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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

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IMCO group develops control procedures regarding sub-standard ships

Representatives of 22 governments (including 4 flag-of-convenience administrations) and 9 inter-governmental and international organizations (among them the ITF) met at IMCO headquarters in London from 28 to 30 July 1975 to consider proposals concerning improvements in the system currently used to identify and take preventive or remedial action against sub-standard vessels.

During the ensuing debate, the main stumbling-block appeared to be whether or not the groups should deal with ships below SOLAS and Load Line convention sizes and vessels registered in countries which were not parties to the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) or Load Line Conventions. The ITF delegation (which included representatives of British and Indian affiliates as well as the Seafarers' Section Secretary) interpreted the terms of reference of the group to mean that the present system should be strengthened with a view to dealing with all sub-standard ships and therefore argued that port state members of IMCO were entitled, legally and morally, to inspect and, if necessary, detain all vessels which were found to be sub-standard in relation to the above conventions and any other instruments which might be adopted in the future. The group failed to reach agreement on this point which was therefore left in abeyance. The ITF representatives also stressed the need for anonymity in cases involving crew members (for fear of reprisals) as initiators of complaints but this line was opposed by some administrations, in particular by Liberia. However, the vast majority of administrations felt that only the port state needed to know the identity of the complainant and that therefore they should preserve the anonymity of the complainants. With regard to the question of inspections generally it was suggested that in cases where ships paid few visits to flag state ports the administration concerned should appoint inspectors in foreign ports. Also it was recommended that IMCO member governments should supply information with regard to what services were available in their respective countries for the purpose of undertaking such inspections so that an appropriate list could be drawn up for the benefit of governments submitting deficiency reports or passing on complaints. As to the new standards which might be envisaged the ITF suggested that they should include levels of manning but this idea was immediately countered by the shipowner representative. However, it was generally felt that whatever the merits of the suggestion it belonged to the ambit of the Maritime Safety Committee.

As a result of its deliberations (during which it has also become increasingly evident that to define a sub-standard ship was well-nigh impossible) the Group proposed a number of control procedures and guidelines (to be expanded) regarding sub-standard ships which governments should adhere to. These proposals, which will be discussed by the session of IMCO's Maritime Safety Committee due to start in London on 22 September 1975, refer to the following measures:

- Adherence to control procedures inherent in the SOLAS and Load Line Conventions (including the submission of deficiency reports according to SOLAS and the relevant instructions issued by the Maritime Safety Committee);
- transmission of deficiency reports by port states also to flag states and classification societies concerned;
- transmission of flag state comments without delay to IMCO;
- circulation of deficiency reports and any flag state comments by IMCO;
- identification of sub-standard ships by port states based on general criteria (defects relating to hull, machinery, life-saving appliances, radio and fire-fighting equipment);
- identification of sub-standard ships by port states based on prima facie evidence (lack of valid certificates, including a radio operator's certificate);
- initiation of complaints to port state authorities by corporate bodies (including trade unions) or individuals (including crew members) preferably in writing;
- identification of complainant for port state records only;
- early submission of complaints by initiators;
- requirement for port state to investigate claims (if possible in co-operation with flag-state representatives) and take appropriate port state action in cases of substantial non-compliance;
- port state to designate authorities to deal with complaints;
- documentation by port state authorities of information regarding deficiencies.

CHILE

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International Day of Solidarity with Chile

The Chilean and international trade union movements - led by the Trade Union Centre of the Chilean workers (CUT) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions - are commemorating the anniversary of the fascist military take-over in Chile two years ago. 11 September this year will be the occasion for world-wide demonstrations of protest against the junta and solidarity with the oppressed Chilean workers. The ITF appeals to its affiliates to join in organizing protest and solidarity activities on and around that day as part of the continuing campaign for the restoration of democracy and freedom in Chile.

GHANA

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One-week basic trade union seminar

A one-week seminar was organized recently at the Workers' College (University of Ghana), Takoradi by the ITF and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Most of the participants were local Takoradi members of the ITF's affiliates in Ghana since on this occasion only a very limited number of residential places could be provided. The twenty-four who took part in the seminar came from the Maritime and Dockworkers' Union (11), the Railway and Ports Workers' Union (6), the National Union of Seamen (4) and the General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (3). Of these, fifteen were branch officers and the rest ordinary members. Among the subjects dealt with were Grievance Procedure, Collective Bargaining, Introduction to Industrial Economics, Social Security Scheme, Industrial Relations Act (1956), Duties of Trade Union Functionaries, Trade Union Finance (dues structure in Ghana), Introduction to Industrial Credit Union Organization, Structure and Functions of Ghana Trades Union Congress, Trade Union Communication and the History, Structure and Role of the ITF.

The main emphasis of the course was placed on practical trade union activities such as grievance handling, collective bargaining and union organization. A particularly lively discussion took place on jurisdictional disputes between national unions and the need for the TUC to find effective machinery for solving such disputes.

TRADE UNIONS

GREAT BRITAIN

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Railwaymen regain closed shop

The ITF-affiliated National Union of Railwaymen, Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen and Transport Salaried Staffs' Association have once more obtained agreement with British Rail that union membership is a condition of employment. With effect from 4 August, all new entrants to the railways service will have to apply to join one of the railway unions and those already employed will have to apply for membership or request special exemption (e.g. on religious grounds).

The previous closed-shop agreement was negotiated in 1970, but became void when the (now repealed) Industrial Relations Act made the closed shop illegal.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

ANGOLA

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War risk bonus for seafarers

The ITF-affiliated seafarers' unions in Denmark and Norway have successfully negotiated with the shipowners for a war risk bonus for ships trading to Angola. The Danish agreement, effective from 14 August 1975 except as specified, provides for a war risk bonus amounting to 200% of the agreed pay rates (including most allowances), payable from the day the vessel arrives in ports, roads or approaches in Angola. The minimum amount of the bonus must be 100 DKr per day, to be paid for at least five days. The bonus counts in the calculation of holiday pay, but not for other elements of remuneration based on rates of pay.

Persons killed through acts of war or disabled to the extent of being totally incapacitated for seafaring employment will receive compensation of 60,000 DKr in a lump sum plus 25,000 DKr for each child under age 18; this is in addition to any compensation paid under Danish law or in accordance with any existing pension schemes, and the provision takes effect on 22 August.

Details are not yet to hand of the Norwegian war risk bonus agreement. In addition, negotiations for such a bonus in the United Kingdom have not yet produced any results.

In Portugal, seamen employed by the Compania Nacional Navegacao are striking in support of claims which include demands for protection in Angola ports.

BELGIUM

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New pay agreement for inland navigation workers

The ITF-affiliated Belgian Transport Workers' Union has recently negotiated a new pay agreement for its members in inland navigation. This, which went into effect on 1 July 1975, gives rates for skippers ranging from 17,804 B.Fr. to 26,620 B.Fr., depending on size of vessel and type of navigation; for mates the pay is 19,172 B.Fr. in vessels up to 1,000 tons and 19,520 B.Fr. over 1,000 tons (certificated) and 18,651 and 18,825 B.Fr. (uncertificated).

Able seamen receive rates ranging from 14,150 B.Fr. to 17,441 B.Fr. depending upon size of vessel and type of navigation and ships' boys with at least one year's service get from 13,476 B.Fr. to 15,034 B.Fr.

CANADA

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Strike by harbour pilots ends

A strike by Canada's Atlantic Coast harbour pilots, which lasted almost four weeks, ended when an agreement was signed at the beginning of August between the Atlantic Pilotage Authority and the ITF-affiliated Canadian Merchant Seamen's Guild representing the pilots.

The pilots had been seeking a pay increase of 23.5%. Details of the settlement have been withheld until it has been ratified by both parties.

FINLAND

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Engineer officers' ferry dispute settled

A week-long strike by Finnish engineer officers aboard ferry ships, which at one time threatened to spread to all merchant vessels in Finnish ports and to involve the Swedish seafarers' unions in sympathy action, was settled on 8 July to the satisfaction of the union. The agreement, reached with the assistance of the state mediator, provides for a 6% pay increase, backdated to 1 April 1975. This gives the engineers more or less what they were seeking, i.e. parity with deck officers.

FRANCE

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Negotiations commence on cabin attendants' claims

Following a ballot in which a 76% positive vote was obtained in favour of strike action if necessary in support of their claims, the ITF-affiliated French Flying Staff Union has commenced negotiations with Air France, Air Inter and UTA on improved working conditions for its cabin attendant members. The claims relate in particular to better working hours and scheduling arrangements; improved redundancy provisions; and a special Concorde agreement for when the aircraft comes into service next year.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Unions adopt voluntary wage restraint plan

The British Trades Union Congress has agreed by a substantial majority to cooperate with the government's proposed voluntary wage restraint programme in an effort to reduce inflation and get the country's economy into a healthier position. This plan involves restricting all pay increases for the next year to a flat-rate of £6 per week - a policy designed not only to keep inflation at bay but also to give greater protection to lower-paid workers than could be afforded by imposing a uniform percentage increase.

Seamen accept 37.3% pay offer

In a decision reversing their earlier rejection, the executive of the ITF-affiliated National Union of Seamen voted on 9 July to accept the arbitration pay award of 37.3%. This gives ratings an immediate rise of 31% (including consolidated cost-of-living payments of 11.5%) plus a further 9.7% from 1 January 1976. The union's basic negotiating position - £40 for a 40-hour week - has been accepted in two stages. From 2 July this year weekly rates are paid over 5 days instead of 7, for eight hours a day. And the full £40 minimum for able seamen comes into effect on 1 January 1976.

Pay rises agreed for trawlermen

The ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union has negotiated new pay rates for its members employed in Hull, Grimsby and Fleetwood. The agreement gives deck hands on wet fish trawlers £4.60 per week more in shore pay and £5.10 in sea pay, bringing their basic rates to £30 and £34.50 per week respectively. These increases operate from 1 May in Hull, 14 June in Grimsby and 15 July in Fleetwood. For freezer deck hands, shore pay has gone up by £8.80 per week to £30, and sea pay by £5.10 to £37.50, operative from 1 April 1975 in all three ports.

Pay agreement for underground railwaymen

The ITF-affiliated National Union of Railwaymen has negotiated an agreement with London Transport on behalf of its members employed on the London Underground railway giving an increase of 21.2% on basic rates from July, together with further 0.75% increases every time the cost-of-living index rises one per cent (payable quarterly from the end of July to January 1976). A similar agreement has recently been concluded on behalf of London Transport busmen represented by the ITF-affiliated Transport & General Workers' Union.

ICELAND

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Trawler dispute concluded

The ITF-affiliated Icelandic Seafarers' Union reports the successful conclusion on 23 June of its lengthy dispute with the owners of trawlers over 500 tons. Following a strike which lasted some 11 weeks, the union obtained pay increases ranging from 58-66% on the basic monthly wage and other allowances together with further improvements in conditions.

NETHERLANDS

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Higher wages for bus workers

Agreement has been reached with the employers by the ITF-affiliated Netherlands Transport Workers' Federation on behalf of bus workers, giving pay increases averaging 8%, or at least 115.50 Guilders per week. This consists of cost-of-living increases in half-yearly stages, together with real increases. In addition, various allowances (holidays, split duty allowance etc.) are increased. These measures - apart from retroactive cost-of-living adjustments - went into effect on 1 August 1975.

SINGAPORE

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Maternity leave for bus crew members

Female bus crew members employed by the Singapore Bus Service are to be granted eight weeks' paid maternity leave, under an agreement negotiated recently by the ITF-affiliated Singapore Industrial Labour Organization. In addition, light duties will be assigned where possible in the advanced stages of pregnancy; where this is not possible on medical grounds or because no suitable light duties are available the women concerned will be able to have one extra month's leave on half pay, commencing with the second month prior to the date of expected confinement (leave with full pay commences one month before confinement). This extra half-month's pay is subject to certain conditions, in particular six month's employment with the company.

UNITED STATES

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Railway Clerks obtain new national agreement

After months of time-consuming negotiating procedures, involving mediation, cooling-off-periods, strike vote, Presidential Emergency Board, more cooling-off periods, etc., the ITF-affiliated Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks have negotiated and ratified a new contract with the US railway companies. This gives general wage increases totalling 22% over the contract period: 10% from 1 January 1975; 5% from 1 October 1975; 3% from 1 April 1976; and 4% from 1 July 1977. To this will be added any necessary cost-of-living increases, calculated at five time points during the contract period up to 1 January 1978.

In addition, various improvements in fringe benefits have been agreed, including an increase to ten in the number of paid holidays per year (Christmas Eve is to be added in 1976); better health and welfare provisions; and arrangements for negotiations on vacation improvements, job stabilisation and retraining.

New agreement for National Air Lines flight engineers

The ITF-affiliated Flight Engineers' International Association has negotiated a new contract on behalf of its members employed by National Air Lines. This provides for a 4% pay increase for the period from 1 July 1974 to 31 December 1974; a further 10% from 1.1.75 to 2.7.75. For the period from 3 July 1975 to 30 April 1978 the following pay rates will apply to a Flight Engineer with twelve years' seniority working a 75-hour month in half-day, half-night operations: On B-727s: \$2,542 rising in four stages to \$3,194; on DC-8-61: \$2,821 to \$3,544; on DC-10-10: \$3,115 to \$3,912; DC-10-30 (int'l): \$3,617 to \$4,401; on B-747: \$3,614 to \$4,446.

Various other improvements have been agreed, notably under the headings of hours of service, expense allowances, vacations, sick leave, scheduling arrangements, retirement and health insurance.

ITF FLAG OF CONVENIENCE CAMPAIGN

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Liberian shipowners, worried about their "image", band together

The "Liberian Shipping Council Ltd.," formed in 1974, has recently issued a circular to all owners and operators of Liberian-flag vessels in an attempt to increase its membership from the present "approximately one-quarter of the entire Liberian merchant fleet". This circular lists among the LSC's objectives that of

acting "in whatever ways are necessary to keep the international public aware of and properly informed about the Liberian Maritime Program. We must not allow detractors", it goes on, "to continue to lead the international public into ignoring the hard facts that the Liberian fleet is the largest in the world, and includes the world's best-built and best-manned vessels."

Not even the ITF, as perhaps the main "detractor" can dispute the size of the fleet but nor can the Liberian owners or authorities dispute the fact that the casualty record of the Liberian fleet has been consistently bad over the years and is twice the world average by tonnage lost. The best way for the LSC to improve the Liberian-flag fleet's "image" would be to do something about that.

The LSC circular also points out to potential members the fact that the existence of a coordinating body for Liberian-flag owners and operators will be of value in presenting a united Liberian employers' front at the Preparatory Maritime Technical Conference of the ILO to be held in Geneva in October this year, with especial reference to the item on "Sub-standard Vessels, particularly those Registered under Flags of Convenience". Considering the already powerful influence wielded by these operators within national delegations in a wide variety of international bodies, the possibilities of their regrouping in this manner will of necessity be closely watched by the ITF. However, we can't help wondering why they bother to attend - Liberia has not yet even ratified one useful ILO Convention on seafarers' conditions.

OECD study finds higher loss rate among convenience flag ships

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in a study of flag-of-convenience losses, finds that they are relatively four times as high as those of the OECD countries and at least twice as high as those of the rest of the world.

The study, contained in the OECD Maritime Transport Report for last year, shows that flag-of-convenience ships "generally have a much greater tendency than OECD and the world as a whole to loss by wreck and foundering, the types of loss most closely associated with inadequacies of ship and personnel." It notes that smaller and older convenience flag ships are particularly vulnerable. But it gives no hint of any specific reasons or criteria which would explain the higher loss ratios of the convenience fleets, "which can thus only be attributed to their standards of operation and maintenance. From the available statistical material it appears that the high loss ratios of the different flag of convenience fleets are fairly similar, if account is taken of the different age and size structures of the fleets. Given this, the category of ships most likely to be lost are flag of convenience ships under 8,000 tons gross, over 10 years old, and they will tend to be lost less in the OECD areas and more in the areas of the developing countries."

NEWS IN BRIEF

A general strike in Argentina which commenced when the President ordered negotiated pay increases to be cut to a uniform 50% was called off when she withdrew the order, allowing rises of up to 150% to go ahead.

Ethiopia has joined the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, becoming its ninetieth member.

The Finnish Seamen's Union has recently negotiated a new agreement for coastal fishermen, similar to that concluded earlier for deep-sea fishermen.

A further general transport strike was held in Italy on 9 July in the series designed to put pressure on the government to increase investment in the transport industry.

PERSONALIA

Peter M. McGavin, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO Maritime Trades Department since 1960, died on 6 July. He was 66.

Govardhan Mapara, Special Representative in Asia of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and former General Secretary of the Indian National Railway Workers' Federation, died suddenly in Dacca on 19 May 1975.

Theo Rasschaert, has announced his decision to resign from the post of General Secretary to the European Trade Union Confederation before the end of the year. He began his career in European trade unionism in 1959 when he was appointed Secretary to the European Trade Union Secretariat (ICFTU).

Emmanuel Saitis has been elected General Secretary of the Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation. He is also President of the Greek Radio Officers' Union.

Frank T. Scavo has been elected President of the US Masters, Mates and Pilots' Union in succession to Thomas O'Callaghan; Gerald Johnson replaces William Caldwell as executive vice-president.

Jan Scheffers has been appointed Treasurer of the Netherlands Transport Workers' Federation.

Gunnar Tønder has been elected President of the Norwegian Locomotivemen's Union upon the retirement of Oluf Anfinsen on 1 September this year. The new Vice-President is Hans J. Olaussen.

Marcel Vanderheyden has been appointed Chairman of the Inland Navigation Section of the Belgian Transport Workers' Union following the death of Staf de Wilde.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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- ITF Seafarers' Section Conference - Geneva, 8-11 October 1975
- ITF Executive Board - London, 13-14 November 1975
- ITF Conference on Women Workers' Problems - London, 18,19,20 November 1975.

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

International trade union action programme adopted
regarding North and Celtic Seas offshore activities

Representatives of national trade union organizations of Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom met in London on 26 August to consider the possibility of joint supporting action in order to achieve trade union organization and representation of personnel employed aboard drilling units, supply vessels and auxiliary craft in the North Sea and the Celtic Sea.

A number of guidelines were adopted and the various trade unions agreed to co-operate and to assist each other in obtaining trade union recognition and negotiating rights, by pressing for necessary legislation and/or by taking direct industrial action, with a view to improving safety as well as working conditions within the offshore exploration, production and supply industries concerned.

These guidelines were embodied in a resolution, which recommends inter alia that special attention should be paid to the question of union membership of personnel employed by sub-contractors; that trade union officials should be granted reasonable access to rigs and platforms; that proper safety standards (safety manning, radio safety, survival and safety training etc.) as well as standards relating to crew accommodation, occupational health and personal hygiene should be laid down and enforced by governments; and that governments and the industry should co-operate with a view to improving social security and training standards.

It was also agreed that there would be continuing liaison and exchange of information between the trade unions of the various countries concerned and that a further meeting would be arranged following the completion of a survey by the ITF on the full extent of international involvement in North Sea and Celtic Sea offshore activities.