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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

ITF expresses its deep sympathy with the people of India following the cyclone disaster

Following news of the terrible cyclone disaster which struck the Indian coastal state of Orissa claiming many thousands of lives, the ITF cabled president Giri expressing its profound sense of shock. The cable read:

"The International Transport Workers' Federation expresses the deepest sympathy of its members with the people of Orissa in their present suffering."

ITF Committee on Safety of Fishermen initiates discussion on the proposed Part B of the International Safety Code for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels

The ITF Committee on the Safety of Fishermen and Fishing Vessels met in Utrecht on 26 and 27 October, primarily to plan the work to be done by the Committee in respect of the proposed Part B of the ILO/IMCO/FAO Code of Safety for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels in preparation for the joint meeting of consultants from the aforesaid international agencies which is expected to take place in 1973 and at which the ITF fishermen's affiliates will be represented on the ILO panel. Nine delegates from five of the seven countries represented on the ITF committee attended the ITF meeting, which was conducted by H. Rake (Germany), Chairman of the ITF Fishermen's Section. The International Labour Office and the ITF Brussels Committee were represented through observers. A. Selander (Section Secretary) attended on behalf of the ITF Secretariat.

The Committee was able to deal conclusively with the bulk of the general provisions and the chapters on protection of the crew and shipborne navigational equipment, thereby proposing a number of amendments and additions to the existing IMCO draft which was used as a basis for the discussions. Union experts were asked to examine a number of questions prior to their final consideration by the Committee. The Committee agreed that additionally to the existing IMCO draft particular attention should be given to lighting of accommodation and work spaces, protection against noise, medical care on board, safe access to vessels, ship's sanitation and manning and training and decided to give urgent attention to crew accommodation, radio equipment and de-icing equipment at its next meeting.

In connection with the meeting of the Committee a visit was arranged to a fishery research institute in the fishing port of IJmuiden, where a series of lectures on fish preservation was given for the benefit of the participants.

ITF gives assistance to the crew of the Greek-flag vessel 'Antonis'

When the Greek-flag vessel Antonis berthed in the port of Genoa in August, members of the crew approached F. Giorgi of the ITF-affiliated Italian Seamen's Union (FILM) in Genoa with a request for assistance. Brother Giorgi went on board the Antonis, which is owned by the Margarencia Shipping Company, to inspect the conditions for himself. He found that the vessel was in urgent need of repair and that the crew members were without money and were also short of food. In addition, two members of the crew were in need of medical attention. He also established that the non-Greek members of the crew were being paid at rates which were substantially lower than those stipulated in the Greek contract.

Brother Giorgi reported the crew complaints to the Greek consul in the port, but he was unwilling to help. In an effort to obtain a just settlement of the claims of those members of the crew wishing to be paid off, Brother Giorgi then sought and obtained a court order preventing the vessel from leaving the port until such payment had been effected. Dockworkers in the port agreed to stop working the Antonis so that the vessel should not sail before the restraining order could be issued.

Eventually, our representative was able to reach agreement with the owners of the Antonis that crew members who wished to leave the vessel should be repatriated at company expense. Some of the crew members accepted the offer; others managed to obtain a job on one of the vessels in the port. The court is now expected to issue a notice of sale in order to recover the back wages which are still owed to most members of the crew.

ITF condemns police repression of striking Spanish workers

In recent weeks, workers throughout Spain have taken strike action in support of their claim for improved salaries and working conditions. The present wave of strikes started with a strike of Madrid building workers at the end of September⁺ and has since spread to mining, automobile and bus workers in other centres. In an attempt to forcibly effect a return to work, the Spanish authorities have once again resorted to repressive measures - striking workers have been fired on by the police, two workers are known to have been killed and many more have been seriously injured in these clashes. Hundreds of workers have been dismissed for taking strike action and some of those have been arrested and are now facing trial for the crime of 'aggression towards the police forces'. The strikes now show signs of coming to an end, but the underlying cause, the extreme dissatisfaction of workers with the effectiveness of the state-controlled unions (or sindicatos) remains.

+ See ITF Newsletter No. 10, p. 108

In view of the gravity of the situation, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has passed a resolution insisting that the Director-General of the International Labour Office warn the Spanish government of the serious consequences of this deliberate oppressive and anti-trade union policy and demanding the immediate release of arrested workers, together with the reinstatement of workers who have been illegally dismissed. The resolution also calls upon the Spanish authorities to institute immediate proceedings against those responsible for the shooting of workers on strike at the SEAT car factory in Barcelona.+

The resolution assures the striking Spanish workers of the solidarity of the world free trade union movement and of its support in their struggle for the re-establishment of fundamental rights and trade union rights in Spain, including the right to strike.

In a cable addressed to the Spanish Minister of Labour, the ITF has condemned the police repression and shooting of Spanish workers engaged in strike action in support of their legitimate demands for improved living and working conditions. The cable also calls upon the Spanish government to take immediate measures which would give Spanish workers the freedom of association and of industrial action available to workers in all civilized countries.

TRADE UNIONS

INTERNATIONAL

International Metalworkers' Federation calls for concerted action against multinational companies

The 22nd triennial Congress of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) meeting in Lausanne (Switzerland) last month adopted a resolution calling upon its national affiliates to give up some measure of their autonomy in order to strengthen joint union action against international corporations. The resolution noted that the power of national unions to respond to large companies was being weakened in the measure that these companies became independent of profits drawn from any single country. The IMF, the resolution stated, must now undertake the complex task of coordinating the movement of its affiliates towards concerted action.

+ a Spanish worker, Antonio Ruiz Villalba, died as a result of injuries received during the disturbances at the SEAT plant

CANADA

Canadian Railway Labour Association pleads the case for publication of accident reports

At a recent hearing of the Canadian Transport Commission inquiry into safety on Canada's railways, the Canadian Railway Labour Association gave evidence in support of its argument that those sections of the Railway Act which prohibited the release to the public of official information on train accidents were unconstitutional. The CRLA counsel reminded the hearing that, while official reports on railway accidents were marked 'secret' or 'classified', full reports on all shipping and aircraft accidents were invariably made public. Counsel charged that the Canadian Transport Commission had no right to withhold information that was of vital public concern.

The CRLA brief was opposed by the two major Canadian railway companies - the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian National Railway - which were represented at the hearing. Counsel for both railroads expressed satisfaction with the current legislation, which gave the CTC the legal right to divulge information at its own discretion.

The CRLA remains unconvinced by the counter-arguments advanced at the hearing and is now determined to take its case to the Supreme Court.

ISRAEL

Israeli seamen's convention stresses need for improved conditions for seafarers

At its union convention held last month in Haifa, the ITF-affiliated Israel Seamen's Union passed a resolution condemning the lack of agreed safety and accommodation standards on a number of vessels recently acquired by Israeli owners and instructing the Secretariat of the union to use its influence to prevent the operation of those vessels in their present state. The convention also appealed to the Israeli government to expedite the passing of maritime legislation requiring compulsory manning of Israeli vessels by Israeli crews, this measure to be introduced gradually but within a fixed time limit.

In respect of flags of convenience, the convention adopted a resolution empowering the Secretariat to act with all the means at its disposal in order to continue the fight against owners of flag of convenience vessels, in accordance with ITF policy and under its guidance.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

AUSTRALIA

Australian dockers seek higher pay

The ITF-affiliated Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia has submitted a claim for substantial pay increases (of about 49%) on behalf of its 18,000 members. The federation bases its claim on the increased cost-of-living and an estimated rise in productivity. It is also seeking an increase in annual leave from four to six weeks and additional sick leave of 15 days (an increase of 8 days).

FRANCE

BEA employees at Le Bourget face threat to their jobs

We have been informed by the civil aviation section of the ITF-affiliated French Transport and Public Service Workers' Federation (FO) that BEA employees organized by the Federation at Le Bourget Airport are facing redundancy as a result of the decision taken by the British government to transfer the totality of the activities of BEA-Paris at Le Bourget to the new second-force airline British Caledonian.

The Federation, which is seriously concerned at this threat to its civil aviation membership, has adopted a strongly-worded resolution protesting against the proposed take-over by private enterprise of the services previously provided by BEA and against the attempt that is being made, in violation of the fundamental principle of the right to work, to deprive BEA workers at Le Bourget of their livelihood. The resolution also calls for the utmost publicity to be given to its contents and reaffirms the determination of the workers concerned to make every effort to safeguard their safety of employment.

The ITF has written to the Federation offering the support of the ITF and its civil aviation affiliates in its struggle.

French ships' officers step up their campaign for higher salaries

Ships' officers in France have stepped up their five-month-old campaign for improved salaries and working conditions⁺. On 20 October, the officers increased the delays which they have been operating on French vessels leaving port from four to six days.

⁺ For further details of the campaign see ITF Newsletters Nos, 6, 7 and 10

GERMANY

New collective and basic agreements are signed for German dock workers

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OetV) has negotiated a new one-year collective agreement giving Germany's 30,000 dockers substantially improved rates of pay. The dockers receive a 7.6 per cent increase in hourly pay on 1 November, bringing the rate to DM 6.63⁺ (previously DM 6.16). Winchmen and stevedores receive an additional increase of 6.5 per cent.

The union has also negotiated a new basic agreement for dockworkers. The agreement, which comes into force on 1 January 1972, provides for changes in the system of awarding annual leave, under which the minimum annual leave allocation is increased by 3 days to 18 days and the maximum allocation will be reached after 10 years' (and not after 15 years') service. The agreement also provides for the payment of asset formation benefits (vermögenswirksame Leistungen) of DM 156 in 1973. These benefits will rise to DM 240 in 1974 and to DM 312 in 1975.

GREAT BRITAIN

British radio technicians step up their overtime ban

Shore-based radio technicians belonging to the ITF-affiliated British Radio and Electronic Officers' Union (REOU) have decided to step up their six-week-old overtime ban because of the continuing deadlock in their pay talks with two marine wireless companies⁺⁺. On instructions from their union, the radio technicians are already refusing to use their own cars for company business and they will also refuse to work overtime in order to visit off-shore oil rigs with effect from 15 November.

The men are seeking a six per cent rise in basic rates with effect from 1 October and a further six per cent from 1 January 1972.

British road haulage workers seek higher minimum rates

The ITF-affiliated British Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) has submitted a claim for a £3.50 increase in minimum rates for Britain's 200,000 road haulage workers. The claim, which has been lodged with the industry's wages council, calls for a minimum rate of £20 for a 40-hour week, together with an increase in the overnight lodging allowance from £1.25 to £2.75.

For details of current rates of pay for haulage workers see ITF Newsletter No. 9, 1970, p. 102.

⁺ DM 3.48 = £1

⁺⁺ see ITF Newsletter No. 10, p. 114

ITALY

Italian port workers stage series of strikes

Italian dockers are currently staging a series of 24-hour protest strikes in ports throughout Italy in support of their campaign for a national agreement governing the pay and conditions of port workers.

NORWAY

Norway moves towards increased industrial democracy

Norway's Labour government last month tabled a list of proposed amendments to company legislation which if introduced would make for more active worker participation in the running of the companies they work for. The government plan was first announced by Odvar Nordli, the Norwegian Minister of Labour, to a recent conference of government and trade union officials. The plan involves changes in the laws regulating limited companies, which would compel all companies with more than 200 employees to create 'company councils' with one-third employee representation. These councils would elect the company's board of directors and would have a voice in all important policy decisions and the final say in any decision regarding major investment by the company or significant changes in the number of its employees.

The councils, a totally new concept in Norwegian company structure, would comprise at least 12 members and be elected by direct secret ballot. Employees would have the right to choose their own representatives from among their own ranks. The remaining members would be chosen by the shareholders. In the case of companies with 50 to 200 employees, the government is proposing changes which would give employees the right to elect one-third - this to be not less than two - of the members of the board of directors of the company.

In a press statement, Tor Aspengren, president of the Norwegian Trade Union Federation, has welcomed the government proposals as being in line with the views of the trade union movement on industrial democracy.

Norwegian air traffic controllers call off strike action

Norwegian air traffic controllers agreed to call off their strike action last month after the government conceded their request that a neutral chairman be appointed to head the five-man arbitration committee, which is to decide on their pay claim. The controllers have turned down a pay offer of 8.4 per cent.

PERU

Peruvian fishermen stage three-day strike

Some 35,000 Peruvian fishermen staged a three-day strike at the beginning of this month to back up a claim for better pay, working conditions, pensions and other social benefits.

UNITED STATES

US shopcraft unions win substantial contract improvements

Following protracted contract negotiations,⁺ four US railroad unions representing 90,000 shopcraft workers have ratified a new contract which provides for a series of salary increases over the life of the 30-month agreement. Under the agreement, shopcraft workers receive a salary increase of 10 cents per hour backdated to 1 January 1971; an increase of 5 per cent from 1 October 1971; further increases of 5 per cent on 1 April and 1 October 1972; and an increase of 25 cents per hour for the final three-month period beginning 1 April 1973. In addition, skilled shopcraft workers receive an increase of 15 cents and unskilled workers an increase of 8 cents per hour backdated to 1 April 1971. Other benefits include improvements in insurance coverage, sickness payments and the paid leave allocation.

The new agreement has been ratified by the International Association of Machinists (an ITF affiliate), the Boilermakers and Blacksmiths, the Railway Carmen and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The unions are demanding that the pay increases included in the agreement be exempted from the pay freeze currently operating in the US.

Still to be settled are contracts covering shopcraft workers belonging to the Sheet Metal Workers and the Firemen and Oilers.

Strike of East and Gulf Coast longshoremen continues

The strike of longshoremen on the East and Gulf coasts of the United States continues. Most affected by the strike has been the port of New York which remains completely closed. The men, who are members of the ITF-affiliated US International Longshoremen's Association, have been on strike since 1 October.++

PERSONALIA

We congratulate our former president, Hans Düby, on his re-election as a Swiss Federal Councillor.

Our congratulations go to ITF president, Fritz Prechtl, on his election to the Austrian parliament.

William ('Bill') A. Gill Jr. has resigned from his post as president of the US Flight Engineers' International Association.

Carlos Carstenson, assistant treasurer of the Danish Seamen's Union, died on 30 September at the age of 51.

⁺ For further details see ITF Newsletter No. 12, 1970, p. 136

⁺⁺ For further details see ITF Newsletter No. 10, p. 115

R. Olavi Railo has been appointed to the post of general secretary of the Finnish Ship Engineers' Association. He succeeds Einar Ek.

Viktor Jørgensen has been elected a member of the executive board of the Danish Transport Workers' Union (DASF).

The following have been elected as officers of the Dutch KLM Flight Engineers' Association: president, L.F. v. Maanen; vice-president, G.J. Sybring; secretary, H. v. d. Land; treasurer, M.F.A. Wilgils

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Flight Engineers' Technical Committee Meeting	London, 10 January 1972 (provisional)
ITF Civil Aviation Section Safety Committee Meeting	London, 11 January 1972 (provisional)
ITF Railwaymen's Section Committee Meeting	Istanbul, 1-3 March 1972

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