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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

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IMCO launches World Maritime Day

Beginning this year, the 17 March will be celebrated worldwide as World Maritime Day. The date marks the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the IMCO Convention and has been chosen as an appropriate one for the IMCO Secretariat, member governments and various interested organizations to draw the attention of the general public to certain important aspects of the agency's work.

The ITF, as an organization with a substantial number of seafarers among its ranks, has associated itself with the aspirations and objectives of IMCO since its foundation and has, to mark the occasion, written an article which appeared on the Day in "Lloyd's List", a leading British maritime newspaper which is read around the world (see supplement).

The ITF has contacted its seafarer affiliates informing them of IMCO's decision to institute World Maritime Day and has asked them to associate themselves with whatever arrangements have been made in their respective countries to commemorate the birth of IMCO.

ASIA

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Asian dockers' unions discuss safety and job security

An ITF Asian Regional Conference for Dockers' Unions was held in Manila (Philippines) from 6 to 10 February 1978. The meeting was chaired by ITF Asian Representative Donald U'ren and attended by representatives of dockers' unions in Australia, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand.

The Conference had been called to consider the impact of technological change on the waterfront and to look at the health and safety problems in the industry as well as to discuss the proposed revision of ILO Convention No. 32 on Protection against Accidents (Dockers). Other topics covered in the discussions included international trade union solidarity, with special reference to the ITF flag-of-convenience Campaign, and the problems of organizing dockers into trade unions.

The Conference participants reaffirmed the need to protect the right to work of dockers faced with possible cut-backs as the industry was progressively modernized and for greater attention to be paid to dockers' safety. In this connection, urgent revision was urged of the outdated ILO Convention No. 32.

The Conference was hosted by the Philippine Transport and General Workers' Organization. During their stay in Manila, conference participants visited the waterfront and enjoyed the hospitality of the host union at a number of functions that had been specially organized for them.

EUROPE

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Inland transport unions agree on transport policy objectives

An inter-sectional meeting of representatives from road, rail and inland navigation workers' unions in several different European countries was held in Nuremberg on 1 and 2 March 1978. The meeting, which took place within the framework of the ITF European Committee, had been called to examine the effects which the Rhine/Main/Danube Canal, when it was completed, would have on other sectors of the transport industry. The participants also entered into lively discussions on the principles which should govern transport policy decisions and adopted a statement, approved by all those present, which called for the national and international coordination of transport policy measures to bring about a more rational distribution of traffic among the different transport modes, while paying due regard to the social conditions of workers in the industry. With respect to the Rhine/Main/Danube Canal, the meeting demanded restrictions on freedom of navigation on the Rhine and an international social agreement for the future Rhine/Danube waterway link.

A copy of the press release issued on the conclusion of this meeting is attached as a supplement to this issue of the ITF Newsletter.

ANTIGUA

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ITF appeals for continued support of Antigua dockers

Following a renewed approach from the Antigua Workers' Union (AWU) for assistance in its grave dispute with the port employers^x -- still far from being resolved -- the ITF has again contacted its docker affiliates reminding them of the Antigua dockers' desperate plight and urging that they undertake positive solidarity

^x see also ITF Newsletter No. 11, 1977, page 106 and No. 1, 1978, page 1

action in their support. The circular suggests that affiliates should refuse to handle ships destined for Antigua unless they are given assurances -- confirmed by the AWU itself -- that the ships will be handled in the port of St. John's by registered port workers and AWU members.

GERMANY

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ITF to study working conditions of female railway workers

The ITF will shortly begin work on a major new pilot study of the working conditions of female railway workers. The field work will be carried out in Germany (in the area around Nuremberg) and will involve both operating and administrative staffs. It has been decided to use the same questionnaire as was evolved for a previous investigation into the ways in which the working lives of railwaymen have been affected by technological change in the railway industry. Supplementary questions relating to the special situation of women in a largely male-orientated industry will also be included at the request of the German Railwaymen's Union, which is actively cooperating in the research project. Husbands will be asked to complete a short questionnaire which will reveal their attitudes towards working wives.

TUNISIA

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ICFTU lodges formal complaint with ILO against government of Tunisia

A top-level international trade union delegation, headed by ICFTU general secretary Otto Kersten and including the president of the ICFTU's African Regional Association and the leaders of the French, German, Dutch and Italian trade union centres, visited Tunisia from 19 to 21 February in an attempt to obtain the release of Habib Achour, General Secretary of the General Workers' Union (UGTT), and other arrested trade union officials, among whom it will be remembered is Abderrazak Ayoub, Assistant General Secretary of the Tunisian Railwaymen's Union and a member of the ITF Executive Board. The delegation was received by the Prime Minister Hedi Nouira, who informed them that the detainees were to be tried in open civilian court and that the ICFTU would be invited to send legal observers to the trial. Permission was granted to visit Achour, who is reported to be in good health. Achour told his visitors that he insisted on standing trial to prove that allegations of a political conspiracy by the UGTT were completely unfounded.

The ICFTU is greatly disturbed at the worsening situation in Tunisia and has accordingly lodged a formal complaint with the ILO against the Tunisian government, alleging violation of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize. The ICFTU argues that the police and army reaction to the events of 26 January constitute an unwarranted

attack on an autonomous and independent trade union organization and its properly elected officials. It bases its case on the fact that the police invaded UGTT headquarters on the day of the general strike and arrested UGTT officials and members of staff. While the staff members were eventually released after interrogation, one hundred trade union officials (including eleven UGTT executive board members and the transport and railways secretaries of the UGTT) are believed to be still in detention. The detainees have been denied access to legal advice and members of their families have been refused permission to visit. To date, they have not been charged with any offence.

TRANSPORT

INTERNATIONAL

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UNCTAD Working Group examines economic implications of open-registry shipping

Delegates from forty-three nations attended a meeting in Geneva last month of an inter-governmental Working Group convened under the auspices of the UNCTAD^XCommittee on Shipping to investigate the economic implications of the use of open (i.e. flag-of-convenience) registries.

After considering a detailed report submitted by the UNCTAD Secretariat, the Working Group adopted a resolution expressing the view that the expansion of open-registry fleets had adversely affected the development and competitiveness of the fleets of countries which did not offer convenience facilities, including those of the developing nations, and calling on UNCTAD to conduct further research into a number of matters, including the economic elements of a genuine link between ship and flag country.

The group further agreed to investigate the benefits of open registry fleets, to determine the actual trading routes on which flag-of-convenience ships are operating and the trading partners involved, and to compile statistics on comparative labour costs in consultation with the ILO.

Brian Laughton, Secretary of the ITF Special Seafarers' Section, attended the meeting as an observer.

^XUnited Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

EUROPE

=====

New anti-pollution measures for the Mediterranean

Three anti-pollution agreements covering the Mediterranean became international law last month when the requisite number of ratifications was achieved. The ratifying countries (Lebanon, Malta, Monaco, Spain, Tunisia and Yugoslavia) have agreed to outlaw the discharge by ships or aircraft into the Mediterranean of certain dangerous materials (including mercury, cadmium, DDT and crude oil); to impose strict controls on the dumping into the sea of less toxic wastes (such as lead, zinc, copper, cobalt, silver, cyanide and fluorides etc.); and to cooperate in clearing up major oil spills. No formal body will be established to police the accords as the individual ratifying countries will make themselves responsible for ensuring that they are respected.

A number of other Mediterranean coastal states (notably France) are expected to ratify the agreements in the coming weeks.

GREAT BRITAIN

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New bodies needed to monitor health and safety of seafarers

Writing in his column in the February issue of "The Telegraph", Eric Nevin, General Secretary of the ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association, regrets that not enough is being done to reduce the considerable safety risks to which seafarers are exposed in the course of their work. For example, the protective legislation that applies to shore-based workers does not extend to seafarers once they leave port and the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Bill, which contains many changes to safety regulations on British ships, will not apply for some time as consideration of the bill in the present session of parliament is now considered unlikely.

In the light of recent statistics, which reveal an alarming accident rate for the industry (the fatal accident rate in 1975 was higher than for any other industry and only in mining in 1976 was there a higher incidence of non-fatal accidents), Nevin argues that there is a clear need for statutory rather than voluntary arrangements to control safety and recommends that a single formal institution be established -- on the lines of the Marine Authority mentioned in the authoritative Rochdale Report on Shipping (1970) -- with responsibility for enforcing marine safety legislation. A review of the work of the joint Industrial committees on accident prevention and ship safety is also urged.

Nevin points out that the health risks to seafarers are also considerable. The suicide rate and the incidence of alcoholism are both unacceptably high and many seafarers are suspected of dying, perhaps many years after leaving the sea, of the long-term effects of exposure to dangerous chemicals in the course of their work. Cardiac, arterial and renal disorders are also becoming increasingly common among seafarers as working methods change and periods of intensive activity alternate with longer periods of relative inactivity. To overcome these difficulties, Nevin proposes the creation of a Merchant Navy Health Board, which would survey the wealth of published material on health matters, give advice to both seafarers and shipowners and generally attempt to reverse the trends that have become discernible in the statistics.

LUXEMBOURG

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Union opposes management plans to dispense with second man on Luxembourg Railways

The engine drivers' and train staff sections of the ITF-affiliated Luxembourg Federation of Railway and Transport Workers (FNCTTFEL) have said that they will oppose management proposals to amend Articles 22 and 23 of the Grand Ducal Decree of 23 June 1952 so as to dispense with the second man on certain trains over the entire network of the Luxembourg Railways (CFL) until such time as the CFL has the permanent way and other installations that are necessary to ensure the safety of rolling stock, passengers and crew during one-man operation. In particular, the union is seeking the introduction of the automatic block system, two-way radio in train cabs, and improvements to the signalling system which is inferior to that of other European countries.

The union feels it is important that the railway management should bear these and other safety considerations in mind before making their decision and that the Transport Minister should be fully aware of the counter arguments presented by those most directly involved, the train crews themselves.

NORWAY

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Seamen's leader rejects use of cheap crews

In a letter to the Department of Trade enclosing his union's comments on the conclusions of the Skanland group, which has been investigating ways of improving conditions in the country's shipping industry, Henrik Aasarød, president of the Norwegian Seamen's Union and a member of the ITF Executive Board, says that his union will strenuously resist any attempt on the part of Norwegian shipowners to seek a way out of their present financial difficulties by transferring vessels from the national flag to convenience registries and then employing foreign seafarers at sub-standard rates of pay and under inferior conditions.

SWEDEN

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New shipboard safety regulations under consideration by parliament

New regulations on shipboard safety -- which it is hoped to introduce this summer -- are currently under consideration by the Swedish parliament. The government bill envisages, inter alia, the appointment of a safety officer with the right to halt "dangerous work" on all vessels with five or more seafarers on board. Under certain conditions, the master would retain the right to reverse a safety officer's decision to halt work and a shipping company would be allowed to appoint a single safety officer for several of its ships. It is intended that this latter concession should apply to companies operating several small vessels and also to certain types of ferry operator. The safety officer's responsibilities are to be extended and basic regulations covering his activities form part of the draft legislation.

Additionally, a shipboard safety committee would be mandatory on all vessels with fifteen or more seafarers on board. Such a committee would also have to be formed if there were a demand for one from the crew. The committee's responsibilities would be wide-ranging, encompassing the planning of new or altered working areas and the overseeing of equipment and working methods. As in the case of safety representatives, it is proposed that the committees might also serve several ships belonging to the same company.

TRADE UNIONS

AUSTRALIA

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Maritime unions refuse to supply crew for new bulk carrier

Australian maritime unions are refusing to supply a crew for the newly-completed 15,800 dwt bulk carrier Lake Eyre, which has been built for the Australian National Line in Japan. The Lake Eyre is the first of four such vessels ordered by ANL and due to be delivered by April this year.

The unions decided in 1975 that they would apply sanctions to ships built overseas for Australian lines which could have been built in the country.

NORWAY

=====

Railwaymen vote to join state employees' union

The ITF-affiliated Norwegian Railwaymen's Union convened an extraordinary Congress in Oslo during February at which members were asked to give a decision on the future of the union. At stake,

was whether the union should continue to have a separate identity or should join a future national union of state employees. Delegates voted overwhelmingly in favour of the latter course.

It is proposed that the public service unions affiliated to the Norwegian national centre (LO) should be eligible to join the new union, in which each industry would be represented by a separate section. Thus the railwaymen, together with the footplate staff, would form a single section.

Railwaymen's union president Sverre Kortvedt has welcomed the decision as he feels that a single union would be able to make more effective use of the financial and manpower resources now split among the individual unions. It would also enable state employees to present a united front in their dealings with the employers, who already have their own centralized negotiating machinery.

It is expected to be some time before the views of all the unions involved in the proposed merger are known.

PORTUGAL

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Dockers urged to support their colleagues in the Azores

Portuguese dockers' unions have been strongly urged by their national federation to lend their full support and solidarity to their colleagues in the Azores following a visit to the islands by a top federation official, Bro. Alexandre Gonçalves, last month to investigate working conditions in the various ports. He established that most port workers lacked the basic protection of a formal collective agreement, such agreements as exist consisting of loose-leaf sheets or being merely verbal agreements to implement certain minimum standards. As a result of this, efforts will now be made to draw up a single agreement to apply to all ports.

Dockers' rates of pay in the islands are low and consequently some of them are forced to take "moonlighting" jobs because they are unable to secure a decent life for themselves and their families by their earnings. In some cases, dockers actually pay for the privilege of working: on Graciosa, one of the northernmost islands, dockers loading cargo are obliged to give a proportion of their income to the vessel owner (the dockers here maintain that the situation has improved; previously, they had to part with a larger slice of their income to the owners). It is also not unknown for certain jobs (such as securing vessels by line to the quay) to be performed for no payment (the income of those involved being derived from a share-out with dockers working vessels or employed ashore). In yet other instances, dockers receive only half the rate paid for work aboard vessels when they are engaged in shore work.

Many port jobs are performed by non-registered dockers and organized workers are not infrequently threatened and told that they will be replaced by unorganized labour.

UNITED STATES

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Supreme Court upholds contempt verdict against Stevens

The United States Supreme Court has refused to allow an appeal by the textile multinational J.P. Stevens^x against a contempt of court order issued against it last August for persistently failing to comply with previous judgments and thereby creating an "atmosphere of fear" in its plants. The Supreme Court is expected shortly to issue a decree requiring full compliance with the earlier order.

Effectively, this means that representatives of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union will now have the absolute right of access to all 65 company plants in North and South Carolina as well as to the names and addresses of Stevens workers. Employees who have been fired for their union activities must be reinstated as well as paid for the period of their suspension) and Stevens management personnel instructed in the rights of union organizers. The union has also won the right to be present, with the right of rebuttal, when J.P. Stevens executives address employees on the subject of union representation.

Stevens will be liable to fines of up to \$100,000 for each violation of the contempt order plus \$5,000 for each day the violation continues.

The ACTWU has said that if the order is obeyed "a great step forward" will have been made in protecting the rights of Stevens workers.

^xsee also ITF Newsletter No. 1, 1978, page 5.

Sleeping car porters join Railway Clerks

The ITF-affiliated Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks gained another thousand members at the end of last month when the formal agreement of the members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was obtained to a merger with the larger organization. A unity agreement signed by the two union presidents had already been approved by the BRAC executive.

Pilotsurge adoption of anti-terrorist measures

The US Air Line Pilots' Association is urging Congress to demonstrate its determination to stamp out air piracy by approving the tough anti-terrorist bill that is now before it. The bill proposes the establishment of a high-level Council to Combat Terrorism, which would be headed by the President's national security adviser, as well as the formation of special anti-terrorist units in the State and Justice Departments.

The President would be required to submit to Congress a list of countries which are known to give aid or sanctuary to terrorists and to name all "dangerous" foreign airports (i.e. those with inadequate security arrangements). He would then be instructed to impose sanctions against offending states, which would include a ban on flights to and from the United States. It has yet to be decided whether such a ban should be mandatory or allow an element of "flexibility".

In its testimony, the pilots' union welcomed the branding in the bill of terrorism as "an international crime". ALPA President John O'Donnell said that his members welcomed the extension of existing safety and security requirements to charter operators and supplemental carriers and were relieved that higher standards were being set for protecting shipments of nuclear materials from possible damage or attack.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

AUSTRALIA

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New long-service leave agreement for merchant navy officers

The ITF-affiliated Merchant Service Guild of Australia has recently concluded a long-service agreement giving masters and deck officers an entitlement to 13 weeks' paid leave after 15 years' continuous service in the Australian maritime industry. (Officers with over 15 years' continuous service will receive 8 2/3 weeks' paid leave after an additional 10 years' service.) Previously, the granting of long-service leave had been dependent on service being with the same employer.

The Guild hopes that it will be possible eventually to extend the award to the offshore oil and gas industries, the pilotage and port services, as well as to shipwrights, who are expected shortly to be received into Guild membership. These groups are currently excluded as the award applies exclusively to officers employed by shipowners who are party to the Maritime Industry Seagoing Award.

Cost-of-living rise for dockers

A cost-of-living award, effective 6 March for most ports, has come into operation in Australian ports. The top terminal rate is now \$199.80, while the weekly rates for ordinary waterside workers and mobile crane and forklift truck drivers are increased to \$184.90 and \$193.20 respectively. In each case, rates have been lifted by \$2.60.

CANADA

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Settlement in rail pay talks

A new one-year contract^X for Canada's 100,000 railwaymen was successfully concluded last month between the Associated Railway Unions (ARU) and the managements of Canadian National, Canadian Pacific and eleven smaller railway companies. Government anti-inflation legislation prevented free negotiation on pay with the result that increases of only six per cent on basic rates could be achieved for 1978. However, the unions are hoping that these restrictions will not be operating in the next round of pay talks in 1979 and that larger increases will be obtained.

The settlement includes considerably strengthened job security provisions. For example, joint union/management committees will have the authority to decide claims for benefits which are currently subject to arbitration and to apply the inverse seniority principle in redundancy situations (i.e. senior employees would have the option to take redundancy compensation in preference to more junior railwaymen). The length of service requirement for payment of allowances on relocation within the railways is also reduced from three years to two and most allowances have also been improved (i.e. incidental expenses are increased from \$300 to \$400; the mileage allowance is raised from 15 to 18 cents; and the reimbursement allowance, payable when an employee loses money on the sale of his house, is increased to \$4,500 from \$3,000). Railway workers who do not wish to be relocated will now be eligible for retraining.

Under the terms of the new agreement, the practice of contracting out work will be limited to certain clearly defined circumstances. The unions will be given advance notice of the management's intentions and if the need to contract out work is disputed the agreed grievance procedures will be brought into play. It has also been decided to increase the pensions of former railwaymen who retired before 1973 and to give workers who had previously chosen not to join the industry's superannuation scheme a further opportunity to do so, although they will be unable to buy in to the scheme for past service.

Other improvements include: maximum weekly sickness benefits increased from \$147 to \$160; paid-up life insurance on retirement increased from \$1,000 to \$3,368, and pass privileges on Canadian Pacific brought into line with the more generous facilities for privilege travel on Canadian National.

Rank-and-file members are now voting whether to accept the agreement. The result of the ballot is not expected for some weeks. The agreement, which was reached with the assistance of a federal mediator after four months of negotiations, expires on 31 December 1978.

^Xsee ITF Newsletter No. 11, 1977, page 110, No.1, 1978, p. 7 and No. 2, 1978, page 21.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Train drivers call off one-day strike

Train drivers belonging to the ITF-affiliated ~~Associated~~ Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) cancelled a 24-hour national strike called for 1 March after talks with the two other British rail unions (also affiliated) resulted in an agreement to convene an urgent meeting of the Railway Staff National Tribunal, whose members, sitting as expert advisers, would consider and recommend a means of resolving the dispute which gave rise to the strike threat. As a sign of goodwill, ASLEF has also agreed temporarily to postpone a series of regional one-day strikes, the first of which was due to take place in Scotland on 7 March.

The dispute concerns an agreement reached at the beginning of February between the Board and the National Union of Railwaymen that 1,600 guards, whose duties include the collection of passenger fares on trains operating between unmanned stations in rural areas, should be paid a commission on their takings. ASLEF challenged the payments on the grounds that they breached a 1974 restructuring agreement, which consolidated all premium payments into basic rates and banned sectional deals in the rail industry. The drivers feel strongly that their position at the top of the industry's earnings league has been steadily eroded by a series of reclassifications and regradings that are against the spirit of the 1974 agreement.

Meanwhile, talks are progressing between the three rail unions and the Board on a new twelve-month pay agreement, which is due to take effect from next month. Details of the settlement will be given in due course in the Newsletter.

Marconi Marine radio officers resume normal working

Radio officers employed by Marconi Marine on ten oil rigs in the British sector of the North Sea have returned to normal working after working to rule for nine days. The officers agreed on 3 March to suspend their action, which had been stepped up the previous day, when Marconi Marine was given the go-ahead by the government to pay the men increases of £4 plus productivity payments of between 12 and 14 per cent negotiated in November of last year.

The officers are members of the ITF-affiliated Radio and Electronic Officers' Union and control communications with the shore and with supply vessels and helicopters serving the oil rigs. Four oil companies were affected by the action:- Shell, Texaco, BP and the British National Oil Corporation (BNOC).

Pilot vessel officers call off threatened strike

On 28 February, Harwich-based merchant navy officers who operate buoyage tenders and man Trinity House pilot cutters cancelled a threatened strike on being informed that their pay award was not in breach of government guidelines and could therefore be implemented in full. This means that the officers, who are organized in the ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association, will now receive a £4 stage 2 pay offer plus additional payments of between 12 and 14 per cent under a self-financing productivity deal. The increases were agreed with the National Maritime Board last November.

Dockers' national minimum rates fixed

The national guaranteed daily wage and minimum holiday pay are both increased by ten per cent under a new agreement on national salary levels negotiated for Britain's dockers within the framework of the National Joint Council for the Port Transport Industry. Also raised is the payment for certificated absence due to sickness: now £20 per week (£4 per day). This is payable in addition to state sickness benefits.

LUXEMBOURG

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Private bus company drivers win improvements; no agreement yet for road haulage workers

The ITF-affiliated Luxembourg Federation of Railway and Transport Workers (FNCTTFEL) has successfully concluded a number of improvements to the existing collective agreement for private bus company drivers, which is thereby extended to 29 February 1980. The revised agreement includes the following changes: working week reduced to 43 hours with effect from 1 March 1978 (42 hours from 1 March 1979); annual leave increased to 24 working days for 1978 (25 days from 1 January 1979); length of periodic rest periods increased in line with EEC Regulation No. 543/69 to a minimum of 40 hours.

Meanwhile, negotiations are continuing with the assistance of national conciliators on a new collective contract for road haulage workers. (The previous contract expired on 1 June 1977.) The employers have so far failed to make a realistic offer and the union side has suggested a final compromise solution: a salary increase of three per cent from 1 April 1978 or a reduction in the working week from 44 to 42 hours from the same date.

NETHERLANDS

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New collective agreement for dock workers

A new collective agreement was negotiated earlier this month by the ITF-affiliated Dutch Transport Workers' Union (NVV) for its members in the ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. A number of improvements have been won, including an increase of 0.5% applied from 1 January 1978 and a 1.3% cost-of-living adjustment due from 1977. It has also been agreed that Easter Sunday and Whit Sunday will be written into the collective agreement as Public Holidays, that wage indexation will continue and that rises in fuel prices will be compensated separately from the index.

Detailed measures have been drawn up for promoting full employment in the docks, and the voluntary early retirement scheme, which begins at 63, will now be extended to the end of 1978.

UNITED STATES

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Mediation sought in rail pay talks

Seven US rail unions (including the ITF-affiliated Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks and a number of unions represented in the ITF-affiliated Railway Labor Executives' Association) have sought the assistance of the National Mediation Board to hasten a settlement in contract talks with the major railroads. The employers have steadfastly refused to improve on a pay offer made last October, which has been dismissed by the unions as being totally inadequate to maintain living standards.

The 36-month contract formally expired on 31 December 1977, although under the Railway Labor Act its provisions remain in force until a new agreement is concluded.

FLAG OF CONVENIENCE CAMPAIGN NEWS

Olympic Glory is transferred to national flag

The ITF has won a major victory in its endeavours to persuade the owners of tonnage sailing under flags of convenience to transfer such vessels to the flag of the country of beneficial ownership.

The 77, 847 dwt tanker OLYMPIC GLORY -- the vessel has flown the Liberian flag for the past fourteen years -- docked in the Teeside port of Middlesbrough at the end of February where it was subjected to boycott action by members of the local branch of the National Union of Seamen and the Transport and General Workers'

Union (both ITF affiliates) in a dispute which hinged on the transfer of the vessel to the national flag, or bringing the officers and crew under a collective Agreement of the internationally acceptable standard adopted by ITF maritime affiliates.

Lengthy negotiations conducted by union officials with company representatives and the Greek shipping authorities resulted in the Onassis shipping group, which owns the Olympic Glory, agreeing to the transfer of the vessel to the Greek registry. The necessary documents were flown from Greece to Britain and the ship was able to sail from Middlesbrough on 8 March flying her new colours.

The ITF believes this is the first time that the Onassis group, whose fleet consists of over fifty vessels totalling nearly five million deadweight tons, has agreed to such a flag change. The Federation is now watching the situation closely to see if the group will transfer the sister ships of the Olympic Glory to the Greek flag before they encounter similar problems with ITF affiliates.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dockers in Belgium have submitted their demands in connection with the 1978 contract negotiations. They have asked for a reduction in the working week and increases in the rate paid for the day shift.

The Danish Trade Union Confederation (LO) is to ask its representatives in firms with subsidiaries in South Africa to submit reports on conditions of black workers in the Republic. The reports will be published to coincide with the Week of Protest being organised by the ICFTU from 13 to 21 March (see ITF Newsletter No. 2, 1978, page 14).

Air France flight staff staged a one-day strike on 15 March in protest against alleged undermanning on long-haul flights.

Leaders of French seafarers and aviation workers, at a recent meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport, Marcel Cavaille, expressed regret at government plans to abolish the marine inspector service, stressing the damaging effect this was likely to have on safety of navigation and the overall safety of life at sea. Improvements in the staffing of the meteorological service and the civil aviation authority were also urged to help overcome the difficulties currently being experienced by these two bodies.

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) recorded its highest-ever membership figures last year. Union membership rose by over 14,000 in the course of 1977 to stand at 1,077,755 on 31 December.

In forthcoming negotiations for new collective contracts, the ITF-affiliated German Railwaymen's Union (GdED) and the Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) -- along with other unions in the public sector -- will be seeking 7.5 per cent salary increases and longer holidays for their members.

A quarter of a million Greek workers staged a 24-hour strike on 1 March demanding general 30 per cent pay increases, future index-linked rises, tax reductions and the introduction of a five-day working week. Olympic Airways flights and public transport services were hit by the action.

Some 65,000 Icelandic trade unionists, including government employees, staged a two-day general strike at the beginning of this month in protest against the government's austerity measures. An anti-inflation law adopted last month cut in half ten per cent pay increases due to be paid this month under an index-linked cost-of-living agreement.

Italian pilots stepped up a three-day-old work to rule by calling a three-hour strike in the morning of 3 March, which was later joined by ground staff and technicians. The strike was called by union leaders, who are demanding pay rises and the renegotiation of contracts which impose very heavy work schedules on airport staff.

The All Japan Dockworkers' Union will be demanding pay increases for 1978 in excess of the uniform Y 30,000 sought last year.

Dockers in the port of Leixoes (Portugal) staged an overtime ban from 1 to 10 February in support of a claim for payment for overtime working.

Contrary to a report in last month's issue of the Newsletter (page 28), Trinidad and Tobago pilots of British West Indian Airways have not yet abandoned their strike against the airline. It is understood that the government is now considering declaring the company's operations an essential service in order to force the men back to work.

PERSONALIA

Francis Blanchard has been re-elected Director-General of the International Labour Organisation for a further five-year term. He has held office since February 1974.

Tell Böhler, former secretary of the Swiss Railwaymen's Union and a one-time member of the union's executive, celebrated his 65th birthday on 24 February.

Robert Curran has been elected a Vice-President of the US Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks. He fills the vacant seat left by Fred Kroll, who is now the union president. Brother Kroll has recently been elected a Vice-President of the AFL-CIO.

Clive Iddon has been appointed Secretary of the Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Community following the resignation of Baudouin Jonckheere, who is leaving to take up a new post at national level. Brother Iddon will be assisted by Louis Buonaccorsi, former general secretary of the French Railwaymen's Union FO and a member of the ITF Executive Board.

J. Tomita, who retired from the presidency of the Nippon National Railway Power Motive Union (DORO) last year, has been appointed a member of the Public Corporation and National Enterprise Labour Relations Committee. He is one of the labour representatives on the tripartite mediation board.

Eustaquio Tolosa, a prominent Argentine dockers' leader, died on 10 March 1978, aged 54. Brother Tolosa had been closely connected with the ITF for a number of years. He was elected on to the Executive Board in 1965 and made an honorary member of the Board in 1968 (at this time he was still in prison for his efforts in organizing the 1966 Argentine dockers' strike). He served a second term on the Board from 1974 to 1977. Brother Tolosa was also a member of the Committee of the ITF Dockers' Section in both the sixties and the seventies.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ITF African Office transferred to Nairobi

Affiliates and other interested persons should note that the ITF African Office run by Regional Representative Ben Udogwu has been transferred from Accra to Nairobi, Kenya.

The new postal address of the Office is as follows:-

Benjamin R. Udogwu,
ITF African Office
P.O. Box 57392

NAIROBI

Kenya

Fair Practices Committee Meeting, London, 15 - 16 March 1978

A full report on this meeting will be carried in the April Issue of the ITF Newsletter.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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- ITF International Symposium on
Hijacking and other forms of
attack against Civil Aviation - Bonn, 6-7 April 1978
- Manning Committee - London, 13-14 April 1978

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING FURTHER
INFORMATION ON ANY ITEM IN THIS
NEWSLETTER MAY OBTAIN IT ON REQUEST
FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE I.T.F.

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THE SEAFARERS AT IMCO

By A.G. Selander, Assistant General Secretary,
International Transport Workers' Federation

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) -- participating in IMCO by virtue of the consultative status bestowed on the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) -- played a considerable part in the establishment of the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation (IMCO) and has ever since actively participated in the organisation together with many ITF affiliates serving as members of national delegations to IMCO meetings.

Throughout the years many vital issues involving maritime safety and marine environment pollution prevention have been brought to the attention of IMCO and have received more or less immediate consideration, either by IMCO acting on its own or in cooperation with other international agencies concerned, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The name of the Torrey Canyon is surely firmly embedded in everyone's mind and the preventive measures agreed with IMCO following that particular incident have already had and will continue to have a beneficial effect on the seafarers' working environment and the ecology alike.

It is encouraging to note that the organization's membership shows no sign of decline and that an increasing number of emerging maritime nations attach great value to IMCO and what it stands for.

Let us all hope that everybody who is associated with IMCO in one way or the other will endeavour to ensure that the maritime safety standards already agreed by the organization will not be withered away as a result of narrow economic considerations but that the more advanced IMCO members will assist the disadvantaged maritime nations in a manner which is fully conducive to safety.

In particular the ITF is looking forward with great interest to the practical results which may be gained from the recently agreed concept of an international marine corps.

Let us also hope that new bold initiatives will be taken in the areas where consensus has yet to be reached, for example with regard to safe manning and qualifications standards.

In spite of IMCO's many achievements the ITF cannot afford to be complacent. Until such time as the unscrupulous shipowner is a thing of the past seafarers will continue to suffer considerable and sometimes irreparable hardship not least as a result of negligent ship management.

The flame of cut-throat competition fanned by the flag-of-convenience operators will not disappear as a result of the coming into force of recently adopted international minimum standards for merchant ships. Nevertheless these standards are a step in the right direction and, indeed, we expect all governments to implement those standards as expeditiously as possible and to observe any agreed IMCO procedures for the control of ships under the 1960 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and other IMCO instruments.

Furthermore, we would hope that all governments would make a concerted effort to bring the 1974 SOLAS Convention into force without further delay.

The ITF itself will on World Maritime Day call upon its members to redouble their efforts to ensure maximum safety and welfare for all seafarers and has, with this objective in mind, decided to convene a meeting of ITF inspectors from all over the world on that very day.

They will compare notes on experiences gained from their dealings with sub-standard shipping and will outline measures designed to ensure that all seafarers at least have an equal chance of getting a fair deal.

(Reprinted from Lloyd's List
of 17 March 1978)

International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), London.

International Transport Meeting in Nuremberg / ITF European Committee

PRESS STATEMENT

on Transport Policy and the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal

Representatives of ITF-affiliated trade unions from several European countries met in Nuremberg on 1 and 2 March, 1978, to discuss the future effects of the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal. Unions organising road transport, inland navigation and railway workers were represented at the meeting.

Strong criticism was levelled at European transport policy. It was stated that there was a nonsensical double-investment situation brought about by transport policy decisions - for example, in the building of the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal. The building of this canal would cost 4,000 million DM and the annual cost of maintaining it in good order had been estimated at 300 million DM. As if this were not enough, the taxpayer would be called upon to pay twice over; firstly for the building and maintenance of the canal, and secondly for the additional losses which would be sustained by the railways thus affected, which even now are running with excess capacity.

Transport policy decisions of this kind would bring about unnecessary over-capacity and would thus have purely negative effects upon the communal and national economies. The cost of the competition which would erupt from this situation would have to be borne in the main by transport workers, but also by the undertakings themselves for the good of the over-burdened economy.

The transport workers' unions of the western world are extremely concerned at the prospect of a flood of eastern-bloc shipping into the western-European canal and river network once the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal is in operation. The unions fear that there will be serious disruption of established transport markets in western countries as a result of ruinous competition.

In order to avoid this, it is essential that the Mannheim Act, which governs the legal provisions on the Rhine and in which Austria should be included as a riparian State, should be amended so that domestic traffic would be subject to licensing by local authorities for non-riparian States.

Furthermore, international agreements should secure an equitable distribution of the market, as well as appropriate quota systems. These measures should not be subject to weakening by the present freedom of undertakings to choose the location of their premises.

The transport trade unions belonging to the ITF - in which the Federal Republic of Germany is represented by the OeTV (Public Services and Transport) and the German Railwaymen's Union - demand an alternative transport policy:

- Instead of cut-throat competition at the expense of the workers, transport policy must strive towards an allocation of transport according to macro-economic principles. This could be achieved by such measures as the introduction of quota systems and capacity controls on national and international levels.
- In the formation of infrastructure policies, the transport modes which are most beneficial from a macro-economic point of view should be given special consideration. In this, aspects such as traffic safety, reduced environmental damage and energy saving must be regarded as significant factors.
- The social conditions of all those employed in transport should be developed along progressive lines and brought up to the standards which the trade unions have struggled to achieve in Europe.
- It will be essential for a social convention covering the whole of Europe to be adopted for application to the future Rhine-Main-Danube waterway system. This convention should pay particular attention to employment, income and social policies affecting employed persons.
