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No. 3

March 1975

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

GREECE

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Suspension lifted from Greek unions

Following a visit paid in February by the ITF General Secretary, Charles Blyth, to Greece, where he had discussions with trade union and government officials and satisfied himself that the government would not interfere in trade union elections, the following Greek affiliates, suspended after the military take-over of power in 1968, have been restored to ITF membership, subject to payment of affiliation fees:

Air Professional Union
Panhellenic Federation of Motorcars Clerical Personnel
Airline Licensed Technicians' Union
Federation of Loaders and Unloaders
Civil Aviation Mechanics' Union of Olympic Airways
Flight Stewards' Union
Panhellenic Railwaymen's Federation
Panhellenic Seamen's Federation.

NIGERIA

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Seminar arranged for ITF affiliates

A seminar was held recently in Lagos for nominees from the ITF's Nigerian affiliates, organized jointly by the ITF African Representative, Ben Udogwu, and Kurt Häsemeyer of the German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. It took place at the Trade Union Institute for Economic and Social Development and was attended by twenty-four participants from eleven affiliated unions.

The subjects covered were Collective Bargaining, Basic Aims and Objects of Trade Unions, Nigerian Wages Policy and Structure, History of the Nigerian Trade Union Movement, History and Functions of the ITF, Trade Union Communication, Multi-National Companies, Trade Union Administration and Leadership, Workmen's Compensation (Nigerian Factory Ordinance), Duties of Trade Union Officials (with special emphasis on Branch Officers) and the Nigerian Labour Laws.

Since most of the participants were active at Branch level in their respective Unions, particular interest was expressed in the practical day-to-day business of trade unionism: grievance handling, collective bargaining, minute and report-writing and general union administration, including internal communication between leadership and grass roots level. There was also detailed consideration of wage determination procedures, in particular the effects of government-appointed wage review Commissions on collective bargaining in the private sector, and the need for a national minimum wage structure for both public and private sectors.

TRANSPORT

GREAT BRITAIN

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Long-term investigation into conditions at sea

Shipowners and seafarers' unions in the United Kingdom have launched a joint long-term investigation into working conditions in the British shipping industry and how they can be made more attractive. A joint steering group is being set up to take charge of the research programme, to be known as "Sealife". Although the exact areas to be examined will be decided by the steering group, appraisal is expected to be made of future fleet and manpower requirements, job satisfaction, the organisation of work and human relations on board ship. Preliminary results may be ready in 18 months-but the study overall is to be tackled on at least a five-year timetable.

TRADE UNIONS

BERMUDA

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Trade union legislation to be amended

Immediately following a return to work by government employees belonging to the ITF-affiliated Bermuda Industrial Union after the settlement of issues leading to a two-day general strike, the government announced major amendments to the Trade Union Act. The Union considers these changes extremely detrimental to its interests and feels that the government has recently been adopting a policy of deliberately fomenting industrial unrest in order to give itself an excuse for introducing repressive legislation. The ITF has assured the union of its support in the campaign against the new legislation.

Transport union leaves road wages council

The ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union has withdrawn from the national Road Haulage Wages Council (the body which is supposed to set standards for wage rates in the industry as a protection for the large numbers of non-unionised workers). The reason given by Ken Jackson, National Secretary of the TGWU's Road Transport Commercial Group, is that the wages council rate is now approximately £15 per week below what is current in the industry as a whole (£40 for a 40-hour week). In the union's view, the Wages Council have been responsible for keeping rates at subsistence level; what comes from the Council as a minimum becomes a maximum to hauliers and the system has been used as a machinery for depressing wages. For some time the union has been setting rates by means of separate negotiations with companies and groups of companies.

The Union now wishes to see the Wages Council disbanded and has written to the government asking for this to be done.

NETHERLANDS

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Joint union action obtains reinstatement of strikers

Following the dismissal of 25 employees of the Meeus road haulage company of Bergen op Zoom for having participated in a strike, a national campaign was organized by the whole Netherlands trade union movement, in which a leading part was played by the ITF-affiliated Transport Workers' Federation, to obtain their reinstatement. This solidarity action was eventually successful, despite the fact that the company refused to cooperate with an independent arbitration committee proposed to recommend a solution of the dispute. A court ruling was given in favour of the union case and the first six of the dismissed men returned to work on 5 March. All 25 men have to be reinstated within a period of fourteen days.

UNITED STATES

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Railway unions re-unite

The two groupings of railway trade unions, the Congress of Railway Unions and the Railway Labor Executives' Association (RLEA), have agreed to reunite forces with effect from 1 April 1975. The new RLEA will consist of nineteen unions.

The Brotherhood of Railway and Air-line Clerks, which withdrew from the Congress of Railway Unions earlier this year, has not yet decided whether to join the RLEA, and is retaining separate affiliation with the ITF.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

FRANCE

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Agreement on pay structure for public transport workers

Two years' work by a special joint committee have ended successfully in agreement between French transport workers' unions - including the ITF-affiliated FO Federation - and the Urban and Regional Public Transport Employers' Association on a major restructuring of pay scales. This will not only give public transport employees more realistic positions on the pay scales corresponding with the nature of their work and responsibilities, but will also mean that a standard national grading system applies throughout France.

GERMANY

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Settlement of new contract for German seafarers

Negotiations between the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union have brought about an agreement on new pay and conditions which represent a significant improvement over the recommendations resulting from mediation of the dispute.

Under the settlement, crew members receive an increase of 6.5 per cent plus a payment of 15 DM per month; captains and officers receive 6.5% plus a lump sum payment of 160 DM, payable on 28 February 1975; other monetary allowances such as subsistence allowances are increased by 7%. The pay agreement runs from 1 January to 31 December 1975.

The following improvements have also been obtained in general working conditions (effective from 1 April 1975 to 30 September 1977): leave entitlement is increased by 1½ days per month (½ day each on 1 April 1975, 1 January 1976 and 1 January 1977); watch-going crew members and catering and service staff, who until now have received only the basic pay, are in future entitled to bonus pay for Sundays and Public Holidays at sea. An able seaman would thus receive 2.02 DM per hour and a cook 2.29 DM per hour (effective 1 April 1975). The following year these amounts rise to 3.04 DM and 3.44 DM respectively.

New pay agreement for railwaymen

Agreement has been reached between the German Federal Railways and the ITF-affiliated German Railwaymen's Union on a new pay agreement, effective from 1 January 1975 for thirteen months. The agreement provides for a 6% pay increase plus a lump-sum payment of 100 DM for all railwaymen. Improvements have also been agreed with respect to salary structures and these go into effect on 1 January and 1 March 1976.

GREAT BRITAIN

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New severance pay rates for dockers

The National Association of Port Employers has decided to increase substantially the voluntary severance payments for registered dockworkers. The new maximum payment a man can receive after 25 years' service, if he is under 63 years and three months, is £5,250. This is an increase of £125 on the previous rate, introduced two and a half years ago. Now the scheme is limited to those ports in which there is an overall surplus of dockworkers or an unduly high proportion of men who cannot perform manual cargo handling operations. In these ports it will apply only to men to whom a severance offer is sent by the local dock labour board and who apply and are selected by the board.

MEXICO

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Pay improvements for railway workers

The ITF-affiliated Mexican Railwaymen's Union has negotiated pay improvements for 75,000 employees of the country's six major railway companies. The agreement for the National Railways provides for increases in basic pay rates of 22% in compensation for rises in the cost of living, plus a flat-rate increase on all rates of 274.15 pesos representing a "real" improvement in standards. In addition, railway pensioners receive 300 pesos more per month. (The monetary improvements were backdated to 1 September 1974.) The agreements for the remaining companies are similar to the above, and all now run uniformly from 1 October 1974 to 30 September 1975.

NORWAY

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New agreement for trawler officers

Members of the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Mates' Union have voted to accept a new agreement recommended by the union and the Trawler Owners' Federation on the basis of proposals made by the state mediator in January. This proposal was agreed in time to prevent strike action which had been scheduled to commence on 31 January.

The agreement gives skippers and mates aboard fresh fish trawlers an increase in basic pay from Kr. 715 to Kr. 844; the mates' share of the catch is set provisionally at 2.5%; factory ship rates for skippers go up from Kr. 2,096 to Kr. 2,473 and for mates from Kr. 1,956 to Kr. 2,308.

Seniority bonuses rise from Kr. 62 to Kr. 73 for skippers and from Kr. 49 to Kr. 58 for mates; the subsistence allowance is increased from Kr. 16.70 to Kr. 19.- and holiday subsistence allowance from Kr. 39.65 to Kr. 44.35. Other fringe benefits such as sick pay and compensation for loss of effects are also improved.

UNITED STATES
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Pay increases for New York bus workers

Members of the ITF-affiliated Transport Workers' Union employed by New York's bus companies have recently obtained improved pay rates as the second stage of increases agreed in contracts concluded with effect from April 1974. These cover employees of New York City Transit Authority, the Manhattan and Bronx Surface Transit Operating Authority, and five private bus lines.

The increases provide an additional 15 to 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ cents per hour with effect from 1 December 1974, and a further 5% increase becomes due on 1 April 1975. A cost-of-living increase - giving 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents per hour for every one point rise in the index - will be applied with effect from 1 July 1975.

Current rates (before the 1 April increase) are now: \$6.41 $\frac{1}{2}$ per hour for a bus operator (driver), \$5.87 $\frac{1}{4}$ for a conductor; and a range of \$5.50 $\frac{3}{4}$ to \$6.89 $\frac{1}{4}$ for various grades of maintenance staff.

NEWS IN BRIEF

A new pay agreement for public service employees in Germany provides for an increase of 6.5% for all workers, plus a lump-sum payment of 100 DM.

The German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union has given notice to terminate, with effect from 31 May 1975, its agreement with the fishing employers on behalf of its members employed on board fresh fish and factory vessels.

The three British railway unions - National Union of Railwaymen, Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen and Transport Salaried Staffs' Association - have submitted claims to British Rail for substantial pay increases.

Dockers in the Port of London are on unofficial strike in a dispute over the packing and unloading of containers.

Transport workers through Italy staged a four-hour strike on 4 March in furtherance of their campaign for increased government investment in the transport industry; this was the third strike of its kind in the last six months.

Ten Spanish trade unionists sentenced to prison terms of between twelve and twenty years for illegal trade union activities in the Workers' Commissions have had their sentences drastically reduced on appeal to the Supreme Court. The cuts mean that four were freed immediately and others are expected to be released shortly.

Dockers are on strike in the port of Bilbao, northern Spain, in protest against the dismissal of 12 of their colleagues who had demanded better working conditions.

Negotiations on behalf of cabin attendants employed by Scandinavian Airlines System in Sweden have now entered the mediation stage.

PERSONALIA

Sushil Ranjan Bhattacharya, a senior lecturer at the ICFTU's Asian Trade Union College in New Delhi, died on 6 February 1975.

Reint Laan senior, former President of the Central Union of Transport Employees in the Netherlands (now part of the Netherlands Transport Workers' Federation), and formerly active in the ITF, died in Rotterdam on 11 February. He was 84 years of age.

John J. McNamara has been appointed President of the US Brotherhood of Firemen and Oilers following the sudden death of William E. Fredenberger. He is succeeded as Secretary-Treasurer by George J. Francisco. Both appointments are until the next Convention of the union in May 1976.

Philipp Seibert, President of the German Railwaymen's Union and a member of the ITF Executive Board, celebrates his sixtieth birthday on 20 March 1975.

Eustaquio Tolosa, President of the Argentine Port Workers' Union, was the victim of an unsuccessful assassination attempt on 2 March. A 24-hour strike was held in ports throughout Argentina on 3 March in protest against the attack. Tolosa is critically ill from three bullet wounds.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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Travel Bureau Section Committee - London 8-9 April 1975
Ground Staff Committee - London 13-14 May 1975
European Conference - Zurich, 17-18 June 1975
Road Transport Steering Committee - Zurich 19 June 1975

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING FURTHER
INFORMATION ON ANY ITEM IN THIS
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FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ITF

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