

©

ONE BIG ONION

by

Hugh Murphy

Cast:

Charlie: Mary:

Davy: Sara:

Foreign Sailor

Chairman: Stan:

Alan: Robbie:

Terry: Joe:

Mr Bennet: Extras:

Besides the actors as many extras as possible should be used for the working and crowd scenes. Mr Bennet is present at every Union meeting but Remains silent

ACT ONE
Scene one

[Lights up on office scene. Mr Bennet, sits behind a large desk in a leather chair. The chairman enters, Bennet rises, and they shake hands]

Mr Bennet: Thanks for coming at this late hour.

Chairman: Anything for you Mr Bennet.

[Bennet pours two glasses of whiskey]

Mr Bennet: Here, get that into you. You can't beat the old Black Bush.

[They drink]

Chairman: That's good stuff.

Mr Bennet: Have another. I've a bottle here for you, got a case of it for Christmas.

[He pours another two drinks and they sit down]

Mr Bennet: How's the wife keeping, has she got over the operation all right?

Chairman: Awk... you know how it is... women's trouble, and she's not getting any younger. But she's keeping her chin up.

Mr Bennet. That's good... that's good... My own wife had to have the same thing done but they get over it. And what about that young tearaway of yours, is his leg out of plaster yet?

Chairman: No, it'll be a few weeks yet, but it hasn't slowed him down any.

Mr Bennet: The wee rascal... you're a very lucky man... As you know... we never had any children.... If only things had been different?

[Silence]

Mr Bennet: A well, down to business. Since our last meeting, I thought things were progressing nicely, but... I've had a disturbing report that could put your job and the whole concept of Decasualisation in jeopardy.

Chairman: I can assure you I have everything under control.

Mr Bennet: And I had intended to congratulate you, but my concern is about this. [holds up several pages] from Liverpool tells me that several Belfast Dockers are over there, right now.

Chairman: They came back this morning. The union sent four committee men to report on how their Decasualisation scheme works.

Mr Bennet: Why wasn't I consulted about this?

Chairman: I, I, I didn't think it was important.

Mr Bennet: Not important to me? My God...? This report must not see the light of day.

Chairman: How did you get it?

Mr Bennet: Your members must not be informed of its contents.

Chairman: That's impossible. Every Docker knows the delegation went to Liverpool.... A...a ... a meeting has been called for Sunday to bring them up to date.

[Mr Bennet looks at the Chairman coldly]

Mr Bennet: Have I been played for a fool.

Chairman: No. I've been dead straight with you.

Mr Bennet: That meeting must be cancelled.

Chairman: Why...?

Mr Bennet: Because of the wages, and the conditions, they have over there?

[Chairman opens his mouth]

Mr Bennet: Let me tell you, if... applied to Belfast, myself and all the other employers will be bankrupt in six months.

[Chairman cocks his head]

Mr Bennet: Take my word for it, and you may forget about decasualisation and containerisation. Plus... all your members will lose their jobs.

Chairman: Is... is that not a slight exaggeration?

[Bennet glares at him]

Mr Bennet: I do not exaggerate. But... but look at the other side of the coin. What do you think your members will do if they're given the money that these Liverpool Dockers are getting?

[Chairman cocks head and looks puzzled]

Mr Bennet: They'll drink themselves silly! They're doing it now and they aren't getting a fraction of that money. It's your duty as a Christian... and your duty as a trade union official to look after the moral well being of your members, and, and and and to suppress this report.

[Chairman nods slowly]

Mr Bennet: We must sort out the wheat from the chaff? That is the men who want to work and not lie about all day drinking, so we can keep the Docks profitable and guarantee everyone's job.

[Chairman nods quickly]

Mr Bennet. By doing this... we can march forward, into Decasualisation.

Chairman: I agree. My first duty as a trade union official is to protect the jobs of my members.... But having said that... I can't see how this report can be kept quiet about?

Mr Bennet: What's the delegation like? Can they be trusted? Will they do what they're told?

Chairman: Yes... No... Maybe. The meeting is the problem.

Mr Bennet: Say nothing about it. Just don't have it, and above all swear those committee men to secrecy.

Chairman: An incentive will be needed.

Mr Bennet: I understand... Promise them good jobs, I guarantee it.

Chairman: But... but-

Mr Bennet: You know who the trouble-makers are the one's who'll open their mouths? Get the committee on their backs, harass them at every turn, get them up before the committee every Tuesday night and fine them for everything. Everytime they're drunk fine them, everytime they've a hangover, fine them, every time they break a rule, fine them. When they won't work in the rain fine them? They'll be so busy working to pay off the fines Liverpool will be the last thing on their minds.

Chairman: That might just do it. They... do hate paying fines.
[Silence]

Mr Bennet: Well... that was a very successful meeting. It just shows what can be achieved when you put your mind to it. I hate to rush you, but I've a meeting of the employers to get to.

Chairman: I understand, I understand.

[They stand up]

Mr Bennet: Be assured, your understanding of our position will be conveyed to the others. Give your wife my best wishes, and I hope that she gets over her difficulty without any more trouble. And tell that young scallywag not to be breaking any more legs... or he'll never become a Docker.

Lights down

SCENE TWO

[Charlie enters carrying a lemonade bottles full of red wine and brushing white powder from his clothes]

Charlie: Where are you my little darling... come out and give me a kiss?

[Mary enters, drying her hands on a tea towel]

Mary: Would you do that outside. You're late. Your dinner's ruined.

Charlie: Had to work to finish.

Mary: [coughs] Have you been drinking? What's that?

Charlie: Something called asbestos, it-

Mary: Not that. [points] That.

Charlie: Table wine, the barrel got busted.

Mary: You know I don't drink and you risked six months in jail carrying that out. You'll end up like your da.

Charlie: Fuck up, it was brought out in a car.

Mary: And what if the committee find out? You'll be put off it. You're supposed to be setting a good example That would be a disgrace all right, your own rule being used against you... having to serve the same sentence away from the Docks as what the courts give you.

Charlie: Stop. That would kill me... There was no risk, all right. Does my little bunny rabbit forgive me? [Silence] I promise never to do it again.

Mary: You'll end up like Mugs McStravick... Put away for six months. Will you stop calling me that, and will you stop trying to make a fool out of me.

[He lifts A mug, checks its empty and pours wine]

Charlie: What are you talking about? I love you.

Mary: Talk's cheap.

Charlie: [He sips wine] Wow! That's delicious.

Mary: Pay attention to me. Those words... I LOVE YOU, just roll off your tongue, and... and... I don't know you.

Charlie: What d'fuck are you talking about? How long have we been married?

[She glares at him]

Mary: That's got nothing to do with it. Why do you always have to be in control? Why can you not just be yourself... whoever that is? All I ever see of you is what you want me to see... and I know there's a lot more to you than that. You never let go... you never let me in.

Charlie: You've lost me. I haven't a fucking clue-.

Mary: Liar.

Charlie: Would you get off my back... is this about your feelings again?

Mary: That's not what I'm talking about and you know it. [Silence] Forget about it, just forget about it. I should've known better than try and talk to you.

Charlie: Awk wise up wee girl.

[Mary looks at him and exits. Charlie sits at table, sampling the wine appreciatively]

Charlie: What are you making, I'm starving.

[Mary enters and carrying hot plate]

Charlie: Oh you wee fibber, that's perfect.

Mary: It would be a cinder only I heard... from her up the street that you were working late. Why didn't you phone the shop?

Charlie: I was in the Bunker Hatch, six fucking decks down, and, guess what... there's no telephones down there.

Mary: There's no call to be sarcastic.

[He eats in silence then offers her some wine]

Charlie: Here... try some.

Mary: You know very well I-.

Charlie: Just stick your tongue in. It's... it's what the poor people drink in hot countries cause the water's so bad.

Mary: Their water? The doctor said I shouldn't drink too much of ours cause of lead in the pipes, especially... in my condition.

[For a moment Charlie eats, then cocks his head, smiling, and looks at her]

Charlie: What do you mean?

[She pats belly]

Mary: You know what I mean.

Charlie: Great, when did you know?

Mary: I was near certain, but I went to the doctor this morning for the results. Had you no idea?

Charlie: No.

[She shakes her head in disgust]

Charlie: Maybe... I should've guessed-.

Mary: Guessed...? Is that all you're going to say? Not a word about... how it might be too soon after... two in a row

Charlie: Naaa, have them while yer young and git it over with.
[Silence] Look, I wasn't ignoring you.

Mary: I just want some attention from you. And, I'm worried about-?

Charlie: Yeah... And we don't want anything to happen to our wee Docker?

Mary: Thanks for your concern. Is that all I am to you... a breeder of-.

Charlie: You know what I mean... and... and that I love you.

Mary: Do you? See how easy you say that. And, you've already got two Dockers.

Charlie: Mary... I love you and I love our children. And I will love any children we have in the future.

Mary: Why... then, do I feel so unloved? The... the Docks is the biggest thing in your life... and I feel I can't compete.

Charlie: So that's what's wrong with you? But, why do you want to compete, it's... only my job.

Mary: No, it's a lot more to you. You get so worked up and passionate about it, much more than you do about me.
[He embraces her]

Charlie: Darling, granted, I love it. My father... worked there thirty years, until... and my grandfather for sixty, but it can never replace you.

Mary: Sometimes I think you love the docks more than me.

Charlie: Don't be thinking like that.

Mary: What if it's a girl?
[He hugs her]

Charlie: I hope it is.
[She kisses him and he fills the mug with wine]

Charlie: A toast... to our daughter.
[She smiles and sticks her tongue into the wine]

Mary: That's delicious, where did it come from?

Charlie: It's ammm Al al al ...al... Algarve wine.
[A phone rings off stage and voice shouts]

Voice off: Mary, you're wanted on the phone.

Mary: That'll be mum, I told her to ring tonight... After I told you
[Mary exits. Charlie eats. Mary storms on in a raging temper]

Mary: Algarve wine? That's alter wine. That Davy one is full drunk. He's just pissed in the wardrobe.

Charlie: [laughs] Good stuff that, he could hardly stand. No wonder there's so many fat alcoholic priests about.

Mary: You'll be excommunicated.
[He laughs]

Charlie: You mean, we'll be excommunicated?

[She throws herself onto her knees crossing herself]

Mary: Oh, my God forgive him for he knows not, not not what he made me do.

Charlie: If you believe that, it's... it's only ordinary wine till it gets blessed by the priest.

Mary: Oh my God I am heartily sorry for having offended thee. If we die tonight, we'll burn in the everlasting flames of hell for eternity.

Charlie: Get off your knees woman. You're praying to someone or something, in whose name countless thousands of innocent people were tortured and murdered.

Mary: Lies. Communist lies.

Charlie: Get the dictionary and look up Inquisition.

Mary: My ma's right... The Devil's working in you.

Charlie: Superstition, cant and hypocrisy. No bloody wonder Catholics are easily-.

Mary: So, that's why the union marches round the Docks carrying our Lady's statue... so you can control the Dockers?

Charlie: If they believe in it, who are we to stop them.

Mary: We...? You're talking like them already. You don't go to Mass and you march in the May-day parade with the communists and people are saying-.

Charlie: The socialists. Jim Larkin was expelled from the Union he founded, and James Connolly was condemned by the Church and executed by-.

Mary: Oh God forgive him for using your holy office for ulterior motives.

Charlie. Get up on our feet woman. No-one belonging to me will ever grovel?

Mary: I don't belong to you, I belong to God.

[Lights down]

SCENE THREE

[lights come up to Dim - on a Ship and quayside. A Midnight Shift is being worked. On the Deck, Charlie wraps a chain around a Square Timber, while Alan and Stan are on the quay-side beside hand-trucks, smoking. Robbie enters beside Charlie]

Charlie: Go ahead.

[Slowly, with a chain around its middle, the square timber is winched four feet off the deck. Charlie walks with it as it moves across the deck and over the side]

Charlie: Lower away.

[The timber is lowered to the quay. Stan and Alan land it onto a hand truck and pull it away]

[On deck load, Robbie sticks his Bill hook into the end of square timber and looks at Charlie]

Charlie: Heave away.

[The Nipper chain is winched upwards and Robbie lifts the square timber]

Robbie: Charlie, shove that skid in.

[Charlie runs across the deck load and shoves a short thick piece of wood below the square timber]

Charlie: Use that fucking crow bar, you're gonna do your back in.

Robbie: Fuck up! None of themins are coming back ya know.

Charlie: Sure this is wee buns.

Robbie: That's not the point, they're lying in their scratchers and I'm working for them.

Charlie: Do you want to stop their money?

Robbie: I couldn't do that but by fuck I'll get my own back.

Charlie: Well stop whinging then, and there's fuck all due the rest of the week.

Robbie: Yeah, I know, that's why I'm here. But I wish d'fuck I hadn't a came back.

Charlie: I'd have been on my own.

Robbie: Sure one man could this.

[This chain rattles across the deck. Charlie grabs hold of it and throws it beneath the square timber. He puts a double turn on it and hooks the chain onto itself]

Charlie: Go ahead.

[The timber is lifted, it moves across deck load and over the side. It lowers to the quayside, is landed onto a hand-truck and wheeled away by Terry and Joe. The nipper chain is slowly winched back onto the deck.]

Robbie: Want a smoke?

[Davy enters Drunk, and staggers towards them]

Davy: I want a fucking smoke!

Charlie: Tut... Would you look at the fucking state of him.

Davy: See your sister!

Charlie: One bad word about my sister and I'll break your neck.

Davy: I love her, didn't I marry her?

Charlie: She never would listen to me.

Robbie: What d' fuck has brought you back?

Davy: Fuck up you. Gimme a feg Robbie, my lungs is fucked. It must be five miles down that road.

[Davy sits down. Robbie lights a cigarette and gives it to him.]

Charlie: You're drunk.

Davy: Of course I'm fucking drunk. A sober man wouldn't walk down here at this time of night. You fucking prick, get out of the way... I'm getting a heave.

[Davy takes his Big Hook from his shoulder and attempts to stick it into a timber. He misses, loses his balance and goes into a head-long drunken run towards the side of the ship. Charlie runs and dives at Davy, bringing him down. They roll to the edge with Davy's upper body going over. Charlie hangs onto his legs as he frantically scabble for a foot hold]

Charlie: Robbie...!

[Robbie bounds across the deck-load and helps pull Davy to safety.]

[Charlie grips him by the neck]

Charlie: Ya stupid bastard ye, you could've got me killed.

[Confused Davy throws him away]

Davy: Fuck up... How am I gonna live with myself being saved by you? You've joined the arse lickers!

Charlie: Arse licker, am I... Say that sober?

[Davy lifts his fist to punch him. Robbie jumps them and holds him]

Robbie: Don't Davy it's worse than hitting a peeler hitting one of them.

[Davy struggles for a bit then stops, panting, and sits. Robbie sits beside him]

[The nipper chain comes onto the deck load. Charlie takes hold of it and throws it beneath a square timber]

Robbie: Davy, behave yourself.

Davy: I was locked out.

Charlie: Go ahead.

[The timber is lifted and crosses deck load]

Davy: All the committee do is suck up.

Charlie: I heard that.

Davy: I don't give a fuck what you heard. Yis are only good living scebs. You and the rest are following that wanker of a chairman, who doesn't smoke or doesn't drink but who has a big brown tongue.

Charlie: That's drink talking!

Davy: Drunk or sober, I tell the truth.

Charlie: Davy, shut up!

Robbie: You'll regret this the marra.

Davy: I just tell the truth about them.

[Davy throws Robbie away, tries to stand, but staggers.]

Charlie: You're gonna go over the side again. Away into the Fo'cs'le Head and sleep it off.

Davy: Fuck up, ya employers bastard ye.

[With difficulty Charlie remains calm]

Robbie: That's a good idea Davy, go in there and lie down.

Davy: Don't let him stop my money Robbie, I came back.

[Davy staggers up the deck-load and disappears into the bow of the ship]

Robbie: You say fuck all about him.

Charlie: I'm not as thin skinned as the rest.

[Suddenly, a small foreign sailor, hair standing on end, runs from the Fo'sc'le Head screaming.]

Sailor: Help, help help..

Robbie: Where d'fuck did he come from?

[The sailor runs around Charlie shouting gibberish]

Charlie: Take it easy man, take it easy. What's wrong?

[Davy staggers on]

Davy: That wee bastard jumped outta nowhere.

Sailor: He blobby beel, he blobby beal.

[Davy makes a drunked lunge at the sailor, who hides behind Charlie]

Davy: Ya fucking dingo bastard ye, stand still.

Charlie: Stay away Davy.

[Charlie gets between the sailor and Davy]

Charlie: Calm down. Now tell me what happened?

Davy: Nothing happened. That wee fucker with big white eyes jumped outta the dark.

Sailor: Dee he rob, dee steal he steal, dee-

[Davy makes a run for the sailor, but Robbie grabs him]

Robbie: For fucksake Davy he's only a wee lad.

Davy: Lying bastard, I couldn't see a thing.

Sailor: De rob de rob, de steal he steal.

Charlie: Shut up Davy. Look sailor, what's your name?

[Charlie points at his chest, than at the sailors]

Charlie: Me Charlie... you -.

Sailor: Pedro. Me... Pedro. De rob steal, de steal.

Charlie: No. No, he was just looking somewhere to sleep.

Sailor: Yes, de rob when I sleep.

[Stan and Alan enter]

Stan: Right, what's going on here?

Davy: Fuck you two and fuck Charlie, and fuck the rest of the committee, I've done fuck all.

Sailor: De rob steal de steal.

Davy: Lying bastard.

Alan: Shut up Davy. What's going on Charlie?

Charlie: A misunderstanding. Davy frightened the sailor when he was sleeping and he wakened and -

Stan: You entered a sailor's cabin...?

[Davy runs at Stan, Charlie grabs him.]

Davy: No fucking way, it's a paint locker.

Charlie: Calm down Davy, it's all right.

Davy: I went into nobody's cabin.

Charlie: He's telling the truth.

[Terry and Joe enter scene]

Alan: What d' fuck do you two want? Fuck away off back ashore.

Stan: Go, or yis are up before the committee.

Joe: Fer what, we only wanna know-.

Stan: It doesn't concern yis... fuck off.

Terry: Come on Joe.

[Terry and Joe sheepishly go off. Robbie steps in front of the sailor]

Robbie: It's all right... nobody was robbing you.

Alan: Get back to work there, hook a heave on.

Stan: Davy... you're up on Tuesday night, we'll get it sorted out then.

[Davy runs at Stan]

Davy: No. No fucking way, I done nothing wrong. Nobody ever comes out of them union rooms without being fined... by youse arse lickers.

Stan: That's it you're sacked, fuck off.

Davy: What, what you're taking that Dingo bastards word over mine.

Stan: You're sacked for being drunk and for insulting the union.

Davy: Union...? To call you people a union... is... an insult to parasites. Yes sur no sur, three bags-.

Stan: You... you're on dangerous ground. Good men-.

Davy: Aye I know. I'm sick listening to that.

Alan: We protect our membership.

Davy: Ballecks. What about Short and Quinn...yis sacked them, an see the good men yer are talking about they... must be damm sorry they fought and died for the likes of you?

Stan: Tuesday night... You're insulting the memory of-.

Davy: Me... Ya Monkeys Bastard ye... here

[Davy head butts Stan and he falls]

[lights down]

SCENE FOUR

[Lights up]

Sara and Mary meet centre stage, they both push old prams.

Sara: This is desperate. It's nearly three weeks now.

Mary: Charlie said there's a big Head Boat due at the weekend.

Sara: There'll have to be more than that for Davy to get a job. He won't keep his mouth shut. And that union-

Mary: Once they get decasualised, they'll be working every day.

Sara: Wouldn't that be great. Not having to live on Tick?

Mary: I wish... [Silence. Sara looks at her]

Sara: What is it Mary, you wish what?

Mary: I wish... I wish your Charlie would leave me alone at night.

Sara: Stop, that's your business.
[Silence]

Mary: Sara... I'm so frightened.

Sara: Of Charlie...?

Mary: Nooooo. Of everything. In here [touches chest] I don't know if it's... not knowing if we're going to eat next week or not, or... or him joining the union, or what it is?

Sara: There's always Big Joe.

Mary: Robber. Eight Bob to the pound. You never get clear.

Sara: I know what you mean.

Mary: There's a wee man down Greencastle way only charges four, but you have to be recommended.

Sara: I meant... about being frightened. I'm the same. In the morning I can hardly move. It takes everything to get up and get her dressed. But, you have to make an effort for the kids.

Mary: Yes, all these mad things in my head. I know they're not right but I can't stop myself thinking them. I imagine that they're gonna come and knock the house down with me in it, and-

Sara: That's only a rumour, and if it does happen it'll be years away.

Mary: I hope you're right. But that's not the worst of the stuff. I see Charlie meeting a woman and running away with her and-

Sara: No way, he loves you.

Mary: I... I... I've been trying to make sense of these things in my head. It's like... I'm trying to give myself something to be afraid of... because, I know being afraid of nothing is ridiculous. And... now you keep this to yourself, I am afraid of Charlie.

Sara: He wouldn't hurt you!

Mary: You don't know the way he goes, in-.

Sara: I don't?

Mary: In his sleep. He's started reading this book about somebody called Larkin, and a whole lot by James Connolly. He even bought a Dictionary so he'd understand what James Connolly was saying.

Sara: I've heard that name somewhere.

Mary: After reading them books he grinds his teeth all night. And... and one night... in his sleep he was punching the pillow and his elbow hit me.

[Sara hugs her]

Sara: I'm sorry. I'm sorry that happened. I'll try and talk to him.

Mary: No, that would make things worse.

Sara: Mary, I'm not daft. I won't say anything about anything. But he's my brother... I will be able... in a very nice way, to let him know that you're having a bit of a rough time. That's all!

[Mary nods and hugs Sara]

Sara: I know... from he got on the committee, he's changed a bit. He wants the Dockers to be treated better, and should get more money for the work they do.

Mary: Who doesn't want that? But... he's pushing me away. I feel so depressed. I'm... I'm, finding it so hard to love Charlie.

[Silence Sara looks at her]

Mary: Even after we've had a row, and, and have made up, I'm still so angry. I feel, and this is so, so stupid... I feel lonely. And then I cry my eyes out. And then I feel guilty for feeling lonely when I've got Charlie and... I mustn't be appreciating him and that the way I'm feeling must be my own fault because-.

[Sara hugs her hard]

Sara: Stop, you're head's running away with you. Every woman round feels the same way.

Mary: Do they?

Sara: Of course. The dirt, the filth, the mice the rats, and... after years and years of nothing we're gonna be rich.

Mary: I think rich, is pushing it.

Sara: They'll be working every day.

Mary: I feel... like leaving him.
[Silence]

Sara: That would kill him.

Mary: What about me? How can I love him feeling the way I do?

Sara: Mary, once this Docks business is over things will improve, you'll see.

Mary: I can't see it, he'll still be working at the Docks.

Sara: I promise you, he'll go back to being himself.

[Silence Sara paces then angrily turns on her]

Sara: Stop thinking of yourself. What about your kids, what're they gonna do? Stop putting yerself first and think of them. You do love Charlie and deep inside you know it, but because of your wired up feelings which you've admitted are wired up you're going to ruin their lives, Charlie's life and yer own. You may shudder when he touches you but think what'll happen in twenty years time when your own children shun you because of what you did to them, and their father.

[With a tear stained face Mary holds out her arms]

Sara: If you do it... don't you come near me.

[Lights down]

SCENE FIVE

Lights up in hold of ship.

Several stacks of bags are stacked six high. Terry, Joe, Robbie and Charlie load the bags onto slings. The air is filled with fine - Talcum Powder like dust - which causes them to choke and spit.

Terry: This fucking stuffs cutting the throat out of me.

Charlie: I'm glad there's only a hundred ton of it.

Robbie: We'd five hundred last week and my nose is still bleeding from it.

Joe: What d'fucks is it used for?

Charlie: It doesn't burn. They put it in new houses and the insides of ships.

Terry: Doesn't burn, it's burning my fucking throat.

[Davy runs on in an agitated state, shouting, and covering his mouth with his hand]

Davy: Stop! Stop! That stuff gives you cancer.

[All look at him in amazement]

Robbie: Are you drunk again, Davy?

Davy: Get away from it, it's a death sentence!

Terry: Fuck off Davy you'll say anything to get us to stop work.

[Davy runs about excited]

Davy: Believe me. Believe me. That stuff kills ya. Get d'fuck away from it.

Robbie: Davy, where'd you hear that?

Davy: I read it in the paper, ya have to stop working, get away from it.

Charlie: The Union wouldn've been told.

[Chairman and Mr Bennet enter, Chairman carries a shoe box]

Chairman: There's nobody stopping work here. Don't listen to this trouble maker.

Davy: Trouble maker? This stuff kills ye and you know it. All Unions and employers have been told about it.

Chairman: How could that powdery stuff, dust, kill anybody?

Davy: I don't know the in's and out's of it but you've got the letter what the government sent to all-.

Chairman: Davy, if you don't go away and let these men work you'll be up before the committee, and I guarantee you it won't be a fine.

[Silence]

Davy: Terry, Joe, Robbie I've warned you. I've told you of the dangers of that stuff, an what them bastards know all about. Fuck you Charlie. On your own heads be it.

[With hand over mouth Davy storms off]

Terry: What d'fuck was that all about?

[Charlie shrugs]

Charlie: You know Davy.

Robbie: Could it be true? I've never seen him act like that before.

Chairman: It's a red herring. He knows what's coming.

Terry: And what is coming?

[Chairman takes from shoe box some cloth masks]

Chairman: Look, these were left over from the Meat Boat, they might keep some of that stuff out of your mouths.

Charlie: Masks, at a meat boat?

Chairman: I know, but it was Kosher meat. The masks stopped us from breathing on it.

[Charlie, Terry, Joe and Robbie put them on and start loading bags onto slings]

[As they work they suck the cloth masks into their mouths and can't get air]

[The pull the masks off and throw them away]

Joe: Not worth a fuck.

Chairman: Well don't be saying that we didn't try to help.

[Chairman and Mr Bennet exit]

Lights down

SCENE SIX

Charlie, covered in white dust enters living room and takes his hook from his shoulder. He hangs it on a picture of the Sacred Heart. With a grunt he sprawls in armchair beside fireplace and lights a cigarette. Mary enters.

Mary: I told you about coming in with them dusty clothes on.

Charlie: Fuck up.

[Frightened, she looks at him]

Mary: What's wrong?

Charlie: There's nothing fucking wrong. [Silence]

Charlie: How's the kids.

Mary: Fine. Why?

Charlie: I didn't ask for smart Alec remarks.

[She looks at him, and exits. He sits, in a black mood, smoking. She enters carrying two plates, upturned and sets them on his knee. She hands him a fork and retreats to a safe distance]

Mary: What's the matter?

[He throws cigarette into fireplace and lifts off the top plate]

Charlie: Davy.

Mary: What's he done now?

[He looks at her, shakes head and eats]

Charlie: Why did Sara have to marry him? The union hates him. They see Davy and his friends as troublemakers and that he's stopping progress.

Mary: There's truth in that.

Charlie: Some.

Mary: What did he do?

Charlie: He tried to make us to stop work over some owl dust, and at the all nighter... he whacked Stan with the head.

Mary: I heard about that. That's a big fine.

Charlie: But... that wasn't the worst... they'll never forgive him for what he said about them.

Mary: He never could control his mouth.
[Silence]

Charlie: Yeah. He started shouting about the dust killing us.

Mary: I always knew there was something wrong with him. That's why he's always left out. Don't... don't you be going against the union.

Charlie: You just can't say what you like about people, even if it's true. I'm not going to the meeting that's doing him. [Silence as he eats]

Mary: Charlie... I'm not telling you what to do... but... avoiding that meeting won't be very clever.
[He looks at her and eats]

Mary: I mean... the union will think that you're not supporting them, and this is your first stint on committee. They'll think you're being... disloyal?

Charlie: I can't go along with fining anybody.

Mary: Be careful. Take sick, or get hurt or something. Don't let them know you deliberately didn't go?
[Silence as he eats]

Mary: With Decasualisation so close you can't be too careful.

[She swats her hand in the air]

Mary: There's them flies again, I'll have to get some fly killers.

Charlie: Leave them alone there're doing no harm.

[He sets some food on the hearth]

Mary: Don't. You encourage them. You know they carry all sorts of diseases.

[She rolls a newspaper and swats]

Charlie: Every living creature... or insect has a right to life. It must be allowed to live out its natural life as -.

Mary: As God planned it. But you don't believe in God.

Charlie: I don't believe in your God, but I believe.

Mary: That's double dutch.

Charlie: No more than you being a hypocrite.

Mary: What, just how do you make out I'm a hypocrite?

Charlie: You a good Catholic, yet every day your break God's most sacred commandment, thou shalt not-.

Mary: He didn't mean flies.

Charlie: How do you know? Have you got a direct line straight up to him, or is it written down somewhere, about what you can and cannot kill.

Mary: He didn't mean flies.

Charlie: But how do you know? Is this another mystery of faith that we mustn't question?

Mary: Don't mock God.

Charlie: What about spiders or bugs or creepy crawlies, of which good Catholics put to death millions every day. Why did God create them... just for-.

Mary: Stop, you make it so hard for me.

Charlie: You see, what starts off with flies quickly become innocent human beings.

Mary: I'm not listening to this. Shut up.

[Silence]

Charlie: All I'm saying is Mary, I believe. But... having said that, Jesus Christ, whether myth or metaphor had it sussed out. The way he lived and died, and the things he said. 'Turn the other cheek, and the meek shall inherit the earth.' That was pure vision... and wisdom.

[She looks at him]

Mary: You do believe, you're not a communist?

[He opens his mouth, stops, and rolls his eyes]

Mary: Thank God. Thank God. Thank God. To say that Charlie, there's goodness in you. [Silence] Charlie... It's your mother's anniversary soon.
[Silence]

Charlie: I know. Why did she have to die so young? She never saw her grandchildren... You know, she had sound principles. She wouldn't let a wrong or injustice be left unchallenged... And there was never a beggar turned away from our door, they always got a few bob and a cup of tea and a bap.

Mary: Aye... she was quaren decent all right.

Charlie: My da came in one day, raging, to get a bucket of water. He saw a gypsy sign above the door that meant we were an easy touch.... She wouldn't let him wash it off. I was always bringing home stray cats and lame dogs and birds that couldn't fly... and she'd fix them up.... And you know something... I miss her something shocking.

Mary: Charlie. Charlie, why don't you talk to me more often?

[lights down]

SCENE SEVEN

Davy, Robbie, Terry and Joe sit are sitting in a Pub drinking. Charlie enters and stands at the bar.

Davy: Look... the Gestapo.

Joe: In to drink the Dockers fines.

Charlie: Would you two fuck up.

Terry: What's happening about Decasualisation, Charlie?

Charlie: How do I know?

Terry: You're a committee man.

Robbie: Get off his back, he's not the worst.

Charlie: Look lads... have faith. The chairman's not going to sell us out.

Davy: Charlie, you're not fucking stupid, but, these people are too clever for you. See your good intentions well they won't amount to a bucket of piss.

Joe: They can do whatever they like.

Davy: Ya can't pick yer fucking brothers in law

Charlie: Fucksake Davy shut up. Do youse not believe in progress?

Davy: Not, when the only people who'll progress will be union officials.

Robbie: Charlie, on their record, we're fucked.

Joe: Are you really not on the inside, Charlie?

Charlie: Joe, I'm as wise as you.... And it's fucking wrong. I agree with you that there's a lack of communication... but, but that's only because they're too busy.

Davy: You don't believe that, do you.

Robbie: Charlie, you haven't the brains you were born with. You know the union always look after themselves when there's good jobs going?
[Silence]

Charlie: That was before my time. If that happens again I won't stand for it.

Terry: What's the crack about Davy?

Charlie: See... that proves it. They're too busy even to deal with him.

Terry: Will you be... lenient... or, as lenient as you can be?

Davy: Don't you beg off him, for me.

Charlie: I... I won't be there.
[Silence All speak at once]

Davy: Why not? You're the only chance I've got.

Charlie: They reckon I'm biased cause we're... family.

Robbie: Don't worry... I'm your witness.

Charlie: No witness allowed. That's like saying you don't believe the committee men.

Davy: They're fucking liars and you know it.

Joe: They're going to hammer you Davy?
[All look at Davy]

Davy: Sure... what else would you expect.
[lights down]

SCENE EIGHT

Lights come up on a committee scene. Seated at a table, are, the Chairman, Stan and Alan. Stan has a large plaster across his nose. A banner of James Connolly hangs on the wall. Chairman lifts phone]

Chairman: Would you send the next one in.

[Joe enters and stands, head bowed at the end of the table]

Chairman: Take your cap off?

Joe: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I forgot? [Takes it off]

[Chairman scans a sheet of paper]

Chairman: You're not down here, what do you want?

Joe: I'm appealing against the union's decision to claim my wages.

Stan: There is no appeal!

Chairman: Rules must be obeyed or everyone will break them.

Joe: But there was nothing else I could do. The wife took sick in the middle of the night and was rushed to hospital, I'd nobody to mind the kids!

Chairman: The rule, as you well know, is... when you work on Sunday, you must you return to the same Ship on Monday.

Joe: I wasn't able to!

Chairman: Dockers, like you are taking the good out of ships and working the weekend, then... come Monday they'd take themselves off to another job-.

Stan: Leaving the employers with nothing but inexperienced non-union men.

Joe: It was a fucking good job I'd have went back if I could've. I'd nobody to mind the kids!

Chairman: A rule's a rule. All this talking is getting us no-where. The sentence stands. The money you earned working the weekend, to eleven o'clock both nights is confiscated.... Get out.

Alan: That'll put sloping out of yer head.

Joe: Look, look, [shows letter] It's a letter from the doctor in the Royal Victoria Hospital, confirming that my wife was admitted in the middle of the night.

Chairman: Do you think we're stupid? Them doctors will say anything you want them to say?

Joe: But it's the truth. The wife was in for-.

Stan: Fuck up and get out or you'll clear your card till the end of the year as well.

Chairman: Throw him out.

[Stan and Alan drag Joe off]

Joe: You can't do this.

Chairman: Can I not? It's done, goodbye.

[Stan and Alan return and take their seats]

Chairman: Why do we bother making rules?

Stan: Who's next, I'm dying for pint.
[Chairman looks at list]

Chairman: A lot of wee ones... and then-.

[Stan smiles]

Stan: Davy...? I'm looking forward to this.
[Chairman lifts phone]

Chairman: All the one's up for being behind with their dues, are fined Ten pound, and send Davy in.

[Davy enters, looking very humble]

Chairman: Stand up straight. This man is charged -.

[Terry runs into scene]

Terry: What d' fuck are yis playing at? I was off hurt I was on the industrial injuries.

Chairman: How dare you barge in here.

Terry: Never fucking mind about that. How could I pay union dues when I was only getting enough to live on, and now you fine me Ten pounds?

Chairman: Don't be coming in here with your hard luck stories, you didn't pay and that's that.

Terry: But why am I being fined? I had no money.

Alan: Look Terry, we can't make a difference.

Terry: Where will I get ten pound?

Chairman: There's a money lender down there on the ground floor, that's where you'll get it. And you better get it paid before you go back to work, or you don't go back to work. Now get out.

[Terry exits with his head hanging]

Davy: Do you believe anybody?

Chairman: Shut up. You're in enough trouble.

Stan: Maybe you're not.

Davy: Look, look, look... Stan... I'm sorry. I can't remember a thing about it I was blocked out of my head.

Alan: You will be sorry.

Stan: Shove yer fucking apology.

Chairman: [Lifts papers] You are charged, that on the night in question, you did, with criminal intent break into a seaman's cabin and steal his personal effects.

Davy: Nooooooo! That's fucking lies and them two know it, I-.

Alan: Shut up ya scumbeg and let him read the charges.

Davy: But I didn't, I didn't.

Chairman: Quiet. You'll get your chance to speak when I'm finished, now where was I... - with stealing his personal effects and when apprehended by two officers of the union, you assaulted one, by head butting him.

Davy: No...

Alan: Look at his nose.

Davy: Yes... I hit him. But I never looted anybody's cabin. It was a paint locker for fuck sake.

Chairman: But how do you know you didn't rob him? You've just admitted, and have been telling all and sundry that you can't remember that night.

Davy: I... I vaguely remember hitting him, but I never robbed anybody.

Chairman: Are you calling these men liars?

Davy: Am.... no... no, but they're wrong. Charlie and Robbie will back me up.

Chairman: You were in the seaman's sleeping quarters, why else would you be there. You are plainly guilty. Charge number one... proven.

Davy: No. No, this is a fucking railroad job.

Stan: How dare you! You are getting a Fair Trial.

Alan: You take that back!

Davy: Fuck up. It's true.

Chairman: You... you're dragging decent men down with you. The day of the drunken docker is over. I will instil respect into you people.

[Stan and Alan nod and say Here Here]

Chairman: The employers will never grant Decasulisation while you drunks are bringing the docks and this union into disrepute.

[Silence]

Davy: Holy fucking Joe, that's you. This is what this is all about? I'm the Fall Guy to put the frighteners on everyone else.

Chairman: Charge number two. That, on the night in question, you did grievously assault and did occasion actual bodily harm upon an officer of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union.... How do you plead?

[Davy shrugs his shoulders and extends his arms]

Chairman: So you're pleading guilty?

[Davy repeats the gestures]

Chairman: Charge number two... proven.

Davy: What's my sentence to be [points to James Connolly] like him, the Firing Squad?

[Chairman jumps to his feet]

Chairman: You fucking shit bastard. You're scum, you're scum.

[Stan and Alan look at the chairman in puzzlement. He throws back his chair and walks up and down. When he has contained himself he reads from his papers with venom]

Chairman: Also, on the same night, you were so intoxicated as to be a danger to yourself and to your work-mates

[Davy shrugs]

Chairman: Number three, proven! Number four, For bringing this union into disrepute you are expelled under rule 14.

[Silence]

Chairman: We are ridding ourselves of the shit. This union no longer wants the likes of you.

Davy: You fucking wee sewer rat. You've turned this union into a whore, where men prostitute their principles for the employers.

[Stan and Alan jump to their feet, shouting. Chairman stops them]

Chairman: No. Let him finish.

[Davy points to banner on wall]

Davy: He was on the Union's national executive when he led the Citizens Army into the GPO to fight for Irish Workers, he... he had a name for people like you lot... Lick - Spittals. And I know one thing for certain-

[Chairman yawns and looks bored Stan leans on the table and yells at Davy]

Stan: Everything we do is for the greater good.

Davy: Your greater good. See that union slogan, 'United We Stand'. That's supposed to mean the working man against the employers, and not as you believe, the union and the employers united... against the working man.

Alan: We are not against workers, we must look at the big picture.

Stan: There must be dis-cip-line.

Davy: Granted Stan. Why don't you adopt the discipline of the Citizens army? or the principles of Larkin and his O.B.U. which... I can tell from the blank look on your faces you know nothing about, but means - One Big Union. In your hands One Big Union, has become One Big Onion. Nothing but layer upon layer of corruption?

[Davy waves his arm in a grand gesture]

Davy: Mr chairman, Stan, Alan. I bid you goodbye. I was better off as a non-union man and I got more money. Your fucking mad rules didn't apply to me and you couldn't fine me. So, thank you and goodbye.

[Davy walks away]

Chairman: Davy... I've got news for you! You won't be allowed to work as a non-union man. I'll take great pleasure in... instructing every foreman not to employ you.

[Davy stops]

Chairman: Keep going big mouth we're glad to see the back of you.

[Davy reaches into his coat and pulls his hook from his shoulder. With a mad yell he turns and leaps over the table. He grabs the chairman by the hair and shoves his hook into his throat]

[Stan and Alan attempt to stop him]

Davy: Get back or I'll rip his head off.

Chairman: Stay back... get back.

[They step back]

Davy: Now Mr chairman-.

Alan: Davy, you're in enough trouble.

Davy: You're right, so I've nothing to loose. I'm gonna do the pig factory out of a job.

Stan: Davy... you'll end up in jail.

Davy: And like... you care? I suppose you're going to tell me that this employers toe rag cares as well?

[Davy strokes the hook under the chairman's chin]

Davy: Do you care... do you really care? What's that fucking smell? Oh you dirty bastard!

[Stan and Alan attempt to circle Davy]

Davy: Stay in front of me.

[He pushes the hook into the chairman's throat. He screams]

Chairman: Please please, don't do anything Get in front of him.

[They sit down]

Davy: That's better. Don't you two move a muscle or say a word. Now mister chairman, we're gonna right a few wrongs... ok.

Chairman: You'll not get away with this.

[He pushes the hook into his throat, he yells]

Davy: I take it that's a yes. Is it...?

[Silence]

Davy: Answer ya bastard, or I'll gut you.

Chairman: Yes.

Davy: Good. Nobody is to be fined ever again. Yes?

Chairman: Yes.

Davy: That was too easy, I think you're telling pork pies. But never mind. I want the union to represent the workers and not the employers, agreed.

Chairman: Yes.

Davy: Too easy. I want any new rules to be agreed by the men.

Chairman: Yes

Davy: Oh goody goody. Now... I want my expulsion from the union withdrawn. And... I want the expulsion of the other two men, Short and Quinn, whose lives this union ruined, to be brought back.

Chairman: Yes.

[Silence Davy looks at Stan and Alan]

Davy: Should I believe him? Or... will he, as soon as I take this hook out of his throat revert back to being an employers shit?

[Silence]

Davy: I asked yis a fucking question!?

Stan: Nobody... can be expected to answer under duress.

Davy: But... we have to work under duress from you and this bastard here.

[He rakes the hook under Chairman's chin, he screams. Davy then slams his face into the table]

Davy: You lying bastard, you couldn't believe a word you'd swear?
 Bastard. Bastard. Bastard. What am I gonna do? How will I
 feed my family?

[Demented, he bangs chairman's head repeatedly into the table]

Davy: Even Connolly couldn't put balls on yis!

Alan: Stop. It's the rules.

Davy: Are you telling me... that James Connolly, who was executed in
 1916 for leading the Citizen Army into the GPO, is making my
 family starve.

[With an agonising howl, He raises the hook high, holds it for a few
seconds then brings it down... and sticks it into the table, just in
front of the chairman's nose]

[lights down]

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO [1]

Lights up in Davy's living room. He and Sara glare at each other.

Sara: What do you mean sacked?

Davy: What do you think I fucking mean, I'm sacked.

Sara: Keep your voice down, you'll waken the childer. But... but you're in the union, they can't sack you?

[Silence]

Sara: Did you drink that money I borrowed to pay the fines?

Davy: No. I paid the fines.

Sara: Well... how in under God are you sacked? What...? What did Charlie say? There's... there's no way he would do that.

Davy: He wasn't there.

Sara: He wasn't there?

[He drinks from whiskey bottle]

Davy: It's a long story it started about three months ago-.

Sara: So you're a non-union man again? We were better off before then.

Dave: Sara... I'm sacked from the Docks...

Sara: But... but how can that be? You work for ten or twelve different firms.

Dave: The Union sacked me.

Sara: The union sacked you? But the union's there to protect you.

Davy: Huh...

Sara: The, the union don't employ... so... the union can't sack you.

Davy: They can. They've done it before.

Sara: I don't believe this? This is a nightmare, a mad dream. What did you do?

Davy: Member the night you wouldn't let me in, I went back to an all nighter, drunk and stuck the head in a committee man.

Sara: So it's my fault? And what else?

Davy: And nothing else, that's it.

Sara: That's all. What are they... a crowd of wee girls. What do the rest of the men say about it?

Davy: They're too afraid to open their mouths.

Sara: Are they... well I'm not! See the marra morning I'm taking them childer up to that office, what do they call it, Connolly Hall, and telling them to feed them.

Davy: No you're fucking not. Are you trying to make an eejit of me altogether?

Sara: Don't talk daft. If they're left with screaming kids they'll not be long giving you your job back?

[Silence]

Davy: No Sara. Somebody who worked in one of the Mills tried that. They phoned the Welfare and the kids got took away, and he'd a hell of a job getting them back.

Sara: [sobs] Davy... what're we going to do?

[Silence]

Davy: I wish d' fuck I'd got an education instead of leaving school at fifteen.

[She looks at him]

Sara: But... you were expelled for punching a teacher.

Davy: I could've went somewhere else... There's no work here so ... I'll go to England.

Sara: Nooooooooo. [She runs about demented] No no no no. If you go to England I'll never see you again, and you'll just be another Irish Labourer.

Davy: And if I stay here I'll be on the dole.

Sara: But you'll be with us?... Cha... Charlie might be able to get you something as-.

Davy: Fuck Charlie. Don't mention his name again and don't you take anything off him.

[He takes a long drink from the bottle]

Sara: Over there, you'll just get into fights and... and you'll go on the drink and live under a railway bridge and we'll never see you again.[Sobs] Pleaseeeee, please please please don't go.

[Distraught, he drinks and is getting drunk]

Davy: Stop Sara... I can't take it. I love you and I love the kids, but if I stay here without work it'll kill me.

Sara: Don't go... Don't go, we'll get by, we'll get by.

Davy: How? How will we get by? With me living on the dole and looking for handouts?

[Silence. Davy walks about in anguish with his face twisted]

Davy: It's... It's... It's what the union have done. They've made me a Leper. Old friends won't talk to me, or even look at me, You'd think it was me that shot James Connolly the way they look at me.

[Sara nods]

Sara: Now I understand. Her in there said, what did you do on the Rebel Union? I'd no idea what she was talking about.

[Silence Davy's in despair and near to tears]

Davy: I should've told you. Rebel Union? What d'fuck are they rebelling against... only... everything that Larkin and Connolly lived and died for?

[He Drinks and laughs and cry's at the same time]

[Sara hugs him and takes bottle from him]

Sara: That's what they're rebelling against. Drink. They're trying to change the Dockers, for the better. At least that's what Charlie says. We'll manage, Davy... we'll manage.

Davy: Sara... I'm able to work. And see you thinking I'll drink myself stupid over there, I won't. My granny was a proud oul woman and worked till the day before she died. She had a saying... that... 'she never ate a charity bap in her life' and neither will you. I'll send money home plenty of money and-.

Sara: No, I'll get a job.

Davy: That's fucking worse than-... Do you think that I'd let you go out cleaning some bastards house to keep us?

Sara: I'll do anything to keep you here.

Davy: You're not making a skivy out of yourself.

[She cries softly. He takes bottle of her]

Sara: Davy... don't go.

[He walks about drunk, and drinking]

Davy: It's this father to son crap that makes the Dockers so scared, so yellow.

Sara: The one's that I see fighting out there every week, don't look too scared or-.

Davy: It's only against the union they're no balls. Ya see, their da's... and my da too, have it bate into us not to open our mouths, not to stand up for ourselves or what's right.

Sara: But... all you did was fight with them.

Davy: Yeah... but nobody else would... and where d'fuck did it get me. I wish listened to my da and kept my mouth shut.

Sara: What about the Law, surely a solicitor could help?

Davy: Good idea. I'll see one the marra.

[Davy exits]

[Lights down]

ACT TWO [3]

Lights up on the hold of a ship. Charlie, Robbie, Terry and Joe are loading cases of beer [Carlsberg specials] onto a wooden platform three foot square with a metal eye ring at each corner. They're working on a floor of Pulp Paper, clearly marked, DUBLIN. Chairman enters on deck and shouts down the hold.

Chairman: Hey... Down below... When the beer's finished, start on the Pulp Paper.

Robbie: What. That's Dublin cargo and they're on strike down there

Charlie: Hey Chairman... I wanna talk to you.

Chairman: Charlie, I'm very busy.

Charlie: I fucking need to talk to you. Stay there.

[They look at each other as Charlie climbs onto the deck]

Robbie: Are we fucking blacklegs as well as yella bastards?

Chairman: What... Yellow...? What are you talking about?

Charlie: Why'd yis sack Davy!?

Chairman: He deserved it. You don't know what he done.

Charlie: Dont know? It was me that sent him into the paint locker to sleep it off. I, I, I feel like I'm to blame.

Chairman: Nonsense... did you tell him to hit Stan?

Charlie: I never thought yis'd take his fucking livelihood off him.

Chairman: It's neither the time nor the place to be discussing this. Everybody's listening.

Charlie: What sort of bastard are ye? It's a crime to speak out at the docks, and now it's a crime to listen as well.

[Cast cheer]

Chairman: See.

[Chairman walks away]

Chairman: We'll talk about this later!

[Charlie climbs down into hold]

Robbie: Have you grew a pair, Charlie?

Charlie: What they done on Davy was wrong.

Joe: Hey Charlie, what's the wages going to be when we're decasualised?

Charlie: How d' fuck do I know!

[An empty tray is lowered into the hatch. They land it and hook on the full one?]

Charlie: Go ahead.

[Slowly the tray is raised up and out of sight]

Joe: You're a committee man, you should know?

Charlie: In name only... They tell me fuck all as well.

Terry: But your wages have went up since you got on the committee.

Charlie: I... suppose they have.

[An empty tray is lowered to a dozen feet above their heads.

Terry: I've been counting!

Charlie: What are you getting at?

Terry: Why do Committee men get better jobs and more money than us?

Charlie: It's only a wee bit

Joe: No... it's a lot.

Charlie: What are you saying?

[Voice off shouts]

Voice off: Winch is broke again.

Robbie: Charlie, can you not see what the crack is? Them two's running for the committee.

Charlie: Is that true?

[Silence]

Charlie: I couldn't give a fuck, why all the secrecy?

Joe: We'd make a good committee men.

[They sit down, open bottles of beer with their wee hooks and drink]

Robbie: Aye, both as thick as fucking champ.

Terry: If you can't beat them... join them.

Robbie: See... fucking sell out merchants. Charlie, we're the only honest men left at the docks.

Charlie: But Terry... once decasualisation comes in, the union will lose all its power.

Terry: The union has our best interests at heart.

Joe: Our Chairman got us a day's pay.

Robbie: It ain't no gravy train you're jumping on. Crawling bastards.

Terry: What about Charlie there, you never say anything to him.

Robbie: He's... not really a a committee man.

Charlie: Exactly, and that's why I'm jacking it in.
[Silence]

Robbie: I've been reading that Connolly book... and he would be against everything that's going on here.

[Terry and Joe exchange blank looks]

Joe: Connolly? Who'd fucks Connolly?

[Robbie shakes his head in disgust]

Robbie: Barney Connolly.... know him that drinks in Maguires.

Joe: Oh him.

Terry: Didn't know he wrote books

[Robbie and Charlie laugh]

Charlie: Did yis ever hear of Jim Larkin?

Terry: Are youse making eejits out of us?

Robbie: Answer the fucking question. Did you ever hear of Jim Larkin?
[Silence]

Joe: Didn't we go to school with his brother?

Terry: Yes, that's right. Sammy Larkin.

[Charlie and Robbie laugh]

Joe: You'll be laughing on the other side of your faces when we get yis before the committee. Ten pounds on every charge, ha ha ha.

Charlie: That's one thing I'm proud of... I never fined anybody.

[Charlie takes his big hook from his belt and rips open a brown cardboard carton. He extracts a box and takes out a brown pair of boots. Sitting down beside his beer, he takes off his old boots and puts the new ones on]

Robbie: But Joe, with Decasualisation the fines will have to end.

Joe: No fucking way.

Terry: I wanna get my own back on that bastard Fitzy. He got me fined for being behind with my dues when I wasn't.... {Pulls a face}Well I was but it was only a few quid.

Voice off: Winch's fixed!

[An empty tray is lowered into the hatch. They land it and hook on a full one]

Charlie: Go ahead.

[The tray rises out of sight]

Charlie: [shouts up] Hey Billy! Is that shackle pin on the Crown Head tight?

Voice off: Looks all right.

[They start to load the tray]

Terry: Nothing will change... Well besides us being guaranteed a weeks wages. Tuesday nights in the union rooms will still be the same. Every bastard who I don't like, Ten Pound's Ten Pounds Ten Pounds

[Joe and Terry laugh]

Joe: And Twenty Pound for the bastards who answer back.

Robbie: No. Decasualisation must cause the union to lose its power over us. We might, at long last get democracy in this union.

Terry: What's that?

Charlie: At least the mad rules will have to go.

Joe: What's wrong with the rules?

Charlie: You know!

Joe: I don't... Tell me?

Charlie: Why will they not write them down? And what are we doing that we need disciplined for?

Robbie: Why... do they not fine non-union men?

Joe: Good fuck. I thought you'd a bit of sense. Cause they're not in the fucking union... ya daft bastard ye.

[Silence Joe drains his beer and throws the bottle away. Charlie and Robbie look at him in amazement. Terry gives him the thumbs up sign]

Terry: Well said mate.
[Joe looks at Charlie and Robbie, looking at him]

Joe: What? What?

Voice off: Look out below!

[Beer crates, bottles and the tray rain down onto Joe's head. The others carefully look up, and then run to Joe. Charlie lifts Joe's head]

Charlie: Joe... Joe, talk to me.

Voice off: For fuck sake help him.

Robbie: We're fucking Dockers... not Doctors. Get a fucking ambulance!
[Silence]

Charlie: He's fucked. Blood's coming out of his ears.

[Terry rips off his shirt and applies it to Joe's ears]

Terry: Stop the bleeding, stop the bleeding.

Charlie: Fuck off, ya eejit ye.

Robbie: Easy Charlie.

Charlie: It's coming out of his mouth now... he's dying?

Terry: Would somebody get a priest.

Charlie: Fuck the priest. Get somebody that knows what d'fuck needs doing.

[Silence Charlie pulls Terry's bloody shirt over Joe's face, stands up and walks away. A faint ambulance siren is heard, and gets louder]

[Charlie walks to centre of the hatch and looks up.]

Charlie: Hey up there! Tell the union they're right again. He doesn't need... a First Aid Post.

lights down

Act Two [4]

Lights up. Worried, Sara crosses stage wringing her apron. Mary enters, agitated]

Mary: Sara, would you calm your Charlie down. He's took a wobbler.

[It takes Sara a moment to switch gear]

Sara: What... what, what's he done?

Mary: Nothing. He's drunk and just sitting staring into the fire and won't talk.

Sara: Mary, I've enough on my plate.

Mary: Sara, please come and talk to him. You know, what it is next week.

[Sara's face softens and she nods]

Sara: That year flew in.

Mary: It'll be five years this year, and every year the gossip mongers start. That really hurts Charlie.

Sara: They won't say it to his face. There's no way our da done that. He was drunk and the tea pot boiled over.

Mary: Sure half the street was near gassed. But he goes into this black mood and just sits there. I don't know if I can take much more.

[Sara looks at her]

Mary: Don't look at me like that. I've been talking to the doctor and he says that relatives of suicide victims are extremely troubled.

Sara: It wasn't.

Mary: Sorry... I know I know, but that must makes it even worse for him cause everybody thinks it was.

Sara: Like who?

Mary: Everybody. They say his head was in the-.

[Sara reacts and splutters. The tears flow]

Sara: Our oven hadn't worked for years. My granny used to cook the turkey for us at Christmas.

[Silence]

Mary: Oh... Well I'm just telling you what's been said.

Sara: And you listen to it all?

Mary: No... No, it's said at the back of the queue. Charlie's destroying me... with his moods. It's even worse when he's drunk, he won't come to bed and just sits in the chair all night.

Sara: Looking at you...?

Mary: No, downstairs.

Sara: We blame ourselves.

Mary: It wasn't your fault... if somebody's going to do that nobody can stop them.

[Sara looks coldly at her and speaks with venom]

Sara: We... blame... ourselves because, if, we'd come downstairs we'd have seen the flames were out.

[Silence]

Sara: Maybe he gets what I get... nightmares.

Mary: That's for sure.

Sara: My brother thinks too much. And on top of everything he's concerned about-.

Mary: Your Davy can't keep his mouth shut.

Sara: Well I wish Charlie was more like him.

Mary: What's that supposed to mean.

Sara: A heavy cold my arse.

[Lights down]

Act Two [5]

The chairman, followed by Stan and Alan Bless themselves, cross stage and mount platform. Dockers stand looking up at them.

Chairman: Men. It won't be long now till we fulfil our destiny. A guaranteed weeks wages is our for the taking, if only you'll stop listening to these upstarts. [points finger] That man Charlie has created great dissension among the employers. He's blackmailing them by -.

Robbie: Sure it's what we all want. You fucking eejits make us do the work and then the employers give us nothing cause the ship's away to sea.

[Charlie climbs onto the platform]

Chairman: But that's in the short term, it's your whole working lives at the docks I'm looking after?

Robbie: Yeah... So you say.

Charlie: We're going into this scheme being paid buttons... and in the scheme we'll still be paid buttons.

Robbie: Tell us how much we're gonna get and what conditions we're going to have?

Stan: Let the Chairman speak.

Robbie: Put him on the negotiating team, he's better at it than you.

Chairman: They won't talk to him... they'll only talk to me.

Robbie: That's funny. The talked to him yesterday when he got us the extra money you said we wouldn't get.

Chairman: I don't want to put too high a price on decasualisation

Robbie: And what price... will we pay?

Terry: Yes, I'd like to know as well.

Chairman: Men. We must keep the employers sweet if we're to get de-.

Charlie: There men, there's our militant Trade Union official for you.

Chairman: This is no time for militancy.

Charlie: Instead of demanding decent wages and decent conditions from the employers, this crawling bastard doesn't want to upset them.

Chairman: That's a perfect example of what I'm saying. This is 1970 no-one demands anything, anymore... everything is settled by reasonable negotiation.

Robbie: Somebody forgot to tell the London Dockers, they're on strike.

Terry: But are they right? I don't want to strike!

Charlie: Who does Terry? But maybe... by some stretch of the imagination their employers weren't reasonable.

Robbie: Fuck you up, Terry.

Charlie: Men. The only way to get anything from these money grabbing employers is to take it, cause they won't give it.

Chairman: We don't want to hear your communist propoganda.

[Sara enters, carrying a bundle of papers. She approaches Robbie. Charlie sees this]

Charlie: Try and control this Mr chairman. [Jumps from platform]

[Robbie takes the papers, runs to Charlie and gives him half. They both walk around shouting]

Charlie: The Dockers Voice! A paper dedicated to exposing the corruption and betrayal of our union leadership. Get your Dockers Voice, the paper of the rank and file Dockers.

Robbie: Get your paper here, we expose the bastards.

[The chairman's mouth drops open. Stan and Alan run to him]

Stan: What'll we do?

Chairman: Oh no... Oh no... Oh no.

Charlie: Read all about the secret deals and the sacking of -.

[Alan and Stan jump down and run at Charlie]

Stan: This is all lies men!

Alan: Give me them papers!

Charlie: Sure you can't read.

[The chairman regains his composure and shouts from the platform]

Chairman: Men, don't look at that paper. It's preaching treason and sedition. That communist Charlie doesn't go to mass. It's lies lies.

Terry: Charlie, tell me you haven't put our shame in black and white, for all to read.

[Charlie and Robbie and walk about shouting and giving out papers]

Chairman: It's lies, it's lies. And if you believe these lies you're putting in jeopardy what I've worked for. Decasualisation.

Charlie: Read, how the union officials are in the pocket of the employers.

Stan: The next person who takes a paper is fined Ten pounds

Alan: The next one gets a punch in the fucking mouth.

Stan: Communists. Communists, burn their paper, burn their paper
Throw them in the Dock.

Charlie: Get your Dockers Voice! Read all about our union officials sacking the young Dockers!

Chairman: Anybody that reads this communist rag will be excommunicated. He's a liar he's a liar.

Terry: What... what was that about the young Dockers?
[Silence]

Charlie: Ask him. All the young Dockers are getting fucked out by the union when we're decasualised!

Chairman: He's twisting the truth!

Terry: Is this right Mr Chairman? Is my son getting put out?

[Silence]

Chairman: Terry... Charlie is distorting the truth, and -.

Terry: Is... he right?

Chairman: Negotiations for decasualisation are at a very delicate stage, and anything untoward now could upset the applecart and spoil our chances of ever attaining de -.

Terry: Mr Chairman... would you answer the fucking question?
[Silence]

Chairman: The... the... the employers... do think that there are too many men.

[Charlie and Robbie shout abuse. Terry hangs his head, sickened]

Charlie: Do we really want decasualisation? [Silence] As far as I can see the only people that want it, are the Chairman, the committee and the employers. Are we not happy the way we are?

Chairman: No. You are never out of the Pub.

Terry: What will my son do?

Robbie: Vote on it. At least let's have a vote on it.

Chairman: Men, if we are to progress we must abolish the casual system, and the drinking.

Terry: Vote on it.

Charlie: Yes. Vote. Vote. Vote. All those in favour of Decasualisation, stick up their hand!

[The chairman, Stan and Alan go ballistic, running around shouting and pushing Charlie, Terry and Robbie]

Charlie: Don't punch them Robbie!

Stan: Nobody vote.

Alan: Everybody go to work it's ten past eight.

Chairman: Foremen onto the platform, school your men. Go ahead let's get some work done.

[Stan and Allan jump on Charlie and drag him off stage]

Charlie: Bastards

[Charlie shouts at Chairman. Terry walks off, head hanging]

[Robbie runs to help Charlie but Chairman jumps on him and holds him around the neck.

Chairman: This is an illegal vote.

Robbie: What d' fucks an illegal vote?

Chairman: One I don't control.

[lights down]

ACT TWO [6]

Light's up on Davy's living room. He paces angrily, drinking.

Davy: It's that fucking union that-.

Sara: No. It's that drink. If you were sober you'd be able to keep your mouth shut. If you stayed off that, we'd be all right.

Davy: [laughs] That's a chicken and egg one all right.

Sara: What're you talking about?

Davy: If it wasn't for this... the drink... I couldn't have stayed there as long as I did.

[She looks at him. He holds up the bottle]

Davy: This, made me forget I wasn't a man, and how big a bastard I made out of myself... when I allowed the employers, and that union to walk all over me.

Sara: You are a man, you don't need drink to-.

Davy: Used to be. They've de-balled me. I'm a failure, I couldn't even kill that bastard. I would've loved to... to have buried my hook in his head... but... but I couldn't.

Sara: Oh Davy, Davy Davy, thank God you didn't.

Davy: I still want to. That... that union has instilled fear into the Dockers and made them docile... even me. Huh, even the money-lender stayed open late on a Tuesday night.

Sara: What I never could understand... why yis joined a union, and let non-union men take all your work?

Davy: Because the ship owners don't want the ships waiting and costing them money. Belfast is renowned the world over... for its speed of unloading.

[She thinks for a moment]

Sara: There's something wrong Davy, it just doesn't add up. This Decasualisation can't be all it's cracked up to be.

Davy: Why do you say that?

Sara: Well... if non-union men will no longer employed, and young Dockers, like that kid down the street, are to be sacked-.

Davy: Young Docherty...?

Sara: His father's been told. Anyone not in the union before 1968 is not included in Decasualisation.

Davy: Ah Jaysus no. Can they sink any lower? That's a whole new generation of Dockers, fucked.

Sara: But... but you don't understand. Yes, they only want so many men... but the ships won't wait. There'll be nobody to unload them.

Davy: There'll be work all the time. The ships will have to queue up and wait their turn.

Sara: No Davy. If I go into a shop and there's a big queue, I go somewhere else.

[Silence. Davy cocks his head and looks at her]

Davy: You're talking sense. Like when the Union made us sceb with Dublin cargo, it was took down by road?

Sara: There must be another reason, Davy, the Union's being conned.

Davy: Could there possibly be a massive conspiracy to reverse history, here? [looks at bottle] Is this drink wrecking my head?

Sara: This is all about money... and ships have to keep sailing to make money. In ten years... the docks will be finished and all the Dockers will be gone.
[Davy paces]

Davy: After Larkin's famous strike in Belfast, which he won, when he united religions under the banner of workers and got the cops to support him... might as well have not have happened.

Sara: How can the union ignore that history?

Davy: Massive salaries. When the NUDL recalled Larkin to England, he he wouldn't go, but went to Dublin and founded the most militant trade union in the world. It had its own Citizens Army protecting the workers and strikers-.

Sara: How can today's Union Leaders sell out those men?

Davy: Union...? It's been turned into an employer's play-thing, by the sons and grandsons of the employers Larkin fought against. They're exacting revenge for his 1907 Strike... by corrupting his union?

Sara: And when the docks collapses, they'll have all the lovely land on Lagan-side, to profit from, once the Docks and Dockers are gone.

Davy: [Nods] Right in the city centre.

Sara: The York Dock, where they used to carry Our Lady's statue, already filled in. [Silence]

Davy: Stop, stop it Sara. This drinks rotting my brain... what's your excuse thinking like that?

Sara: But you're right. Why don't you get the non-union men and the young Dockers... and have your own union, a closed store. You could work on the queue of ships... you'd have your job and they'd have their job's and-.

[He drinks and laughs sarcastically]

Davy: It's called a closed shop, ya eejit ye!

[She looks at him coldly]

Sara: It's a wonder you know the name of it, because you and that union never practised it. [Silence]

Davy: Get off my back... it's not my fault.

Sara: It's every man in that union's fault. You allowed yourselves to be told what to do.

Davy: I tried Sara, I tried.

Sara: In a completely arse about face way. You took everything from them, and then exploded, that put you in the wrong. All you had to do... in a nice calm quiet non-threatening way... was, ask them what they're playing at?

Davy: It's no use talking to you... you don't understand, you can't understand.

Sara: Yeah... that's right! What's wrong... is there's no women working at the docks?
[He laughs]

Davy: I can imagine a couple of women working down the hold of a ship... there wouldn't be too much work done, I can tell you that for a fact.
[Silence]

Sara: What about, the women sailors on Russian ships? Are, are you saying they're just there for the enjoyment of men?

Davy: I didn't say that.

Sara: Are you saying the women Dockers in Russia... are using their bodies... the way Belfast Dockers use their principles?

Davy: What'd fuck does that mean?

Sara: So you think that every woman who works with men is-.

Davy: I didn't mean that... I just meant... I just meant... that the work would be too hard for them.

Sara: Liar. And we'd ensure that Dockers got a decent wage without working the clock round.

Davy: Fair play to ya

Sara: Women know the cost of running a home, and they know the cost of a husband losing his job. And, it's... it's even more disgusting when the sacking is by the people who're supposed to protect you... and have been paid to protect you. Take my word for it Davy... women wouldn't stand for what men stand for. Fools. One little prick of a Chairman, can manipulate and persecute men three times his size.

Davy: You've right, but I need to work. I'm going to England.

[lights down]

ACT TWO [7]

[Angry and determined, the Chairman, with Stan and Alan cross stage. Charlie enters and they meet centre stage]

Chairman: Look Charlie, apologise, and we'll forget what's been said. Come back to us.

Stan: Davy had it coming. It really has nothing to do with you?

Charlie: Has it not?

Alan: You know he brought it on himself.

Chairman: Look... you're probably still under the weather from that dose of Flu you had.

Charlie: Never existed. There was fuck all wrong with me. I hadn't the balls to go to the meeting.

Stan: Well what's changed?

Alan: Apologise, stay with us and it's water under the bridge. [looks at chairman] We will forget about it, won't we?

[Chairman nods]

Charlie: Forget...? Can Davy forget? Can Short, Quinn and Turner forget about it? I'm fucking disgusted with you gombeen men, and above all... with myself!

Chairman: Are you sober?

Charlie: And seeing clearly.

Chairman: So... the rabble have got to you.

Charlie: Rabble...? Yes. And I'm glad.
[Silence]

Alan: You aren't thinking straight. Take a few days off and-.

Chairman: Or, I'll arrange for a few days over at the shipyard for you. You get took over in a wee boat, it's a gift, and the employers will-.

Charlie: Will do whatever you want? But why, that's what I can't understand?

Stan: Because... they're sound people.

Charlie: Why are they being so nice to you...? Or do you already know?

[Stan pulls a hook from inside his coat and moves towards Charlie, who backs away]

Stan: You watch what you're saying.

Charlie: So the truth hurts even you? Five years ago, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, I stood at the bottom of the Whiterock Road, watching the Union march past on the Falls Road... behind a banner of James Connolly. [Silence] And yis stopped outside Connolly's house where his head's on the wall, as a mark of respect. Fucking hypocrites.

Stan: Nooooo, we're followers of Connolly.

Charlie: I wouldn't have been surprised... if a lightning bolt had shot from Connolly's eyes and wiped out every committee man that was there.

Chairman: You've been watching too much science fiction.

Charlie: Even Connolly, who had a great knack for describing suckups would be hard pressed, to find words to describe you.

Alan: If you're not with us, you're against us.

Charlie: Am I glad of that. Every decent person should be against ya.

Chairman: You've sold yerself out.

Charlie: You would know all about that.

Stan: You're not committee material.

Charlie: What part of me resigning... did you not understand?

Chairman: One wrong move and you'll join Davy.

Charlie: To late, Adolf... I've went above your head. I've written to Head Office... and the powerful Irish Congress of Trade Unions. They know about your betrayal of trade unionism and your arse-licking tactics... Why... why did you have to sack Davy?

Chairman: Ooo, think you're clever, I'll get it sorted. Who do you think they'll believe? I'll tell them about you... and what you think of the Catholic Church?

Alan: Only decasualisation is so close-.

Stan: From now on, you do as you're told like the rest.

Charlie: Or what. There's nothing you can do or you'd have already done it. And while you're at it tell them about the Cargos of Death, you make the Dockers discharge.

Chairman: We weren't told of any danger.

Charlie: Liar. Davy was right. This funny bastard with a stethoscope round his neck says to me, don't worry... it can take forty or fifty years to kill ya.

Alan: Isn't that what we've been telling you.

Stan: Any of us, could be called, by the Good Lord tomorrow.

lights down

ACT TWO [8]

[Spot shines side of stage. The chairman and Mr Bennet enter]

Mr Bennet: Things are progressing nicely.

Chairman: Are they?

Mr Bennet: What's...wrong?

Chairman: Charlie. He's mouthing off something shocking.. and three times he's refused, point blank, to work at Asbest-.

Mr Bennet: Stop. Don't use that word, call it... 'it'. That cargo is to be called, 'it'

Chairman: What'll I do about 'it', and Charlie?

Mr Bennet: Sack him.

Chairman: Can't. He's got too much support. I can only push them so far... at the minute.

Mr Bennet: Don't worry, I've a plan. After decasualisation we'll set up a Court system to-.

Chairman: A Court system?

Mr Bennet: Yes, and you'll be the prosecutor. It'll be similar to what the union does with the fines, but more rigorous, with more powers and based on the legal system.

Chairman: Sounds good.

Mr Bennet: At the start, anyone who steps out of will be suspended without pay, thus building a bad work record, and giving us a reason to sack him. We'll need your help to implement it.

Chairman: That's no problem.

Mr Bennet: This will sort out Charlie and any other malcontents.

[Chairman nods and gives the thumbs up]

Spot Out

ACT TWO [9]

Lights up across stage. Chairman climbs onto platform facing audience. Stan, Alan, Charlie, Terry and Robbie stand in front of him. In the background Sara and Mary wheel prams to and fro and listen

Chairman: Men. Today history is made. For the first time Belfast Dockers are guaranteed a week's wages. [Stan and Alan cheer] We have Decasualisation.

[Stan and Alan cheer]

Chairman: This will give us the security which other workers, in vital industries have taken for granted and enjoyed for many years.

Charlie: What about the young Dockers? The only security they have is the dole?

Chairman: Men. Don't listen to these upstarts and communists. Unfortunately, some young men were not included in the scheme but they knew this would happen when we allowed them into the union.

[Terry raises his hand, Stan glares at him so he remains silent]

Chairman: Some of these young men have had four years working and-.

Charlie: Who d' fuck is this union to sack anybody? But, seeing you have, will you pay them redundancy money?

Stan: They were surplus to requirements!

Robbie: Whose requirements?

Chairman: Men. There will be teething troubles -.

Charlie: Answer the question.

Chairman: Men, follow your union's advice, and we'll get any teething problems sorted out. As you've noticed, yellow boxes have been painted on the floor, with a centre pathway.

Robbie: At least you got the colour right.

Chairman: The, the New...Labour Controller will walk up and down the pathway allocating work.

Robbie: What, instead of looking down a foreman's throat, we'll be looking down this Labour Controllers throat for a job!

Chairman: This will be a fair way of allocating work. The labour controller has no axe to grind. With the Labour Controller there will be no favouritism. The labour controller will-.

Charlie: Who d' fuck is this Labour Controller?

[Silence]

Chairman: Maybe I should've mentioned it before... I... am the Labour Controller.

[Stunned silence Charlie, Robbie and Terry stand with mouths hanging open]

Charlie: Cocksucker.

[Terry and Robby, shout, Cocksucker, Cocksucker]

Terry: I don't believe it. I don't believe it. I can't believe it.

Robbie: Judas, judas... judas.

Terry: Mr chairman... you can't...?

Charlie: Ya traitorous bastard ye. You... can't be Chairman of the union and an employer.

Robbie: He's just come out in the open.

Chairman: I have stepped down from the Chair, but I remain a union member. I believe in trade unionism and the brave men who fought and died to-.

Charlie: Larkin and Connolly wouldn't vomit on ye.

Chairman: Apologise for that, or or-.

Robbie: Stop letting on yer a man, ya scum sell out bastard.

Terry: I believed him about the young Dockers.

Chairman: Men, listen to me.

Robbie: More of yer fucking lies?

[Charlie, with fist punching the air walks around stage chanting]

Charlie: Out, out, throw it out. Out, out, throw it out.

[Charlie, Robbie and Terry also chant]

Chairman: Men, this is the only way we can exist, we must compromise.

Cast: Out, out, throw it out. Out, out, throw it out. Out, out, throw it out.

[Stan lifts a megaphone and shouts through it]

Stan: If you fucking bastards don't shut up, every fucking one of yis is fined a hundred pound.

Alan: And you'll never have a pint in peace again, cause when yer drunk the committee will kick fuck out of yis.

[Stan roars through megaphone]

Stan: Shut up.

[Charlie and Robbie get hoarse, and stop shouting. Terry keeps walking and chanting. Robbie stops him.]

[Silence]

Stan: That's better, and I don't want to hear another fucking word out of yis.

Alan: Our Chairman has worked hard to secure your jobs, and get you a guaranteed weeks wages this is how you treat him. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

Charlie: We...?

Robbie: Aye... his tongue's in raw flesh.

Alan: Can you not see, that by having him working for the employers, we'll have the best of both worlds. He'll be on our side and-

Charlie: Why should he be... he never was before. [Men agree] Now tell me something, does Dublin agree with our Chairman joining the employers?
[All look at the Chairman]

Chairman: Of course they do, this is the new strategy whereby the Union will infiltrate the employers. In years to come it will be common practice to have union reps as Directors of company's-.

Robbie: There can't be a sell out on that scale.

Chairman: How can it be a sell out if we're protecting jobs.

Charlie: You're own.

Chairman: The time will come, when Unions will be equal to employers, and Directors of banks, airlines and every company under the sun to protect our members.

Robbie: Don't listen to him, men.

Chairman: Men. You know as well as I do, that there are disrupters among us. Communists, who for their own, un-holy and perverse reasons, don't want to see us progress into good well-paid jobs.

Charlie: You've betrayed us, Larkin and Connolly, and most of all yerselves. And... and you claim... that you did it for our benefit?

Chairman: They... they... they want to see this scheme collapse and your only hope of a decent standard of living collapse as well.

Charlie: It's a wonder those lies don't choke you.

Alan: Men, Listen to the voice of reason from your union.

Robbie: The voice of traitors.

Charlie: We're either employers or workers, we can't be both.

Terry: How will I face my son?

Alan: Men. That fucker Charlie is winding you up. He's jealous that the Chairman got a good job.

[Stan pulls at Alan's sleeve]

Stan: [stage whisper] Ex Chairman, I'm the Chairman now.

Charlie: Stop. Stan... Alan... our Chairman has changed sides. Even you two must see that his negotiations are null and void. This scheme was drawn up by an employer pretending-.

[Stan speaks through megaphone]

Stan: Everybody get into your boxes, and those who don't will know what to expect.

Charlie: Don't be afraid, men, don't be afraid of them. Everything that Traitor agreed with the employers must be re-negotiated.

[Stan and Alan jump on Charlie and drag him off]

Charlie: Men stand up for yerselves.

lights down

ACT TWO [10]

Lights up at side of stage on Davy and Sara, they crouch behind a settee. Loud pounding is heard.

Voice off: Are you in there missus?... You're gonna have to pay something... Just give me the interest.

Davy: Does he never give up? He must be banging there a half an hour.

Sara: He's waiting on the kids coming from school.

Davy: I forgot about them.

Sara: It's all right, I've got them using the back door. But I bet our neighbours are loving this?

Davy: Fuck them.

Sara: Why didn't you keep your mouth shut and your hands down. You'd still have a job.

Voice off: Missus... it's got nothing to do with me whether you pay or not, but if you don't pay the interest, the boss'll send round the heavy mob.

Sara: Jesus Christ. Davy, what're we gonna do?

Davy: Don't be worrying... he's only trying to scare you?

Sara: And doing it!

Voice off: The interest will keep him off yer back.

[Silence]

Voice off: All right... on yer own head be it. Don't be blaming me if he takes yer furniture and breaks yer legs.

Sara: Jesus Mary and Joseph help me. Davy I'm scared.

Davy: It's only bluff, and -.

[Glass breaking is heard and a brick lands beside them. Sara jumps and stifles a scream]

Davy: The fucking bastard, I'll break his neck.

[Sara grabs hold of him]

Sara: Stop. Don't go out. That's what he wants. He always has two or three in the car with him.

Voice off: I'll be back the marra, and you'd better pay something. You're making me look bad?

[Silence]

Davy: Is it a trick? [she peers around couch]

Sara: He's getting into the car.... They're away.

Davy: Thank fuck for that... My nerves are wrecked. Is there any tea left?

Sara: Aye... there's a drop in the pot, but it won't be very warm.

Davy: Doesn't matter. [She lifts brick and examines it]

Sara: Feel the weight of that? If that had hit me or one of the kids.

[She has her back to him. He takes out small bottle of whiskey and pours some into a mug]

Davy: Don't worry I'll stick a board over it.

Sara: Davy. What in God's name are we gonna do?

Davy: Is there anything we could sell, and pay the interest?

Sara: You know there's nothing left... we have to keep one bed.

Davy: If only I could get a job?... I'll go round and see my ma.

Sara: No... The poor woman is tapped dry. But ask her if I can come round and have a bath?

Davy: Why... where're you going?

Sara: Where I should've went months ago... to get a job.

Davy: A job? Where?

Sara: Does it matter? If I'd a job we'd still have the TV and the washing machine, and the electric wouldn't be turned off. Our Jean can get me a start in that pub she works in, and -.

Davy: What? That place-.

Sara: Don't start. Every time I suggest getting a job, I'm hit up the teeth with this whore-house crap. Take a look around ye, No self respecting whore would be caught dead in it.

[Silence]

Sara: Now... to get us out of this mire you've got us into, if the only job I could get was in a whore house, I would take it.... But... and listen to this ya bastard ye, I will never work as a whore?

Davy: I never said you would. It's not my fault?

Sara: No, nothing's ever your fault? Whether you like it or not... I'm taking this job.

Davy: Do what ya fucking like.

[He takes whiskey from pocket and drinks. She goes ballistic and runs at him]

Sara: Where'd you get that? Where'd you get the money? Them childers starving, they haven't an arse in their trousers and you're buying whiskey. Give me it?

[She lunges at him to grab it, he easily avoids her]

Davy: It was give to me.

Sara: Give me it.

Davy: Why?

Sara: I'm gonna throw it out. No wonder we've no luck in this house?

[She dives at him and get hold of the bottle and they wrestle over it]

Davy: Sara, I'm warning ya... let go

[They wrestle about stage as he get more and more angry]

Davy: Fuck ye... Fuck ye... Let go?

[She gets the bottle from him and he tries to pull it off her, but can't... and lifts his fist]

Davy: Sara... Don't make me do this.

[She sticks her face out. [Silence] For a few seconds his fist shakes, then he hugs her]

Davy: I'm sorry, I'm sorry I'm sorry!

[He takes bottle from her and throws it away. Breaking glass is heard]

[Lights down]

ACT TWO [11]

[Lights up. Charlie crosses stage and addresses audience]

Charlie: Men, don't be afraid. We were led into decasualisation by an employer. A Judas Goat. And at no time were we told, our

union would betray... the principles of The Citizens Army...
Who... in 1916... fought to establish the Irish Republic.

Stan: Liar.

Alan: We've betrayed nobody.

Chairman: I am no Judas goat...?

Charlie: [Holds up letter] I've been sacked. Sacked by the Union and
Employers Court.

Chairman: You were afforded your rights and a fair trial

Charlie: Rights, trial? This, unholy alliance you founded has-.

Chairman: Men... With the regulation of the docks industry, there has to
be accountability for your actions. We must progress -.

Charlie: We're progressing... backwards. This is a race to the bottom,
they use... Connolly and Larkin's name's for the employers.

[Robbie shouts agreement, Terry looks guilty]

Chairman: Men Charlie was sacked, and only sacked, because he refused to
appear before the Court.

Terry: Is that right, Charlie? Why didn't you go?

Charlie: Terry... it's all a con-.

Terry: I do support you, but...but-.

Charlie: Shut up, Terry.

Robbie: We're not allowing him to be sacked! An injury to one is the
concern of all. United we stand. One Big Union.

Stan: Where d' fuck did you get all that from?

Alan: He sounds like the three musketeers.

Robbie: It's on the James Connolly banner in Connolly hall, the one you
sit in front of.

Stan: Oh.

Charlie: Any of you can be sacked next. The way to break this evil
dictatorship of-.

Chairman: What Charlie is not telling you is... that he can appeal his
sentence.

Terry: Appeal it, appeal it, appeal it Charlie.

Robbie: Are you daft? Whose side are you on?

Terry: It's a chance for-.

Charlie: Terry... No-one agreed to be 'Tried' by this, Court, and by making me appeal, you're accepting its legitimacy. And, by making me appeal you're guaranteeing that I... and every Docker they want to sack... will be sacked.

Terry: Appeal and if-.

Charlie: Are you fucking deaf, I will be sacked.

Terry: If you're still sacked, I'll walk out... we'll all walk out.

Robbie: Can you not understand. This is what they want. The appeal is a joke.

Chairman: Men... Terry is the only man here talking any sense.

Stan: Appeal it Charlie, give yourself a chance.

Robbie: Like you give a fuck about him, ya bastard ye.

Alan: Of course we care, Robbie.

Charlie: Men. The only chance of guaranteeing my job and all your jobs... is to strike, now

Chairman: Do that and all your jobs will be lost.

Charlie: Men. My union has committed an illegal act.

Alan: You brought it on yourself.

Terry: Why is it illegal now and it never was before?

Charlie: Don't be so fucking stupid. It's always been illegal for our union to deprive a member of the right... to feed his family.

Terry: But... how do you know it's illegal?

Charlie: Because... we pay union dues, so our union will protect us from the employers. Is it doing that?
[Silence]

Charlie: Is it doing that?

Terry: Well... well-.

Charlie: And did it protect your son.

Terry: There's two sides to every story.

Charlie: No Terry, there's three, and the third is the TRUTH.

Robbie: Terry, this union is taking money under false pretences.

Terry: Maybe, maybe more jobs... are saved than lost.

Charlie: Your son would be ashamed of ya. And if yis want to keep yer jobs you'll back me to the hilt!

Terry: I... I only want to strike as a last resort.

Stan: Just right, Terry.

Charlie: This... is the Dockers last resort, Terry. If they can sack me then all your jobs are gone... Stan, what you Alan and the chairman are, defies description. But mark my words...

[Stan takes his big hook from inside his coat]

Charlie: If this Cock Sucking... ex Union Chairman and Judas Goat bastard, gets away with this -.

[Stan stops Alan attacking Charlie]

Terry: Appeal the sentence and see what happens.

Robbie: No, we must strike and protect our jobs.

Charlie: Yes men, strike, but not just for me, and not just for the next man to be sacked, but... but so that we can retain our pride and dignity.

Terry: Ya can't eat pride and dignity!

Alan: Good point, Terry.

[Chairman, Stan and Alan nod wisely. Charlie gives Terry a look]

Charlie: That's right, Terry. You don't eat it... You wear it on yer shoulders with your head held high, like the men who founded this Union. If you won't stand up for yerself... at least stand up for their memory, and act, as they would've acted... Have some principles. Principles that differentiate us from these employer sucking union officials, who would sell-out their own mothers, never mind the Dockers.

Alan: Don't listen to him men. He's a grudge against the union cause we tried to expel him for writing the Dockers Voice.

Charlie: A grudge? I hate yis bastards. Men, I read something, by one of them oul Greeks, I think, he said about freedom of speech... 'I may detest what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it'. At... at the Belfast Docks we don't even have Freedom of Thought.

Chairman: Sounds like they really got to you?

Charlie: What really got to me was you... fucking... this Union. It was forged, in blood, and starvation during the Lockout, when this union really acted for the poor.

Chairman: Charlie... what you're talking about is history. That was a hundred years ago.

Charlie: Well I'll tell you what's not history. And all these educated people are telling me not to mention it, because I'll be called mad and crazy for suggesting... that you bastards, would deliberately send men to their deaths, with Asbestos.

[Stan and Alan whisper to Terry and they move off, Stan turns]

Stan: Who among us can guarantee... that they'll be alive in Thirty, forty, or fifty years time?

Alan: Just last week we had a young man killed crossing the road, so, shove yer crap. We're going to to work.

[They move off]

Robbie: Stop. Terry, any one of us can be sacked next.

Charlie: Do you not understand? I was sacked for not going to Court.

Terry: Well you should've went to the fucking Court then.

Charlie: Ya stupid fucking bastard.

Terry: Me stupid. It's you that's sacked. I'm going to work.

Robbie: Bought and paid for as well. A while back you were gonna walk out?

[Chairman, Terry, Stan, and Alan start walking]

Charlie: Behave like men, get off yer knees and fight.

Chairman: Let the dust settle, Terry, then bring your son down.

Charlie: What will happen when it's one of you.

Robbie: You may forget about it Charlie.

[Chairman exits with Terry. Smiling, Stan and Alan mock Charlie]

Stan: Appeal it. Appeal it and we'll support you.

Alan: Be a man Charlie. Think of the Big Picture.

[They exit after the Chairman]

[Disgusted, Charlie shakes his head]

[Dejected, Charlie and Robbie look at each other]

Charlie: What was it... collective stupidity... or cowardice?

Robbie: A bit of both... No... a lot of both.

Charlie: These docks are our heritage and all we have.

Robbie: These bastards have destroyed this union.

Charlie: And... they will never be exposed.

Robbie: Are you sure about that?

Charlie: No-one in Ireland will... they don't want to... destroy the reputations of Larkin and Connolly.

Robbie: But it's their so called followers who'd be...?

Charlie: There'll be a massive cover up, and they'll deny killing... God knows how many?

Robbie: So we forget about it?

Charlie: No, we keep fighting, but accept... that what they've done to the Union... may never be changed, in our lifetime.

[Charlie and Robbie shake hands]

Robbie: I'll not be far behind you.

Charlie: [Laughs] All of you won't be far behind me.

[They exit different sides. Charlie meets Mary.]

Mary: You stupid bastard, who's going to feed your wee Dockers now?

[lights down]

Act Two [12]

[Lights up. Mr Bennet and Chairman meet centre stage]

Mr Bennet: Things are moving along satisfactorily.

Chairman: They are, they are.

Mr Bennet: There's been a change of plan. As the volume of container traffic is well beyond what we anticipated-.

Chairman: You require something different?

Mr Bennet: Sorry, sorry, I didn't explain myself very well. A new motorway and large bridge will be built... These will be needed for an easy access to-.

Chairman: A motorway bridge?

Mr Bennet: And a very fine bridge it will be too. I... might be able to pull a few strings and get it named after you.

[Silence. Chairman smiles and he nods approvingly]

Chairman: That would be nice.

Mr Bennet: And... there's another small thing I need you to do.

Chairman: Which... is? [Chairman puffs out his chest]

Mr Bennet: Actually, and I'm in your debt for your far sightedness. Remember, when still with the union... you did something which I hadn't thought of. You told the Dockers they didn't need a Contract of Employment.

[Chairman looks at him and nods]

Mr Bennet: Well... because of the containers we've too many men, so, I want you to sack them.

Chairman: How many?

Mr Bennet: Them all. [Chairman wobbles]

Chairman: Them all?

Mr Bennet: Yes, you can re-employ half... at your own discretion.

Chairman: Half...?

Mr Bennet: You know who the trouble-makers are? And, it'll be a few years before the new cranes arrive. Must rush, bye bye.

[Mr Bennet exits. The Chairman, dejected, and with shoulders slumped crosses stage. Stan and Alan enter. As they pass the chairman, both open letters and read. They all ignore each other]

lights down

END PLAY

©