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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

Meeting of the ITF Committee on the Safety of Fishermen and Fishing Vessels, Ostend, 25 - 26 June 1968

The Committee, which was set up at the last conference of the ITF Fishermen's Section (Hull, October 1967) to deal with the question of the safety of fishermen and fishing vessels, held a meeting in Ostend on 25-26 June. It was attended by members from Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. In the absence of R. Dekeyzer of Belgium, Chairman of the ITF Fishermen's Section, D.A. Shenton of the British Transport and General Workers' Union, presided.

The Committee gave advance consideration to a draft of an International Safety Code for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels, which will be discussed at a joint meeting of the ILO, FAO and IMCO in Geneva in September, in which ITF-nominated consultants and advisers will take part. The Committee agreed on the terms of a written submission to be made to the ILO on the subject of the Safety Code. It also adopted a resolution concerning social conditions in the fishing industry, which, among other things, proposed the holding of a conference to draw up and adopt an international convention on the safety of fishermen and fishing vessels, in addition to the proposed international code, and an early meeting of the ILO Committee on Conditions of Work in the Fishing Industry.

ITF unions boycott Greek flag ships

On 5, 7 and 14 June ITF-affiliated unions carried out 24-hour boycotts of Greek flag ships in the ports of Germany, Finland and Belgium. In a Press Statement issued on 17 June, the ITF explains that the reason for these actions "is to emphasize the grave concern which is felt by the world's free trade union movement at the broken promises of the Greek Military Junta and over the interference by the Greek Government in the affairs of innocent trade union organizations". The ITF warned that similar, even stronger, action in the future could not be discounted unless the Greek Government took immediate steps to ensure that the trade union movement in Greece was able to conduct its affairs free from interference by the state or any other outside body.

Swedish affiliated unions take action against flag-of-convenience vessels

By cooperation between the Swedish Seamen's Union and the Swedish Transport Workers' Union, the Greek-owned, Panamanian flag ship "Vakis", was boycotted for 2 days in Norrköping. Despite the owners' attempts to avoid signing a custodian agreement, the Swedish unions stood firm until agreements were signed and full payment made to the Welfare Fund and the Special Seafarers Section. Another Panamanian Flag ship, "Karin", arriving at

Oxelösund, had been forced to sign a Custodian Agreement by the Swedish union in January 1967, but this agreement had not been renewed in January 1968. After difficult negotiations and a threat of boycott, the Master renewed the agreements and made the necessary payments to the Welfare Fund and the Special Seafarers Section.

Our Swedish friends are to be congratulated on their successful action.

ITF gives £15,000 to new seamen's centre in Europoort

At a ceremony on 29 May in the Town Hall of Rotterdam, C. Blyth, Assistant General Secretary of the ITF, handed over a cheque for £15,000 to the Mayor of Rotterdam, Mr. W. Thomassen. The money, which comes from the ITF International Seafarers' Assistance, Welfare and Protection Fund, is an ITF contribution towards the cost of building the International Seamen's Centre in Europoort, due to be opened in May next year.

TRANSPORT

INTERNATIONAL *****

Finland accedes to the Customs Convention

The instrument of accession of Finland to the Customs Convention concerning welfare material for seafarers was deposited with the Customs Co-operation Council in May 1968, and the Convention will come into force for Finland in August 1968.

JAPAN *****

Japan to have nuclear-powered ship

Japan is to become the fourth country in the world to have a nuclear-powered merchant ship. The ship, which is to be built at a Tokyo shipyard, is due for completion in March 1972. She is being built for the Japan Nuclear Ship Development Agency.

ICELAND *****

Iceland switches to right-hand driving

Iceland went over from left-hand to right-hand driving on Sunday, 26 May 1968. Two minor accidents were reported on that day, when most of the country's 40,000 motorists took to the road and long traffic jams developed.

INDIA

Commission set up to study port problems

The Government of India has appointed a 7-member Commission to study port problems. Bro. S.R. Kulkarni, President of the All-India Port and Dock Workers' Federation and a Secretary of the ITF-affiliated Transport and Dock Workers' Union, has been invited to serve on the Commission. Particular aspects to be examined are methods for improving operational efficiency in major ports, and development programmes in the context of present and future needs, with particular reference to changes in shipping and port technology, as well as port management, finance and labour policies.

UNITED STATES

US railways introduce "land bridge" for containers

Two American railroad companies, the Union Pacific Railroad and the Norfolk and Western Railway, have announced plans for establishing the longest "land bridge" on the North American continent. The container route will stretch from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and will cut transport time from Japan to Europe by 10 days compared to the Panama Canal route, and 20 days compared to the route round Cape Horn.

American railroad unions demand strong safety laws

The ITF-affiliated Railway Labor Executives' Association, which represents 23 United States railroad employees' unions, has branded the toll of 2,458 deaths and 24,194 reportable injuries on United States railways last year as "the greatest unpublicized tragedy in America today". The RLEA has asked the nation's railroads to "join with us in urging Congress to enact this year a broad and strong railroad safety law."

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| TRADE UNIONS |
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GREAT BRITAIN

The TUC centenary

In June this year, the Trades Union Congress celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first ever Trades Union Congress held in Manchester from 2-6 June 1968. The 34 delegates who took part in that historic meeting represented 118,367 members. Today, the TUC has a membership of almost 9 million.

KOREA

Annual Convention of Korean Railway Workers' Union

At the 1968 Annual Convention of the Korean Railway Workers' Union, held in Seoul on 29 and 30 May, a new body, the Planning Board, was set up to take charge of all matters concerning grievance handling, labour-management relations, and workers' participation in management.

UNITED STATES

US transport unions form new conference

Representatives of some 50 AFL-CIO unions with a total of over 2.5 million members in all branches of the American transport industry have formed a new Conference of Transportation Trades. The conference is composed of six sections, representing unions of marine, highway, transit, airline, railroad operating, and rail non-operating staff. D.L. Dennis, President of the Brotherhood Railway and Airline Clerks, was elected Chairman of the new Conference. Dennis explained that the Conference would "serve as a clearing house on ideas" in transportation and "deal with issues and problems which affect workers in every segment of the industry."

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

INTERNATIONAL

ICFTU calls for centralized hiring offices for dockers in Asian ports

The ITF representative in Asia, Donald U'ren, in an address on behalf of the ICFTU to the Transport and Communications Committee of the U.N. Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, urged the Committee to ensure that centralized employment offices for dock workers be established in Asian ports. Such offices would help to eliminate the undesirable exploitation of dockers by middlemen and contractors, and would ensure better terms for dockers' safety and welfare.

ARGENTINA

Argentina maritime workers call for better working conditions

The ITF-affiliated Circolo de Electricistas Navales reports that the 3rd Congress of the Argentine Maritime Federation (FAMAR) in May 1968 recommended that member organizations of FAMAR establish as quickly as possible a first-rate organization grouping all maritime workers. The Congress called for a struggle to modify Law 17,371, in order to ensure proper working conditions, the 8-hour working day, sick pay, and wages related to the cost of living. It also called for the defence of nationalized shipping; adequate working conditions on deep sea fishing vessels; the setting up of a single

health service for all maritime workers and their families; and the creation of a Pensions Management Committee to advise and negotiate in all cases concerning maritime workers and pensioners

BARBADOS

Wage increase ends Barbados docks dispute

The Barbados dockers' wage dispute has been settled, following a visit to Barbados by Thomas Gleason Jr. of the ITF-affiliated International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), who advised our affiliate on negotiations. The agreement between the port employers and the ITF-affiliated Barbados Workers' Union provided a wage increase of 20 cents per hour, together with an undertaking by the employers to contribute 2% of the basic wage to the dockers' Sick Fund and to hand over the whole surplus of the Sick Fund - £9,000.

CANADA

St. Lawrence Seaway lock-workers strike for 9%

1,250 lock-workers, on the St. Lawrence Seaway, members of the ITF-affiliated Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers, went on strike on 21 June in support of their demands for higher wages. The union members rejected the majority report on wages by a three-man conciliation board, which proposed two 6% increases, one in 1968 and one in 1969, and demanded two 9% increases. The Canadian Prime Minister has urged the strikers and the Seaway Authority to return to the bargaining table in an effort to end the dispute.

DENMARK

Danish shipping strike ended

The strike by members of the ITF-affiliated Danish Mates' Union and the Danish Radio Officers' Union was ended on 24 May, when the Danish Parliament adopted legislation compelling the unions and the shipowners to negotiate in the presence of a three-man commission. (For detailed report on the strike see Newsletter No. 5, 1968, page 38).

FRANCE

Important gains for striking French transport workers

Some ten million French workers have been involved in the strike movement which broke out on 17 May in support of the workers' demands for wage increases, a shorter working week, trade union rights within the factories, and greater workers' participation in management. Commenting on the strike, André

Bergeron, General Secretary of the Force Ouvrière Trade Union Confederation explains: "It is certain that the strike could not have reached such proportions if it had not found fertile soil. It was an expression of deep dissatisfaction resulting from changes in the modern world. On top of this came the odious policy of the government and employers, who have allowed to accumulate a whole backlog of unsatisfied demands, creating a situation which could not fail finally to explode.

"From the start, FO organizations assumed their responsibilities with seriousness and determination. They opposed anything that could provoke violence, and thus weaken the workers' position. They kept the strike strictly at a trade-union level. This is why they have been victorious..." As a result of the strike considerable wage increases and other gains have been achieved, particularly for the benefit of the lower-paid workers,

Railwaymen, who were on strike from 18 May to early June, have gained immediate wage increases as well as more radical and lasting reforms. Wages are being increased by 3.2% (already received on 1 January), plus 5.5% on 1 June, plus 1.5% on 1 October 1968. A study is to be undertaken with a view to reforming the salary structure, in order to reduce the number of grades and to ensure more satisfactory opportunities for promotion, and a new negotiating structure is to be introduced. The Minister of Transport has accepted the principle of the gradual reduction of the working week to 40 hours, and the statutory working week will be reduced from 46 to 44½ hours from July 1968. Finally, trade union rights on the French Railways (SNCF) are to be extended, the powers of the Joint Committees are to be increased, and the role of the trade unions enlarged.

For workers in the ports and docks improvements include an increase in the hourly basic rate from 2.64 to 3.06 F, and the guaranteed daily wage has been raised to 32.27 F. Dockers in both permanent and casual employment are to receive a payment of 14.12F for each day of the strike. There is to be an immediate study on the reduction of working hours, to be implemented from 1968.

On the inland waterways, the employers took a negative attitude until early June when a strike was called by FO. By 13 June, the unions had won a number of improvements: a wage increase of 7% from 1 June, and 3% from 1 October 1968 (FO considers that the latter increase is too small); discussions in July 1968 with a view to introducing a shorter working week and 4 weeks' holiday with pay. A working group is being set up to revise and bring up to date the collective agreement. FO will not sign any agreement until after the July discussions.

For workers in road transport the different scales of guaranteed wages which existed hitherto are being replaced by a single scale for the whole country. This will bring increases ranging from 7 to 26% from 1 June, with a further 3% in October 1968. For road haulage workers, maximum average weekly hours of work are to be reduced from 54 to 53 hours.

In the merchant navy, both officers and crews were able to obtain greater improvements than those contained in the collective agreements which they had signed or been about to sign just before the strike. Unions have secured a pay increase of 7% from 1 June, followed by a further 3% in October. There will also be a 15% increase in 3 stages on overtime rates for crews. Ratings are to get an extra half-day's shore-leave in respect of each month served aboard, as of 1 June 1968. Officers will get an extra half-day from October 1969, and another extra half-day from 31 December 1970. A Commission, composed of representatives of government, seamen's and officers' unions, and employers, has been set up to advise on all questions concerning seafarers. It will be informed each year of all provisions of the National Plan concerning the merchant navy and fishermen.

GREAT BRITAIN

Railwaymen's overtime ban and work-to-rule

Members of the ITF-affiliated National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) have called a ban on overtime and rest day working, and a work to rule from 24 and 25 June respectively. The move follows the rejection by the Railway Staff National Tribunal of an interim pay claim for increases of up to 9 per cent, which was lodged because the current pay and efficiency talks had not reached a settlement after almost three years of negotiations.

Pay increases for British seafarers

Agreement has been reached between the ITF-affiliated National Union of Seamen (NUS) and the British Shipping Federation on a pay settlement for 62,500 NUS members. The increase is one of 4½% on basic rates. It was also agreed in principle that overtime pay should be established at a percentage overtime rate, but that further discussion on these rates would be held when an inquiry into ratings' earnings had been concluded.

Another agreement, between the British Shipping Federation and the ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association (MNAOA), provides for a 3½% increase in consolidated basic rates and overtime payments for ships' officers from 15 July. The union's claim for a reconstruction of pay scales to provide annual salaries based on the 40-hour week at sea and in port was referred to a joint sub-committee for discussion.

BOAC pilots strike

1,040 BOAC pilots at London's Heathrow Airport went on strike from 16 June to 3 July in support of their claim for a new service agreement and pay based on service, hours flown, miles flown, and gross weight of the aircraft, instead of the present flat-rate system.

INDIA

Indian seamen sign integrated crew agreement

Following an agreement between the ITF-affiliated National Union of Seafarers of India (Bombay) and the shipowners, Hain-Nourse, a 25,991 gross ton bulk carrier belonging to the company will now sail with an integrated crew. Asian crew employed in the deck and engine departments are now interchangeable. Catering ratings can also assist in mooring and unmooring duties if required. The new conditions of service include substantial wage increases, a 44-hour week, an extra half day's leave per month, increases in ration scales and free working clothes.

JAPAN

Pay rise for Japanese public service workers

The Japanese government agreed in May to increase pay for workers on the Japanese Railways and in other public services by an average of 5,132 Yen a month.

(£1 equals 870,25 Yen).

NORWAY

Higher minimum pay for Norwegian fishermen

The Norwegian Parliament has approved a government proposal to raise State subsidies to the fishing industry by the equivalent of £1.7 million a year, bringing total subsidies to the sum of £13.5 million. The guaranteed weekly minimum pay for fishermen was also raised from £7.3s to £10.2s. The new measures follow a drop in income for the Norwegian fishing industry, because increased efficiency has meant over-large catches and falling market prices.

PAKISTAN

Pakistani flight engineers/navigationers gain 33.5% pay rise

We have been informed by our affiliate, the Pakistan Flight Engineers' and Navigators' Association (FENA), that a new working agreement has been signed with PIA Management, providing for a 33.5% increase in salary, 25% increase of pensions, increased accident policies, a reduction of the monthly flying limits to 50 hours for the Boeing, as well as other improvements.

SWITZERLAND

Swiss railwaymen gain pay rise

After 18 months of hard negotiations, the ITF-affiliated Swiss Railwaymen's Union (SEV) has now gained for its members on the Federal Railways a pay increase of 6% over 1967 pay (basic pay plus cost-of-living allowance). The cost-of-living allowance goes up from 16% to 17% of the 1964 basic pay, and will in future be incorporated in basic pay. Other improvements include increased children's allowances and higher bonuses for long service. The new rates of pay take effect from 1 July 1968 and other improvements from 1 January 1969.

UNITED STATES

6% interest urged on airline back pay

The President of the ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists (IAM), Roy Siemiller, has proposed an incentive system to encourage airline management to speed up union contract negotiations, which, he considers, are notoriously long drawn out. He has proposed that the IAM ask 6% interest on all retroactive pay due to members after agreements are renegotiated. Ten major IAM airline contracts are due to be renegotiated at the end of this year.

Substantial gains for NMU following vigorous strike action

Some 55,000 members of the ITF-affiliated National Maritime Union of America (NMU) won a 5 per cent wage increase and 15 additional days holidays following a 3 day strike which tied up some 125 ships in east and Gulf ports.

The strike came to an end on July, when the shipping industry's arbitrator, Mr. Theodore Keel, awarded the increases. He is expected to rule "at a very early date" on other issues, including NMU's demand for an increase in overtime rates.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

29th ITF Congress - Wiesbaden, 28 July -
3 August, 1968

Inland Navigation Section
Conference - London, 29 & 30 August

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING
FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY
ITEM IN THIS NEWSLETTER MAY
OBTAIN IT ON REQUEST FROM
THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ITF

ADDENDUM

GHANA was inadvertently omitted from the enclosed list of the countries represented at Congress.
