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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF



PORTUGAL

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ITF supports Seafarers' Federation in dispute over pay and conditions

As reported in our July issue (p. 96), unions belonging to the Portuguese Seafarers' Federation, with which the ITF has a close relationship, particularly in the campaign against flag-of-convenience ships, have for some time been banning overtime in port in support of their claims for a revision of the existing collective agreement for seafarers. These include an overall increase of Escudos 3,000 a month (rates have not been increased since the agreement was first negotiated in 1975, despite a steep rise in the cost of living), the payment of subsistence allowances, improvements in overtime compensation and seniority bonuses.

The overtime ban resulted in the immobilization of the Portuguese merchant fleet and attempts by the Government to requisition individual ships, which were successfully resisted by the crews. In some cases, union representatives were put off requisitioned ships by the Maritime Police, allegedly acting under instructions from the former Minister of Transport, who later described this as a "mistake". These actions led to strong union protests, including one from the ITF-affiliated Portuguese Dockers' Federation.

During the last week in July, renewed negotiations led to substantial progress being made towards a settlement. The fall of the Government headed by Mario Soares, however, brought the negotiations to a complete stop, approximately 96% of the merchant fleet being operated by the State. The Seafarers' Federation, which believed that a solution to the conflict was very close if negotiations could be continued, had therefore no choice but to maintain its overtime ban.

Ken Golding of the ITF Secretariat, who was on a visit to Portuguese transport workers' unions, had several meetings with Federation representatives to discuss the deadlock which had been reached. Also discussed was a local problem in the Azores, where the crews of five strike-bound ships were being refused provisions by local authorities. As a result, and in consultation with the ITF's General Secretary, messages were sent to the President, outgoing Prime Minister and responsible Ministers calling for a quick resumption of talks, it being stressed that an early end to the dispute was very much in the interests of the Portuguese Republic. An ITF protest was also made to the Regional Government in the Azores, pointing out that the refusal of essential supplies to the ships there was contrary to international law. This resulted in the immediate lifting of the ban.

So far as a settlement of the dispute is concerned, the Seafarers' Federation has now reported some movement towards fresh negotiations and it is likely that these will start immediately a new Government takes office. At the time of writing this was imminent.

TRANSPORT

INTERNATIONAL

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Further talks on Bonn hijacking agreement

Officials from the seven governments who signed the hijacking agreement at the end of the Bonn economic summit last month^X met in the Federal capital at the beginning of August to decide what detailed measures need to be taken to render the proposed airline boycott immediately effective against defaulting states. Other countries have been urged to join in the boycott: Austria has already announced its intention to do so and the Danish government will be taking up the question of possible participation with Sweden and Norway, with whom it operates a joint airline.

^Xsee ITF Newsletter No. 7, page 88.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Railwaymen reduce overtime working

In an effort to fill the 10,000 staff vacancies, which it estimates exist in the various divisions of British Rail, the ITF-affiliated National Union of Railwaymen has asked its regional branches to take "urgent action" to reduce overtime working in the industry and to insist that the extra work is made up by taking on more staff. Sid Weighell, NUR general secretary and a member of the ITF Executive Board, has pointed out that railwaymen are now working a 53-hour week to keep train services running, even in areas of high unemployment. He feels that British Rail should be trying harder to recruit more staff and has urged management to embark on an extended recruitment campaign via advertisements in the press.

Upper docks win reprieve

London's ailing Royal Docks have won a reprieve^X. The Secretary of State for Transport Mr. William Rodgers announced in the House of Commons on 31 July that the two docks would remain open for the time being on the understanding that the dock unions would cooperate in measures to reduce the workforce and that they would

^Xsee ITF Newsletter No. 7, 1978, page 90 for earlier details

allow working practices to be revised to improve productivity and permit greater flexibility in the use of manpower in the port. Government money will be made available to meet the costs of the redundancy payments this will entail.

The decision has been hailed as an important victory by the main dock union -- the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union -- which had been campaigning vigorously for the retention of the upper docks after it became known that the Port of London Authority was advocating their closure.

Dock labour scheme suffers House of Commons defeat

The Dock Labour Scheme set up under the Dockwork Regulation Act of 1976, which would have reserved work at depots and stores within half a mile of ports for registered dockworkers, was defeated in a House of Commons vote on 24 July. The defeat has greatly disappointed the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union, which had fought for the scheme in a bid to halt the decline in dockers' jobs in recent years.

SPAIN

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Holiday ban on transport of dangerous cargoes by road

Following the recent tragic accident involving a liquid gas road tanker, which killed 170 holidaymakers on a camp site at the seaside resort of San Carlos de la Rapita, the Spanish government has banned the transport of dangerous cargoes by road at weekends, on public holidays and during peak holiday travel periods. The order comes into effect at noon each Saturday and lasts until midnight on the Sunday; all-day bans will operate on public holidays, as well as on 1 and 31 July and on the same dates in August.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

AUSTRALIA

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Cost-of-living award for ratings

New rates of pay have come into operation for Australian ratings covered by the Maritime Industry Seagoing Award following application of the latest cost-of-living award. Examples of the new annual aggregate wage from 7 June 1978 are as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
	<u>OVERSEAS CONTAINERS AND RO-RO VESSELS</u>	<u>COASTAL CONTAINERS AND RO-RO VESSELS</u>
bosun	\$ 16,137	\$ 16,241
donkeyman	15,608	15,654
AB	14,964	14,849
greaser	14,964	14,278
OS	-----	12,948

<u>Category</u>	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 4</u>
	<u>TANKERS</u>	<u>ALL OTHER VESSELS</u>
Bosun	\$ 17,493	\$ 16,105
donkeyman	16,503	15,493
AB	16,102	14,742
greaser	15,657	14,153
OS	13,811	12,867

CANADA
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New Great Lakes contract ratified

Seafarers on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway System, in a membership ballot, have approved a new contract negotiated by the ITF-affiliated Seafarers' International Union of Canada following the personal intervention of president Roman Gralewicz in the bargaining talks, thus avoiding a threatened strike^x. The new one-year contract -- hailed by union leaders as the best for years -- is backdated to 1 June and includes an 8.8 per cent increase in pay for 1978, twice the official government guideline figure, plus improved safety and employment protection clauses and more generous fringe benefits.

x

see ITF Newsletter No. 4, 1978, page 57 for earlier details

Tug officers' strike over

Masters and chief engineers on tugs belonging to Eastern Towing Ltd. in Halifax, Seven Rivers and Comeau went on strike late last month in support of demands for a 40-hour week rather than the present system of one day on followed by one day off. The officers called off their strike on 29 July when a satisfactory arrangement on working hours was agreed by their union, the ITF-affiliated Canadian Merchant Service Guild, with the company management.

Walkout by Air Canada ground staff

Air Canada ground service workers at Toronto, Montreal and certain Atlantic provincial airports, members of the Canadian division of the ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists, struck earlier this month to make known their dissatisfaction with the terms of the tentative settlement of a contract dispute.

GERMANY

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Salary increases for travel bureau staffs

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) has negotiated a new agreement for travel trade employees, which raises salaries by 5.2% from 1 June 1978; improves the daily holiday allowance from 28 to 31 DM (effective January 1979); and abolishes the lowest -- largely female -- salary grade.

Higher rates of pay for inland navigation workers

With effect from 1 July 1978, the monthly rates of pay of inland navigation workers organized in the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) were increased by the following amounts: salary group 1 - 5, group 6 (from 4th year of service) and group 7: 4.8% ; group 6 (1st to 3rd year of service): 30 DM; group 8: 25 DM. The lump sum payment made when vessels are undermanned goes up by 4.8 per cent and payment for waiting time in passenger vessel service has also been improved by 10 per cent.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Offshore catering workers balloted on union representation

Following the conclusion earlier this year by two of the ITF's British affiliates (the National Union of Seamen and the Transport and General Workers' Union) of the first collective agreement for offshore catering workers^x, ACAS is conducting a ballot among employees of OSSCO Services Ltd of Aberdeen on the Occidental, Piper and Claymore platforms, who are being asked whether they wish to be represented by the two unions in negotiations on pay and conditions.

^x see ITF Newsletter No. 6, 1978, page 84

SWEDEN

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Finnair contract talks run into difficulties

After preliminary correspondence and meetings lasting well over a year, the ITF-affiliated Swedish Commercial Employees' Union (HTF) commenced direct negotiations with the Finnair management at the end of April on the terms of a first collective agreement for the airline's cabin staff stationed in Sweden. These negotiations have proved extremely difficult and the HTF has warned that if they cannot be brought to a satisfactory conclusion shortly it may have to resort to industrial action to press its claims.

UNITED STATES

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Clerks strike Norfolk and Western Railways

The ITF-affiliated Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (BRAC) began a system-wide strike against Norfolk and Western Railways on 10 July, virtually closing down the entire 7,600-mile network, after failing to reach a settlement of a two-year-old dispute over work rules and job security issues, despite exhausting all the possibilities under the Railway Labor Act. Undeterred by two court decisions against it and union efforts to resume bargaining, N&W remains unwilling to compromise and our affiliate expects a long strike.

Meanwhile, dockers belonging to another of our US affiliates, the International Longshoremen's Association, are refusing to cross BRAC picket lines at the rail terminal at Lamberts Point docks, which are N&W owned, and all US labor unions are being urged by the AFL-CIO to give full support to the striking Clerks and to bring the company's unreasonable attitude to the public notice.

New contracts for American Airlines ground staff employees

The Air Transport Division of the ITF-affiliated Transport Workers' Union of America recently concluded separate agreements for TWU maintenance and stores workers, communications employees, dispatchers and meteorologists working for American Airlines.

Details are as follows:

Maintenance and stores workers and communications employees:

8 per cent pay increase backdated to 3 September 1977, with a further 8 per cent increase in September 1978, followed by 4 per cent in September 1979. Two cost-of-living adjustments of up to 34 cents an hour will be made during the life of the agreement.

Dispatchers: monthly salary increased to \$2,631 from September 1977, rising through \$2,831 in September 1978 to \$2,944 in September 1979. Assistants' pay is increased on the same dates to \$1,940, \$2,095 and \$2,179.

Meteorologists: rates of pay pegged at \$2,389 in September 1977, \$2,580 in September 1978 and \$2,683 in September 1979.

Pay agreement for marine engineers

The ITF-affiliated Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA) has reached agreement in principle on a new three-year contract for 8,000 engineers employed by the four West Coast shipping companies belonging to the Pacific Maritime Association. The agreement -- similar to one negotiated recently for east coast engineers -- provides for a 7.5% pay rise in each contract year, plus a cost-of-living increase in December 1979, further cost-of-living adjustments being made every six months thereafter. Pensions benefits will also be increased by 3 per cent in January 1980 assuming at least a three per cent rise in the consumer price index between 1 July 1978 and 30 June 1980.

Further details have still to be worked out in renewed talks between the union and the employers.

Record wage increases in new west coast contract

The International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) has negotiated record pay increases for west coast dockers in a new three-year contract. The base rate will be increased by 85 cents an hour on 1 July of each contract year, bringing it to \$10.92 by 1 July 1980. Other monetary gains include increases of up to 25 cents an hour in additional skill rates from 1 July 1978 and a "guaranteed wage" of \$331.92 and \$221.29 a week for "A" and "B" graded men respectively in the first contract year.

The new contract also offers significant improvements in the area of pensions. Dockers retiring on or after 1 July 1978 at 62 with 25 yrs' service receive a maximum pension of up to \$550 per month from 1 July 1980, while those with less than 25 years will now be able to retire at 62 with no reduction in their accrued pension benefits. Previous pensions rules have been modified to enable men who wish to retire early (at 55 or over) to do so on a higher pension than hitherto and benefits for existing pensioners were increased on 1 July by \$2 per month per qualifying year up to a maximum of \$50 for men with 25 years.

The agreement also adds two new paid holidays: Christmas Eve (1978) and New Year's Eve (from 1980) and gives employees with over 25 years' service the right to a sixth week of annual leave.

NEWS IN BRIEF

France's 2,500 air traffic controllers briefly suspended their work-to-rule^X for the first weekend in August, only to reimpose sanctions the following weekend after they failed to gain any satisfaction from talks with the Transport Minister, who has now refused to resume negotiations until after the present action ends on 15 August. The controllers are seeking a revised pay structure, with bonuses and allowances being integrated into basic pay, as well as improved radar and radio equipment and better computer facilities in the control towers, which they allege are seriously undermanned. They are also demanding the right of strike action.

^Xsee ITF Newsletter No. 7, page 96

The Civil Aviation Authority is urging the British government to introduce an upper age limit of 60 for all United Kingdom airline pilots. At present, the 60-year limit applies only to pilots-in-command. It is proposed that the new limit should come into effect in the second quarter of 1981.

British Airways engineers at London's Heathrow Airport will stage a 24-hour protest strike, beginning at 06.30 on 23 August, if their claim for pay parity with British Caledonian engineers at Gatwick, who receive extra payments for working on wide-bodied aircraft, is not met by that date.

Icelandic dockers have called off their ban on the handling of export cargo -- it began last April^X -- after the government made it clear that financial assistance would only be made available to the country's fishing industry if the ban were lifted.

^Xsee ITF Newsletter No. 6, 1978, page 87

Clerical employees at British Rail offices in the Irish Republic, who are members of the ITF-affiliated Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, called off a week-old strike on 29 July after reaching a satisfactory settlement of a productivity dispute. The strike had seriously affected British Rail services across the Irish Sea on the previous weekend.

Ground staff at Rome airport staged a 12-hour strike on 3 August in protest against delays in negotiating improved time off after a number of italian public holidays were abolished last year.

Seamen on ferries plying between the Italian mainland and Sicily and Sardinia staged a 48-hour stoppage on 18/19 July; but railwaymen's leaders have cancelled a two-day strike scheduled for the second week of August.

Mexican air traffic controllers have been on strike since the beginning of August in support of pay demands. Aeromexico pilots (as well as pilots with the private airline Mexicana) are refusing to fly while the strike continues and have warned that they will not return to work if the government replaces the striking controllers by military personnel.

The government of the Seychelles has deposited an instrument of acceptance of the IMCO Convention with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. IMCO now has one hundred and seven full members and one associate member.

PERSONALIA

Ole M. Berge has been elected president of the US Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees in succession to Harold Crotty, who, under union rules, was no longer eligible for re-election. Brother Crotty is a member of the Committee of the ITF Railwaymen's Section.

C.L. Dennis, retired president of the US Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, has died, aged 70. Brother Dennis served as BRAC president from 1963 until his retirement in 1976 and was a member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council until December last year.

Tom Goff, Policy Research Officer of the British Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association, is to retire shortly. Prior to going to the MNAOA in 1961, Bro. Goff was Research and Publicity Officer with the National Union of Seamen.

Einar Mathiesen has been appointed oil secretary (representing off-shore mobile rig crews) of the Norwegian Seamen's Union in succession to Jan P. Strømme, who has left to take up an appointment as labour attaché at the Norwegian embassy in Brussels.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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- Seafarers' Section Manning Committee - Baltimore, 12-16 September 1978
- Fishermen's Section Sub-Committee - Faroe Islands, 9-11 Oct. 1978
- Executive Board - Vienna, 17-18 October 1978
- Road Transport Workers' Section Steering Committee. - Vienna, 19 October 1978
- Sub-Committee on Working Conditions of Railway Staff - Stockholm, 26-27 October 1978
- Travel Bureau Section Committee - London, 31 October-1 November 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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