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No. 5

May 1978

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

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ITF/ISF Understanding on Asian seafarers is terminated

A meeting was held between ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis and Assistant General Secretary Ake Selander and representatives of the International Shipping Federation in London on 5 May, at which the shipowners stated that they were unable to accept the principle advanced by the ITF at an earlier meeting that the full "flag rate" be paid within five years to non-domiciled Asian seafarers serving in foreign-flag (other than flag-of-convenience) vessels. Both sides decided that as there was no agreed basis on which to negotiate a new Understanding on Asian seafarers the existing Understanding should therefore expire on 31 May 1978.

The Understanding dates from 1973 and established that where Asian seafarers -- mainly Indians, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis -- were employed on foreign-flag vessels the shipowners concerned should pay the difference between the locally negotiated rate at the point of supply and the minimum rate set by the ILO into a Welfare Fund. However, with the attainment of the ILO rate in a number of countries and with a change in the climate of opinion (notably on the part of British and certain German and Dutch shipowners - the major employers of Asian seafarers) towards a commitment to pay the "flag rate", it was felt by the ITF that the time was right for the International Shipping Federation to formally associate itself with this trend. This the ISF felt unable to do.

Since the meeting, ITF seafarer affiliates have been asked actively to pursue the policy of "flag rates" and to reveal their plans for achieving pay parity within the time limit specified.

TRANSPORT

GREAT BRITAIN

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Merchant navy officers seek to protect jobs

The ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association has asked the General Council of British Shipping to establish joint union/shipowner monitoring machinery, in an effort to minimize the effects of the large-scale cutbacks in

fleet manning levels currently under consideration by several British shipping companies. It has also been suggested by the Association that steps should be taken to redeploy surplus officers, who would otherwise be lost to British shipping. The MNAOA fears that unless prompt action of this kind is taken the total loss of officers' jobs this year could be considerable.

LIBERIA
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Liberian government publishes report into loss of Berge Istra

Nearly two years after the formal inquiry, the Liberian government has released its report into the loss of the giant 227,556 dwt oil/ore carrier Berge Istra, which sank in the Molucca Sea on 30 December 1975, with the loss of all but two hands. The inquiry was unable to establish the cause of the disaster -- which will probably remain one of the great unsolved mysteries of the sea -- although it does make certain recommendations based on the various factors that probably contributed towards the fatal explosion on board, which the Liberian authorities feel IMCO would do well to examine. For example, it suggests that, in the case of combination carriers like the Berge Istra, empty oil tanks should always be inerted when the ship is carrying a dry cargo, unless all slops have been discharged and the vessel is completely gas free. The report also recommends improved safeguards when "hot work" is being carried out at sea on this type of vessel, as it is likely that some sort of welding work had taken place on the Berge Istra prior to the explosion which sank her. It is also speculated that pockets of air might well have built up in the cargo oil tanks during the ship's last voyage and the report accordingly recommends that where tanks extend to the ship's bottom and contain internal members, they should be fitted with purge pipes.

NORWAY
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Unions seek improved working conditions in Norwegian sector of North Sea

The Norwegian trade union centre LO^X has written to the Oil and Energy Department requesting certain improvements to existing regulations governing working conditions in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea. In particular, it is suggested that the maximum period over which working hours should not normally exceed 12 hours daily (36 hours per week) be reduced from 12 to 3 months and that the current regulation which allows for a work-period of 32 days under certain special circumstances should be halved to 16 days.

The unions are hoping that they will be able to achieve an eight-hour day in the oil industry. At present, the practices of the individual companies vary widely and eight hours is far from being the norm.

x) The request was forwarded on behalf of six LO affiliates with members in the offshore oil industry, including the newly-formed Oil and Petroleum Workers' Union (NOPEF) and the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Seamen's Union.

TRADE UNIONS

NORWAY

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Seamen's union retains representation on MS Bolero

The ITF-affiliated Norwegian Seamen's Union reached agreement earlier this month with Fred Olsen Lines that the union should continue to have the right to conclude agreements on behalf of the crew of the MS Bolero, a vessel which the company has leased on bareboat charter to the Swedish Stena Line. Fred Olsen Lines had originally held the view that when the charterer took charge of the vessel it should also assume responsibility for the crew and make its own arrangements with an appropriate union.

Fred Olsen Lines has also agreed that whatever type of charter agreement it may enter into in future for its vessels, the Norwegian Seamen's Union shall remain the negotiating partner for the crew.

SWITZERLAND

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Workers oppose proposed closure of Firestone factory

A mass demonstration was staged recently in the small Swiss town of Pratteln by workers at the local tyre factory objecting to the abrupt announcement by the US multinational Firestone -- one of the world's largest producers of natural and synthetic rubber -- that it will be closing its factory there at the end of July.

Talks have since been held with Firestone in the United States and the company has now agreed to reconsider its decision to pull out of Switzerland. Meanwhile, following representations from the Swiss Trade Union Confederation, the matter was raised at last month's consultation with the trade unions held by the OECD Committee on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises (IIME), in the course of which Firestone was accused of having breached the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises, specifically in respect of its failure to consult the authorities and the workers in the months which led up to its decision to close down the Pratteln factory. Indeed, it had categorically denied on a number of occasions that it planned to close the factory.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

CANADA

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Cabin attendants vote on improved CP Air agreement

Canadian Pacific Air cabin crews are currently voting on a new collective agreement negotiated on their behalf by the ITF-affiliated Canadian Airline Flight Attendants' Association. Agreement has been reached on certain modifications to the service qualification for and the length of service in the first-class position; the payment of an overtime premium (of 1½ times the hourly rate) for all duty in excess of 14 hours daily; and the establishment of a joint union/management committee to study and report on the duties and responsibilities of pursers before the next round of pay negotiations. In addition, the new package also contains all the provisions of an earlier agreement, which was rejected by the union membership, including: a six per cent salary increase; improved pay for emergency training; meal allowances as for pilots; and the introduction of furlough/severance pay.

New contract for Montreal dockers

A new three-year contract was successfully concluded earlier this month for Montreal's dock labour force, thus averting a threatened strike on the waterfront. Details of the contract, which was negotiated by the ITF-affiliated International Longshoremen's Association, are not yet available.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Pay increases for Liverpool dockers

A new annual pay agreement for 7,000 dockers in the port of Liverpool was signed late last month by the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union. The agreement provides for a ten per cent increase in basic rates plus a further 1.7%, achieved by increasing bonus rates for general cargo handling, under a self-financing productivity scheme. No agreement has been reached on increasing fall-back pay and talks on this will be held shortly.

IRISH REPUBLIC

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Aer Lingus strike over

Aer Lingus administrative, supervisory and clerical staff resumed work on 8 May, following acceptance of an interim settlement reached after marathon mediation talks. The staff, who are organized in the Workers' Union of Ireland, will each receive

a lump-sum payment of approximately £500, pending the Labour Court's ruling on a past productivity claim. They have also been awarded a 5 per cent pay rise, in addition to the increases which form part of the national wage agreement (see page 62 of April Newsletter), in return for their agreement to implement certain measures designed to further enhance productivity. This extra payment will be consolidated into basic rates from October next. Other WUI members, notably flight stewardesses, who supported the strike by refusing to pass picket lines, will receive a lump-sum payment of £125.

Further discussions are to be held with the airline management on compassionate leave, sickness and maternity pay and privilege travel.

X see ITF Newsletter No. 4, 1978 for earlier details

JAPAN

New pay deal for ocean-going seafarers

The ITF-affiliated All-Japan Seamen's Union has accepted pay increases averaging 4 per cent on behalf of its ocean-going membership.

Railwaymen and cabin crews launch spring offensive

The spring offensive -- the season when Japanese workers customarily stage a series of strikes to press their annual pay demands -- culminated this year in a nationwide public transport strike, beginning on 25 April, which halted trains, buses and underground railway services. The strike was called off after 48 hours, two days earlier than originally intended, when workers accepted an average 5.4 per cent pay offer.

Japan Air Lines cabin staff and flight deck crews have also walked off their jobs on a number of occasions over the past two weeks and their action is understood to be still continuing in the absence of a satisfactory settlement.

NETHERLANDS

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Higher rates of pay for seafarers in the coastal trade

The ITF-affiliated Dutch Seafarers' Federation (FWZ) has concluded a new collective agreement, effective 1 January 1978, on behalf of its members in the coastal trade. This provides for three cost-of-living adjustments: on 30 April 1978, 1 November 1978 and 31 March 1979, with a minimum of 220 guilders (208 guilders on 30 April 1978) being paid for each percentage point rise in the index. Basic rates and allowances (with certain limited

exceptions) will also be raised on 1 November 1978 by 0.25 per cent. The agreement expires on 31 March 1979.

The extra leave entitlement for older workers (scheme begins five years before retirement) has also been improved. This now consists of 2 extra days rising by 1 day per year to 6 days one year before retirement (previously one extra day rising to five days).

NORWAY
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East Asian seafarers win pay rise

Improved rates of pay for East Asian seafarers serving in Norwegian-flag vessels came into effect on 1 January 1978. Examples of the new monthly starting rates in US dollars are as follows (figures in brackets refer to pay after 10 years' service): assistant electrician: 639.87 (691.99); bosun and carpenter: 526.49 (569.64); able seaman and motorman/fireman: 470.38 (507.79); messman: 413.83 (446.59); ordinary seaman: 357.97.

Basic rates have been increased by 2.5% plus 100 N kr. The ratings electrician and steward have been amended to respectively assistant electrician and messman.

SWEDEN
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New agreement for Swedish seamen

The ITF-affiliated Swedish Seamen's Union has reached agreement with the shipowners on the terms of a new contract. Examples of the new monthly starting rates for the near and distant trades are as follows (figures in brackets refer to pay after 5 years' service):

NEAR TRADE (effective 1 April 1978 - 31 January 1979)

Dry cargo ship

group 1^x: 3,729 (4,099)
group 2^x: 3,336 (3,706)
group 3^x: 1,874 (3,614^x) Skr

Oil tanker

group 1: 3,991 (4,391)
group 2: 3,578 (3,978)
group 3: 2,002 (3,857^x) Skr

FAR TRADE (effective 1 April 1978 - 31 January 1979)

Dry cargo ship

group 1: 3,822 (4,192)
group 2: 3,426 (3,796)
group 3: 1,909 (3,689^x)

Oil tanker

group 1: 4,084 (4,484)
group 2: 3,668 (4,068)
group 3: 2,037 (3,932^x) Skr

(All rates increased by 164 Skr except those marked with an asterisk -- increased by 239 Skr)

The above increases will also be applied to the salaries and allowances already paid for the months of February and March (the agreement was signed on 29 March, but also extends to these two months).

From 1 February 1979 until the expiry of the agreement (on 31 October 1979) seafarers will receive an extra 45 öre per hour (78 kr per month).

<u>group 1:</u> bosun, carpenter	<u>group 2:</u> electrician
1st electrician (rate 700 kr higher than above tables)	ship's mechanic
1st ship's mechanic	donkeyman
storekeeper	1st motorman
cook steward (rate 400 kr higher than above tables)	
pumpman	
cook	

group 3: others within deck, engine and catering departments

Walkout by Swedair pilots

Swedair pilots have been on strike since 25 April. The Swedish Pilots' Association concluded a four-year pay agreement with the company when it was formed four years ago to help it consolidate its position and finds that as a result Swedair pilots' salaries have fallen until they are now little more than half of those paid to SAS pilots. It is therefore suggesting that its members should receive an additional ten per cent over average annual wage settlements for the category in both 1978 and 1979 to help bring salaries into line. To date, Swedair has refused to grant this demand.

In an effort to bring Swedair management to the negotiating table, SAS pilots as well as pilots of the Swedish domestic airline Linjeflyg will ground all domestic flights on Friday 12 May, and again one week later, in sympathy with their Swedair colleagues.

Scanair cabin staff strike postponed

The ITF-affiliated Swedish Commercial Employees' Union (HTF) has decided to postpone its threatened strike against Scanair and seek a mediated settlement. The union has been attempting, so far without success, to negotiate the first separate collective agreement for 100 Swedish stewards and stewardesses employed by the charter airline. Previously, the Danish cabin staff agreement had been applied in Sweden. The HTF is demanding that salaries be converted from Danish into Swedish kr. at the current rate of exchange (the company has indicated that it would prefer to use the less favourable rate obtaining at January 1977). Demands for improved compensation for weekend working and more time off have also not been met in full by the airline.

UNITED STATES

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Rail pay talks near end

The four US railway unions previously engaged in direct negotiations with the carriers have now decided to join their colleagues in seeking a mediated settlement in the current round of rail pay talks^{x)}. It is hoped that a final settlement will be reached shortly.

x) see ITF Newsletter No. 3, 1978, page 45 and No. 4, 1978, page 61

Pan-Am ground staff strike averted

A threatened strike of Pan Am ground staff was called off shortly before the strike deadline of 00.01 on 29 April after tentative agreement was reached with the airline management on a new contract for maintenance workers, dispatchers, port stewards and commissary employees organized in the ITF-affiliated Transport Workers' Union of America. Details of the new contract will be published as soon as they are available.

At the request of the TWU, ITF civil aviation affiliates were asked to lend their support in the event of a strike taking place.

VENEZUELA

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New agreement for Viasa cabin staff

The ITF-affiliated Trade Union of Viasa Cabin Staff (OSASV) recently signed a new three-year collective contract for its members, all of whom are employed by the Venezuelan national airline Viasa. Improvements include: salary scales increased by between 25 and 36 per cent; minimum monthly salary of female and male cabin attendants raised to 2,075 and 2,225 bolivars respectively; 30 days' annual leave; holiday bonus equivalent to 45 days' pay.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dockers in Australia have called off their rolling strikes and stop-work meetings following the resumption of negotiations between the ITF-affiliated Waterside Workers' Federation and the waterfront employers for a new national contract (see also ITF Newsletter No. 4, 1978, page 56).

The Belgian trade union campaign for shorter working hours and earlier retirement ended in victory earlier this month when the government announced the introduction of the 38-hour week and retirement at 60 for 780,000 workers in the public sector.

The ITF-affiliated Finnish Seamen's Union has given notice of its intention to terminate the overseas trade agreement. The union has warned that if the shipowners do not compensate seafarers for the loss of purchasing power resulting from the recent devaluation of the currency it will call its members out on strike.

The French national trade union centre FO has won increased representation on the Air France ground staff council. It won 29.48% of the places this year, confirming the rising trend of recent years.

France and Spain have formally ratified ILO Convention No. 147 on Minimum Standards in Merchant Ships which was adopted at the 62nd (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference in October 1976. Another convention adopted at the same conference, on continuity of employment for seafarers, has also been ratified.

Effective last month, all bulk vessels carrying dangerous cargoes must take on a pilot when they enter German territorial waters. This obligation applies to all liquid, chemical and gas tankers as well as to nuclear-powered vessels and is intended to reduce the risk of fire, explosion and environmental damage emanating from such vessels. The only exception to the rule will be for vessels under 300 grt as well as inland waterway vessels which have the appropriate equipment and whose skipper has a detailed knowledge of the German inland waterway system.

Leaders of Britain's three railwaymen's unions have accepted British Rail's 1978 pay offer (see ITF Newsletter No. 4, page 58). A productivity agreement acceptable to all three unions still remains to be reached.

In the wake of the Amoco Cadiz disaster, John Chalmers, general secretary of the British Boilermakers' Society, has called for a ban on the construction of tankers of over 500,000 tons dw until such time as safety standards have been thoroughly revised. Suggested improvements include: smaller holds, dual controls to rudders and propellers, a reinforced outer shell, segregated ballast tanks and improved radar facilities. Brother Chalmers has also proposed that governments and employers should meet unions at the international level to discuss protection of the sea and coasts and that convenience tankers, because of their poor accident record, should be banned from entering European ports.

The Commissioner for Maritime Affairs in Liberia has announced that a formal inquiry into the wreck of the Amoco Cadiz will be opened in London on 16 May.

Hijackers who execute airline passengers or aircraft crews after taking them hostage will be subject to the death penalty in future in Luxembourg. The penalty for acts of hijacking where there is no loss of life will be a life sentence with hard labour.

The ITF-affiliated Turkish Civil Aviation Trade Union HAVA-IS is to appeal in the courts against a government back-to-work order which forced it to call off its strike against Turkish Airlines at Istanbul airport late last month (see ITF Newsletter No. 4, 1978, page 62). The union had called the strike to press its demands for substantial pay rises for its ground staff members employed by the airline.

PERSONALIA

Humberto Hernandez, president of the Venezuelan Transport Workers' Federation and a member of the ITF Executive Board, has been made a Commander of the Order of Freedom. He was decorated with the honour by Carlos Andrés Pérez, president of Venezuela, in recognition of the fifty years of devoted service he has given to the trade union movement in his own country. Brother Hernandez is also a member of the Venezuelan parliament.

Remi Janssens, secretary of the Dockers' Section of the Belgian Transport Workers' Union, retired on 1 May.

Ole Tennfjord, president of the Norwegian Navigating Officers' Association, celebrated his 60th birthday on 29 April. Brother Tennfjord has been a member of the Committee of the ITF Seafarers' Section since 1971.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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- ITF preparatory meeting on training and qualifications of seafarers - London, 12 June 1978
- Cabin Attendants Technical Committee - London, 12/13 June 1978
- Flight Deck Technical Committee - London, 12/13 July 1978
- Management Committee - London, 25 July 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.