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TRAINING OF PORT PERSONNEL

Paper prepared by the International Labour Organisation

Background

New cargo-handling methods are being extensively adopted in the great majority of the world's ports. Containers, pallets, roll-on roll-off techniques are common now in most ports and greater and greater quantities of goods of a wider variety are transported using one of these methods. Traditional manual handling of goods is rapidly disappearing and, especially in ports of industrialized countries, all cargo handling will be carried on by means of powerful and sophisticated equipment.

This equipment needs new skill and great ability on the part of those called on to operate it, and new types of training have therefore to be given to those persons who drive the machines, who supervise their operation, who carry out maintenance work, and who decide on the use of these machines.

In the old days dock personnel were trained to carry out a specific job: one could be given training in work in the warehouse on the quay, as a holdsmen, or he might receive specialist training as fork-lift truck driver, deckhand or winchman. The line of promotion was to become a specialist in one of these fields. The new approach is to provide training of such a nature that the docker can quickly become an all-round man, able to handle all or most of the kinds of jobs referred to. While the old method of training (training for a specific job) could be carried out by learning on the job without any kind of formal or theoretical instruction, the new concept of polyvalent dockworkers requires a more sophisticated and high-level training which will enable the docker to handle anything from a container to a roll-on roll-off unit load, or mixed cargo requiring careful stowage in the hold by traditional methods.

Practically all experts who have been advising governments on port work have consistently recommended that further arrangements be made for the training of dockworkers. They consider that with all the mechanical equipment available under modern conditions, and in the search for improved methods of moving cargo, organized vocational training of port workers is both an essential requirement and a practical possibility. No longer should workers be expected to acquire their skill simply by experience on the job. They should undergo training courses in proficiency, and be taught how to increase their productivity in order to speed up the handling of cargo.

Another argument in favour of training is the lowering of accident rates. Many accidents are due to ignorance rather than negligence, and can be reduced through training in the correct way of handling cargo. Damage to the cargo, which in many ports has been extremely serious, can likewise be reduced if dockers are properly trained, and this in its turn can have favourable repercussions on insurance claims and rates.

It should also be remembered that the docker is becoming less and less a casual worker and is increasingly in regular employment, so that the cost of training can be readily recovered over time.

Courses for new entrants

It is desirable, both on grounds of efficiency and as a help towards establishing sound labour-management relations, that some kind of an induction course be given to the new entrant. The kind of subjects covered might include the nature of the work covered by the port and the main factors influencing it; the organization and lay-out of the port; the rights and obligations of the dockers in the light of the legislation, collective agreements or awards in force; the working of whatever scheme may exist for the regularization of employment and the allocation of labour; pay arrangements; how to bring up grievances and the machinery for dealing with them; safety; availability of welfare amenities; training facilities and promotion possibilities; and rights and obligations under social security schemes.

Courses of this type are organized in many countries, although much remains to be done in most developing countries.

The duration of these courses depends largely on the level of general education of those who follow them and/or the amount of knowledge which the participants are supposed to acquire. A reasonable average duration could be three weeks.

Training of the established dockworker

This aspect of training may be part of a general scheme for the training of industrial workers. Certain subjects, in fact, are common to several industries, and advantage may be taken of the premises and other facilities which may be available and enable those concerned to save effort, money and qualified teaching staff.

A scheme for the training of dockworkers which would be suitable for a number of ports, particularly in developing countries, could be divided into three parts: basic training, specialist training (tally-clerks, deckhands and fork-lift truck drivers) and training of foremen.

(a) Basic training

The object of basic training is to increase the worker's skill, to give a general fundamental grounding, to teach safety measures and to work with order and neatness and to give workers a team spirit.

The training might last for 13 weeks, divided into nine weeks training in the general cargo branch, three weeks in the bulk cargo branch, and one week in the new methods of cargo handling. During these 13 weeks there might be one day a week of theoretical and practical schooling, while the rest of the week might be spent on actual productive work under the supervision of an instructor who should remain with each group during the whole 13-week period.

The instruction day includes teaching theoretical knowledge and practical instruction, teaching of right working methods, safety measures and attitude to work. Furthermore, this instruction day might provide an opportunity for a review of the past week's work, and for a discussion of the difficulties encountered. Each training group should consist of approximately 12 persons.

The theoretical training imparted might include a wide range of subjects such as general knowledge of dock work and its meaning; the history and development of the port; its organisation (arrival and departure of an ocean-going vessel, relations between shipper and consignee, relations among the persons in the port business, the organisation of work, the administrative organisation of the local port authority, wages, conditions of employment and rules of cargo-handling systems); its relations with other ports; systems of handling bulk cargo and general cargo (equipment and gear of the stevedore, mechanical handling of cargo, grain elevators, hoisting equipment for containers, pallets and other new methods used); a description of the dockworkers' duties, with particular emphasis on safety and harbour terminology.

Practical training might be effected while the men are engaged in productive work. An instructor who is always in attendance shows the men how to move and work. The syllabus includes general exercises (efficient moving and working, correct positions during work, lifting, hoisting, carrying, shovelling and scooping, sewing bags, tying knots etc.); how to use stevedore tools; how to work in sheds and warehouses; practical instruction in efficient loading and unloading of different types of cargo; safety during the performance of the worker's duties; etc.

During the course trainees should be regularly paid, not only for the time they spend doing productive work but also for the time spent in attending class and carrying out theoretical training.

(b) Specialist training

Specialist training may include the following branches: tally clerks, winch drivers, hatchmen and fork-lift truck drivers.

The duration of the course for tally clerks may be between 13 and 26 weeks according to the level of general education possessed by the participants. A maximum of 12 persons are admitted to the course. The trainees follow a theoretical course of some weeks, and for the rest they work in the port as tally clerks under the constant supervision of their instructor.

Theoretical and practical training should be imparted on a number of subjects: the function of the tally clerk; the elements of tallying (arithmetic, adding up, multiplying, cubic measures, language, making reports, filling in tally books, clear handwriting, special technical terms, knowledge of the marks on packages, weighing on different types of scales, tarring, measuring in English and metric systems, filling in and reading cargo plans, sampling and sealing, reporting and settling of damages, handling of customs documents); procedure in the shipping trade as far as the tally clerk is concerned (loading and discharge documents, ordering barges and receivers, delivery of goods out of ships and sheds, transport by railway and trucks, and stowage regulations and provisions); knowledge of ships and their parts; the most important shipping lines; knowledge of the port where the dockers work; the most important commodities imported and exported; the right place of the tally clerk on board, on the quay and in the shed.

The courses for winch drivers and hatchmen lay emphasis on safety. Only those candidates with good examination results at the end of their basic training should be accepted. They also pass a test and show evidence of two years' experience as dockworkers.

The duration of the course may be 13 weeks, out of which a week is spent at school in theoretical and practical instruction while the rest is spent in productive work under the supervision of the instructor.

Theoretical teaching, which is always based on demonstration and practical work, includes explanations on the function of a winch driver and a hatchman. Winch drivers acquire knowledge of the parts of various types of winches and of the hatchman signals, and an understanding of the co-operation between the winch drivers and the hatchmen. Both categories of workers must acquire a knowledge of the stevedoring tools and of the ships' loading gear as well as of the use of buys, blocks etc. They should learn how to adjust the derricks and work safely.

Practical training includes winch driving in all kinds of winches, the rigging of derricks, blocks, guys etc., as well as signalling.

The course for fork-lift truck drivers may have a 16-week duration, with two hours of theoretical training per week. The rest of the time is spent on productive work under the supervision of the instructor. There should be a maximum of 24 trainees in a course.

The subjects on which training is imparted may include traffic regulations; knowledge of different types of fork-lift trucks; lifting systems; loading of a fork-lift truck; safe driving and safe working with a fork-lift truck.

(c) Training of foremen

This course should be considered as a basic training course, after which further training is imparted aiming at the instruction of foremen in their specific branch of dock work (warehouse foreman, elevator foreman, foreman tally man, stevedore foreman etc.).

Trainees are admitted to this course when they hold either a tally clerk's, a winch driver's or a hatchman's certificate. The course lasts five weeks, spread over a period of three months. Between 15 and 20 trainees should be admitted to the course.

The subjects on which training is imparted may include: knowledge of the port where the trainees work and of its equipment; the procedure in port from the arrival to the departure of the ship; knowledge of the laws and regulations governing work in port as well as safety regulations; the functions of the port authorities; collective agreements in the port industry; the construction of sea-going vessels; cargo plans and other cargo papers; stevedoring tools; mechanical equipment; principal regulations concerning loading and unloading; stability of ships; drafts; opening and closing of hatches; distribution of cargo in ship; stowing of cargo; what to do in case of damage to cargo; the task of the customs; national language and how to make a report; the planning, loading and unloading of a vessel; a knowledge of commodities; geography in connection with the harbour and shipping business; knowledge of English used in the shipping industry; some knowledge of first-aid and hygiene; what to do in case of accidents; personnel management in connection with the activity of a foreman; abbreviations in freight traffic; and safe working.

In each case provisions should exist for examinations which may be oral or oral and written, and also practical. Criteria for judging should be based on the personal qualities insofar as they are expressed in working behaviour of trainees (sense of responsibility, the right job mentality which means doing the job safely, promptness in action, co-operation with the instructors, team spirit, leadership), and on their proficiency (learning new operations, understanding instructions, doing the work thoroughly, speed, working efficiently).