

BARBER SHOP.

HERBERT THE BARBER.

MIKE: BEING SHAVED.

PATSY: WAITING CUSTOMER.

CHARLIE: WAITING CUSTOMER.

EVERYONE APPEARS TO BE TALKING AT ONCE.

BARBER: (GETTING ANNOYED BECAUSE OF MIKE'S CONSTANT CHATTER) Cor stone me, Mike! Will you keep your bloody lips buttoned while I try and get this growth removed. Carry on the way you're going, and I'll be peeling your adam's apple. (NODDING HIS HEAD)

MIKE: (TURNS ABRUPTLY TO THE TWO SEATED MEN) And that's just what it's all about, en it?

BARBER: Now what you on about?

MIKE: About the bleedin' employers, that's what I'm on about: keep quiet, keep still, work yer fucking fingers to the bone--- 'cause if yer don't there's always another body to carve up!

BARBER: I'd sooner shave a mop than one of you's lot, believe me.

PATSY: But he's right there, Herbert. Because that's how yer bleedin' governors treat yer: like carcasses. No better than horses. And at least they get a full nose-bag of grub for their labour. Mor than I can say for a docker.

MIKE: Bloody too true. Herbert, go down to Charlie Brown's and see how they call for labour: come out with a handful of tickets and throw at yer. And the tougher you, the more chance of a bit of work. And do you think that's the way to treat men in a so called democracy? Like a load of bloody chickens scrambling for corn.

CHARLIE: (COMPLACENTLY AND RATHER DOCILE) But they've got the educationaint they, those lot. I mean, if you was, like a bit clever, been to one of those big schools, you wouldn't be knocking yer bollocks out down a ship's hold, now would yer---

MIKE: Didn't you? (PAUSE) Well? And was you ever given a chance to get a decent education? And aint you pulled yer tabs out?

DUST

CHARLIE: 'Cause I have, yer know yerself. Still me old back went on me.

MIKE: 'Till yer old back ^{went} ~~when~~. Hm. You pulled three hundred weight bags of sugar about; they get to the pissing factorys, then the sacks are restowed into neat little bags, sent to the shops, then yer money lot--and the others that can afford it--brought it--and then finishing up in little silver bowls all ready for afternoon tea. And you can bet your last farthing they wasn't thinking about your fucking busted back. Not on your sweet life!

BARBER: For Christ sake, Mike, let's finish what I'm supposed to be doing. I mean, it aint as though your a paying customer...

MIKE: Yer, well, get on with it then. But it makes me so sick when yer own kind are like blind bats as to what's happening...

PATSY: And d'you know what, Mike, I can't get over those bloody students. The the worst strike breakers of the lot. What do they know about our struggles, sitting on their arses at them universities, waiting for Daddy's fat little cheque to arrive?

MIKE: (TURNING AND CAUSING THE BARBER TO ALMOST GIVE UP) Too true. Too bleedin' true! And Daddy's fat little cheque's written out with our sweat and the hungry moths of our kids; walking the streets without a pair of shoes on their feet and the arse of their trousers hanging out. And us ~~having~~ practically having to beg for a crust.

PATSY: Bloody right! Why, it's something more than inhuman.

MIKE: Yer. Inhuman--and greed.

CHARLIE: I still say it's education for the workers that's the answer...

MIKE: Education my arse! Why, a bloody man can only wear one suit at a time, why does he need ten? And a man can only live in one house at a time, why does he need two? This struggle has come about from necessity. And the upper classes counter action stems purely from greed--and maybe fear... 'Cause this strike's proving one thing: workers have the power as long as they stay united. We stay together and we'll equal things up a little bit.

PATSY: Trouble is, Mike, there's a few scabs who don't realize it. They want everyone else to fight while they carry on filling their bellies--one way or another...(MIKE AND PATSY BOTH GIVE CHARLIE A LONG HARD STARE)

CHARLIE: I'm... Well I'm with yer all the way, yer know that...

MIKE: Yer, I know that alright...

PATSY: (SERIOUS AND LOUD) Remember a few words of Ben Tillet.

MIKE: Oh, blimey! we're in for something now. Still if it wasn't for the likes of him we'd still be grovelling...

PATSY: Now, Mike, hear me out. Now let me see if I can remember... Got it: "The political machine should be fired and heated with the love of humanity..." Sounds good that, dun it? Fine words.

MIKE: Stone me!

PATSY: But it aint of course.

MIKE: It aint of course as you and all of us know. Just a bunch of greedy jackels and landowners playing games at our expense. Apart from one or two that is...

CHARLIE: But it's like I say--

MIKE: Charlie, go'n get stuffed!--

CHARLIE: Wha'---

BARBER: (PUTTING DOWN HIS TOOLS) Mike I'm giving up with you: I think I'll shave the mat. It'll be bloody easier as low as it is.

MIKE: (AMUSED) Don't be daft... Charlie, yer know, you're a first class cunt and a blind one. Because you just don't see what the struggle's all about.

MIKE: (CON') At this moment you haven't got two halfpennies to rub together. Neither have any of us. We're the one's who are starving, not the bosses. And I'll tell you something else; we'll probably still come out the losers, 'cause we always do. There will always be the poor, no matter who wins the fight.

BARBER: I've got the poor lot here alright: I aint been paid a penny in the last week. That's a fact. Not one penny...Now I don't mind that---

MIKE: I should bloody well think not! We give you your living, don't forget that.

BARBER: Sure, Mike. But I'm supposed to be running a business not a charity works.

MIKE: Ha. You don't do so bad from the lad out of the London docks under normal conditions. And I bet you've still got a shilling or two parked away. Just try living from hand to mouth, never knowing where the next meal's coming from. Just try it.

PATSY: And even when we do manage to get a day's work we still aint much better off: because that's usually subbed before we get it. Twelve bob a bloody day and then have to fight like animals to get the work. You just go and stand on the stones and see the performance. I can assure you it aint nothing like ~~trimmer~~ giving a shave.

BARBER: Yes, but you still don't starve it seems to me. I mean, you aint exactly a bag of bones are you? And you can still have your 'tash trimmed.

MIKE: We'll just have to thank the dear old butchers for their gerorous manners: "a few bacon bones, Mike. Help you and the misses out. Pay when things straighten themselves..." So he still gets his money, keeps a customer, and I'm still in debt. And any extra money we earn won't serve any purpose 'cause by that time prices will all have gone up. They never give you anything.

BARBER: You know something?

MIKE: What?

BARBER: It's bloody amazing how the people in the East End manage to survive. Yet they always seem to get by. They might not have any money, but they never lie in the gutter. I'll give Them that.

MIKE: We've got roots that's why. And our doors are always open. And if we get sold out over this strike, it won't be the doings of the working classes: 'cause we ask only for a decent day's work for a decent day's pay and a roof over our heads. And that's all a man needs...

~~FAST~~

PATSY: And a pint or two.

BARBER: Well you certainly aint ambitious...Now can I finish your shave?

CHARLIE: I hears yesterday they through a bus over Canning Town bridge.

MIKE: Full of the Cabinet I hope. (PAUSE) But I wonder to meself at times just what's gonna come out of all this...

PATSY: Hm. That's a point. I can't see us being much better off whatever happens. We never are it seems to me.

MIKE: True. Take the miners. They'll still be working down their black holes. And did you hear about Harry Gregory?

PATSY: No. What was that?

MIKE: Called the poor bleeder up in the reserves and sent him up north. Still, at least he'll get a few shillings: and a brick or two thrown at him...(LAUGHTER) Cunning devils though: send the troops from the south up north, and the north down to hear here.

BARBER: (WIPING MIKE CLEAN) That's it mate.

MIKE: Good man, good man...All nice and respectable for the Bun house. Can't go to the pawn shop 'cause I'll be walking about without me trousers...(GETS UP. TAKES HIS CAP FROM A PEG AND TIES HIS SILK SCARF ROUND HIS NECK. PATSY GETS INTO THE CHAIR.) I'll see yer down the dock gates boys: turn a few more motors over...(WALKS OFF STAGE)

PATSY: He's one of the best. Pity there aint more like him. But I suppose we'll all creep back like a load of sheep when it's over...Just like a load of sheep...

(CUT TO:)

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SEVEN MEN:THEY APPEAR AND CLIMB (LADDER) ABOARD SHIP. A MIXTURE OF YOUNG AND OLD.

GANGER. BERT. ALF. JOHN. JIMMY. CHARLIE. HARRY.

GANGER: (TO BERT) No...Didn't bother to go out last night

BERT: Cor, I had a right piss-up.

GINGER: Where'd you go?

BERT: Jolly Sailors...And then finished up round Connie Lock's place...
His daughter'd got engaged.

(THEY CLIMB LADDER)

JOHN: (TO HIS MATE) She's a right raver ain't she?

JIMMY: I told yer, she goes through the card.

JOHN: Tongue up bum, the lot. But can she drink!! Cor, stone me!!

JIMMY: Yer, she costs yer alright. And her mate does the business yer know:
Dennie Wright screwed her in his taxi.....

JOHN: (TO ALF) Hear that Alf?

ALF: Cor, I've fancied that sort for ages. He's a jammie bastard.

JOHN: And he's got plenty of old bill...(CLIMBS LADDER)

JIMMY: (TOUCHES HIS BACKSIDE(JOHN'S)) Steady darling.....

JOHN: I like it, I like it !!!

ALF: Always knew you was the other way...(TO CHARLIE) Fuck me, Charlie,
lift your chin off the quay.....

HARRY: I've told him; Spurs ain't worth a rub.

CHARLIE: What are you Fucking talking about? They got robbed!!

HARRY: Balls!!

CHARLIE: Balls my arse!!

HARRY: Was you at the match?

JOHN: (FROM TOP) They're all a load of wallys...

JIMMY: Suck a big hairy!!

CHARLIE: Ah, just listen to the Jack the lads.

GANGER: Now come on you load of twats... Let's get this lot opened and do a
little bit.....

BERT: Let's do fuck all!!! I'm knackered!!

GANGER: Now come on now, game's over. Johnnie, pull that sheet, and Jim,
don't stand there looking like a spare prick at a wedding, get hold
of the other end.....

JOHN: Yes master....(NONSE)

GANGER: (UNSEEN) It's a right load of crap by the looks of it....Come on
Charlie....Fuck me,mate, whether Spurs lost or won, we've got a
living to earn....Harry, give him a shake and stop fucking talking...

(THEY PROCEED TO UNCOVER)

JOHN: Stone me, Stan, this lot looks as though it's been through a mangle..

GANGER: That's what I was thinking.....

HARRY: I reckon you better get a grab for this load of shit.

GANGER: We'll make a start anyway....(SHOUTS UP TO CRANE DRIVER) Can-hooks,
has that lighterman uncovered yet?

VOICE: Yes....We're waiting for you load of berks.....

GANGER: Now don't you start....Let's have that beam out....(NOISE OF STEEL)
Put those snotters down Harry....O.K. you two, get down into that
barge....For fuck sake can-hooks, power the bloody thing....Stone me..
Right me old son, let's get a set out of this hold....

(SET OF BAGS SWING DOWN)

SUGGESTION OF TIME LAPSE

CHARLIE: E're, Stan, this is a fucking joke: these bags ain't worth a toss....

GANGER: Yer....I'll just check with the tally clerk....Hold up can-hooks
....(PAUSE) A?

VOICE: Sixteen ton!

GANGER: Fuck me....Charlie's go'n get hold of Billy Harris....We won't earn a
carrot at this rate....

CHARLIE: Too true....

SHIPWORKER ARRIVES (FOREMAN) DISCUSSION ABOUT STATE OF CARGO

SHIPWORKER: What's the trouble, Stan?

GANGER: Take a look for yourself...~~WAXX~~ We've had nothing but greenacres..
You just can't make up a decent set. And at this rate we won't
earn our daywork money....sixteen fucking ton!! Jesus, normally,
you'd get forty ton an hour out with no bother....Just get hold of
that traffic officer for us 'cause the lads ain't gonna wear this.

SHIPWORKER: Yer. Well, anyway, have your muggo and I'll shoot down the office..
See you in a bit....(LEAVES)

GANGER: Right. (DOWN TO HOLD) Alright ~~you~~ you's lot. Muggo. (THE GANG
EMERGE. TEA IN AN URN. ROLLS. TRAFFIC OFFICER ARRIVES)

CHARLIE: Cor stone me, here comes Charlie Chuckaway.....

TRAFFIC OFFICER: Good morning Stanley....(SMILES)

GANGER: What's good about it? The lads are pulling their tabs out here for
nothing....take a look at that bag work....

TRAFFIC OFFICER: (INSPECTS CARGO) Well it doesn't look too bad

GANGER: Ah come off of it for Christ sake!!

TRAFFIC OFFICER: What's the problem?

GANGER: Problem? Hm

CHARLIE: The problem governor is we're pulling our bollocks out and earning buttons!
(CHARLIE IS A CASUAL MAN AND CAN AFFORD TO SPEAK OUT)

TRAFFIC OFFICER: I see (LOOKS AT CHARLIE WITH CONTEMPT) (INSPECTS CARGO AGAIN)
Hm. Yes, well....sixteen ton.... That right, Stan?

GANGER: Check with the clerk if you don't believe me....

TRAFFIC OFFICER: I see....(TO FOREMAN) We've had this job before, haven't we
Harris?

FOREMAN: Yes, Mr. Reynolds.....

GANGER: I've had the job meself. But this cargo's been thrown in, not
stowed.

TRAFFIC OFFICER: But there's a rate to cover dirty conditions on this Farina...
What is it now....2/9¹/₂d a ton....

GANGER: Ah come off it governor...The bags are just falling apart. The
rate we're moving at, we'll be lucky to earn 15/- bob over our daywork
money.

TRAFFIC OFFICER: (PAUSE) Hm. Well're what did you have in mind?

GANGER: Just a tick....(THE GANG DELIBERATE TOGETHER)
TRAFFIC OFFICER AND FOREMAN TALK ASIDE.

FOREMAN: And you better come up to number four...Bloody gang of poolmen,
complaining about the run-in...Probably want pro-rata men....

TRAFFIC OFFICER: Thought they'd cause trouble....Let's sort this little lot out
first (GANGER APPROACHES) Now nothing ridiculous, Stan....

GANGER: Hm. And when have you ever given anything away?

T/OFFICER: There's no satisfying some men is there...So let's have it.

GANGER: Well we certainly can't earn, not with the state of this gargo...(PAUSE) There's er, three hundred ton, according to the ship's manifest, and normally we'd have that lot out in a day. But I reckon this little lot, at least two days work.

T/OFFICER: O come on now, Stan! Two da ys work to shift three hundred ton. Who are you kidding?

GANGER: Now listen: we average on this bag-work at least forty ton an hour. We'd have cleared it by early afternoon. But with the state of it it's slowed us down something like less than half. It speaks for itself. So you better give us a price for the job, because we can't earn on the piece-work rate. Give us...seven pound for the job. Can't be no fairer than that.

T/OFFICER: Now you are having me on! (INSPECTS CARGO AGAIN) Tell you what: five pound and that's being generous.

T/OFFICER: O come off it for Christ sake!

GANGER: Well we might as well go bloody day-work and get a week's work out of it!

T/OFFICER: Hm. (PAUSE. SHAKES HIS HEAD.) Tell you what: six quid and no more. That's it. (PNUSE. GANGER SMILES AT HIM) Well...?

GANGER: Cor stone me, you're a bloody hard man, bloody hard...But, alright, six quid...And it'll probably take us until Thursday...My lot will like that. But I'll be back on your neck if that bag-work's any worse as we dip down...

T/OFFICER: Well that's settled...(TO SHIPWORKER) Now let's see what's happening at number four...(MOVE TO FOUR HOLD)

S/WORKER: (TO T/OFFICER AS THEY MOVE TO NEXT GANG) Bit generous weren't you?

T/OFFICER: Yes. Still, I know Stan and he's a good worker and he won't budge once he's made up his mind...I'll see if I can recover losses from number four..(S/WORKER GIVES HIM A SLY GRIN)

NOW AT NUMBER FOUR HATCH. THE GANGER IS A PERMANANT MAN. THE REST OF THE GANG ARE CAUSUAL MEN, OR POOL MEN.

T/OFFICER: (TO GANGER) Good morning Charlie.

CHARLIE: Hello, there.

T/OFFICER: Problems?

CHARLIE:Yer.

T/OFFICER: Such as...?

CHARLIE: There's a bit of a run-in...They want a couple of pro-rata: and they aint too pleased with the stowage that's going on to the continent...Said it's dangerous...They want it shored up.

T/OFFICER: Let's take a look...(INSPECTS THE CARGO) There's damn all wrong with that stowage...And if that's what they call a run-in...What are they, all pool men?

CHARLIE: Apart from two of my own boys, yes.

T/OFFICER: Thought so...Well I'll get the crew to make some sort of a show with that stowage...Should keep them quiet...

CHARLIE: Yer, well, apart from that, they want thirty bob while they work the run-in.

T/OFFICER: They what?

CHARLIE: Thirty bob...And there's a couple down there who won't stand for any old nonsense. Take it from me.

S/WORKER: Bloody pool men are always the same...

T/OFFICER: You're right, there. Well I'll tell you what, Charlie, I'll get you a couple of men lunch-time: but no thirty bob. They'll be in the square by two-o'clock.

CHARLIE: And I'm gonna tell them that?

T/OFFICER: Well if you don't I will. Now come on, Charlie...Putting two extra men down there is just plain blood money. Definately no thirty bob. And that's final.

CHARLIE: Well I'll tell 'em...But I can't see them standing for it...It is a bit of a slap yer know--

T/OFFICER: Come off it now. They'll have their two extra men...(LOOKS AT HIS WATCH) They'll be knocking off for lunch in another hour...

CHARLIE: O.K. I'll tell 'em...(SHOUTS DOWN THE HOLD) We'll have the two men dinner time--no thirty bob. (PAUSE). What's that...?
(TO T/OFFICER) I told yer: they want the union down.

T/OFFICER: (A NON-CARING ATTITUDE) As they please...

~~SH~~

S/WORKER: I'll go'n fetch him...I think he's on the palm boat down at two shed...(HE LEAVES.)

T/OFFICER: (PATRONIZING. OFFERS THE GANGER A CIGARETTE) Nice weekend, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Busy in the old garden, yer know.

T/OFFICER: Wife and children well?

CHARLIE: Yer. Yer, all well. The boy started at grammer school last week.

T/OFFICER: Glad to hear it.

CHARLIE: Bloody homework he come's home with. He leaves me standing...

T/OFFICER: Nothing like a good education. I don't suppose he'll come into this industry...

CHARLIE: Bloody right! There aint a lot of future in this game....

T/OFFICER: Ah come on now: you don't do too bad...Ah, here comes trouble...(S/WORKER AND UNION MAN APPEAR. THE UNION MAN IS IN FACT A KIND OF SHOP STEWARD WHO ACT AS A KIND OF AN INBETWEEN: HE WILL BE A DOCKER HIMSELF AND SPEAKS FOR THE MEN ON ANY ISSUE CONCERNING PROBLEM JOBS. IF HE CAN'T ARRIVE AT SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE BETWEEN A GANG AND THE TRAFFIC OFFICER, THEN A PROPER UNION OFFICIAL IS CALLED. ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT A UNION OFFICIAL AS SUCH, HE IS WELL VERSED IN JOB PRICES AND WELL ABLE TO PUT UP A REASONABLE ARGUMENT WITH THE T/OFFICER.)
Morning, Joe.

JOE: Morning...Charlie. What's the problem, mate?

CHARLIE: You better go down there and talk to them...

JOE: Right. (CLIMBS DOWN HATCH)

S/WORKER: I'm off, Mr Reynolds...Number one need some ^{gear} for those logs.

T/OFFICER: Right. Running smooth?

S/WORKER: Smooth as houses...I'm off. (HE LEAVES. JOE APPEARS)

JOE: (TO T/OFFICER) You seen that run-in?

T/OFFICER: I have.

JOE: And...?

T/OFFICER: I've told them: two pro-rata and that's it.

JOE: (HE LAUGHS) Now come on, you must be joking. And how about that stowage?

T/OFFICER: I'll have the crew shore it up.

JOE: Not good enough. They want thirty bob a man while they work it without the extra men. And in fact, you should have had two extra men when this job started.

T/OFFICER: Ah, rubbish, Joe. Two extra men for forty ton of case-work? Why, a gang of my perm's would have shifted that in no time at all.

JOE: That might be true. They haven't got much option: and they'll be at work tomorrow. They're all pool men down there. Anyway They might be dabbing on for the rest of the week. Anyway, that's beside the point...They're still working light, apart from the fact that they haven't even got rollers.

T/OFFICER: Now what do you expect me to offer them...?(LOOKS AT WATCH)
Another couple of hours and they'll have the extra men.

JOE: Meanwhile they've got to drag that case work out and the piece work rate's cut by half. Now come on, play the game.

T/OFFICER: O.K. A pound for the job. I can't be fairer than that.

JOE: (PAUSE) Pound? Hold on...(GOES DOWN THE HATCH)

THE TRAFFIC OFFICER AND THE GANGER LOOK DOWN THE HATCH.

JOE: Alright, gov', they'll accept that. But they want the extra men.

T/OFFICER: They'll have them...

CHARLIE: (DOWN TO HOLD) Right, let's get started down there...(JOE LEAVES)

THE TRAFFIC OFFICER MOVES FORWARD ON STAGE. SPOT ON HIM. DARK REST OF STAGE. DRAWS NOTE BOOK FROM POCKET AND PENCIL. STANES FOR A MOMENT.)

TRAFFIC OFFICER TO AUDIENCE:

Let me see. Stan' at number two wanted seven pounds for the job...I was prepared to go as far as five pound ten. He wangled six. But well worth it. Charlie's bunch of crows wanted thirty bob. Got them to accept a pound. Well worth it. That in fact makes me even...(BEAMING) Take off Peter-- give it to Paul. Take off Paul--give to Peter. Because Peter and Paul just do not know each other. (LAUGHS LIKE SOME SILLY NAN) Ha Ha...Very clever, what? (KILL SPOT QUICKLY)