I.T.F.(1)

I.T.F.(1)

I.L.O.(1)

(1) See sources for numerous qualifications.

TABLE A.9 (cont inued)

|             | 1977 |       | 1978 |       | 1979  |       | 1980  |       |
|-------------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|             | \$   | Index | \$   | Index | \$    | Index | \$    | Index |
| U.K.        | 295  | 100   | 360  | 100   | 400   | 100   | 567   | 100   |
| Japan       | 528  | 179   | 534  | 148   | 590   | 147   | 693   | 122   |
| Norway      | 802  | 272   | 829  | 230   | 900   | 225   | 947   | 167   |
| Greece      | 292  | 98    | 381  | 106   | 425   | 106   | 436   | 77    |
| Germany     | -    | -     | -    | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     |
| Italy       | -    | -     | -    | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     |
| Netherlands | -    | -     | -    | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     |
| U.S.A.      | 804  | 272   | 865  | 240   | 1,022 | 255   | 1,022 | 180   |
| Liberia     | 531  | 180   | 579  | 161   | 621   | 155   | 674   | 119   |

SOURCE: Lloyds Shipping Economist.

APPENDIX VII

LIAISON REPRESENTATIVES SCHEME

Qualifications of Liaison Representatives - Summary

| <u>Original Scheme 1966</u>   | <u>Modifications: Sept. 1970</u>   |
|---|--|
| a) Prior to departure of vessel union official appoints a convenor whose duty to convene meeting and election for representative who must:- | Election before vessel sails   |
| b) have at least 5 years continuous union membership and 5 years sea service  | 2 years continuous union membership - 3 years sea service as and adult rating. |
| c) be at least 23 years of age  | cancelled  |
| d) have a clear record of conduct for at least 12 months immediately prior  | still stands   |
| e) be willing to take union training course   | " "  |
| f) if election must be by two-thirds of members eligible to vote  | 50% of those eligible to vote  |

The Shipboard Liaison Scheme does not provide the type of workplace representation envisaged by its original proposers. Initially, it was hoped that shore based union practice would be extended to the maritime industry. This, however, has not been the case since rather than developing from below the shipboard liaison, representatives are imposed from above. The representatives have little, if any, authority; their function is to facilitate communication between N.U.S. officials and the seagoing membership whilst encouraging co-operation and welfare onboard.

The emasculated role of the representative owes much to the tradition encrusted policies and attitudes prevalent in the shipping industry. This was evidenced in the length of the negotiations within the N.M.B. which specified his role and function. For the N.U.S. these negotiations were the product of a rapid conversion to the idea of representatives after over two decades of firm opposition. This was brought about by the need of the official candidate (in an unexpected

election for General Secretary) having to gain popular support to fend off a serious challenge from the first lay candidate in such elections. Following the official candidate's victory, he was held to his commitment by a vocal and militant section of the membership. The extent of the officials' genuine conversion may be questioned since it could have provided the foundation for a shipboard rather than heavily shore based professional union structure. A possibility which was heightened by the union's financial difficulties, forcing it to curtail, or what was termed 'streamline' its function and activity. In addition, there was anxiety lest some representatives incited crews to harass the professional officials when vessels entered U.K. ports. These must have been important considerations for the N.U.S. when negotiating with the N.M.B.

Opposition to any form of representation came from the Officers' Associations. Most vociferous was the Masters' (Mercantile Marine Services Association) who feared that the Masters' authority would be undermined, a fear shared by the Employers' Association, known at that time as the Shipping Federation. Such negotiations, perhaps inevitably, produced a scheme which failed to have an impact or take root in the industry. At its peak, 1970-71, it operated in only a small number of vessels (see below). The original rules of eligibility prohibited all but a minority of ratings from participating, either through the method of voting, the candidate's age or his recent conduct. Later modifications only marginally changed this. Union officials select the candidates and if an election is necessary, confirm them in office. They are presented from above rather than emerging from below. Masters and officers are suspicious or openly hostile to representatives. Even the most open-minded officer feels apprehensive at the hint of a rating seeking to influence, or question, their authority. Circumstances which cause the representatives to be anxious about victimisation, whether real or imaginary; anxiety heightened

by the fact that he is in an industry where he can easily be paid off and has little recourse by being exempt from much of the Employment Protection Act.

The kernel to an understanding of the liaison representative's situation is the recognition of his absolute lack of any point of reference; no work place rules exist, even on such matters as safety and normal over-time working. This omission leaves him without authority to modify orders from above, or ameliorate dissatisfaction from below. Living in a close knit community, he can easily become exposed to alienation.

TABLE A.10  
NUMBER OF SHIPS OPERATING SHIPBOARD LIAISON SCHEME  
1966-1975<sup>a</sup>

| <u>Date</u> | <u>No. of Ships</u> | <u>No. of U.K. Flag<sup>*</sup></u><br><u>Vessels<sup>b</sup></u> | <u>Source</u>                    |
|-------------|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1966        | 12                  | -   | Trial Scheme                     |
| 1968        | 256                 | 2,074 N.U.S.  | A.G.M. Report 1968 p.18          |
| 1969        | 400                 | 2,042 N.U.S.  | <u>The Seaman</u> Oct 1969 p.238 |
| 1970        | 500                 | 2,017 J.M.C.  | Estimates                        |
| 1971        | 482                 | 2,048 N.U.S.  | A.G.M. Report 1972 p.26          |
| 1972        | 200                 | 2,020 N.U.S.  | A.G.M. Report 1974 p.26          |
| 1975        | 240                 | 1,966 N.U.S.  | A.G.M. Report 1976 p.18          |

NOTES:

a. Latest available figures.

b. Source: Chamber of Shipping Annual Reports.

\* A small number of ships do not qualify as crewed by "lascars".

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