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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

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ITF Executive Board condemns Tunisian show-trials

The Executive Board of the ITF met in Vienna on 17 and 18 October 1978. Details of the most important decisions adopted in the course of the meeting are given below.

Individual members of the Board expressed their profound shock and anger that one of their number, Abderrazak Ayoub, assistant general secretary of the Tunisian Railwaymen's Federation, should have been given a savage sentence of five years' imprisonment with hard labour for his part in last January's general strike. (See ITF Newsletter No. 10, 1978, page 119). The Board's feelings were made known in a statement^x on the Tunisian situation which also denounced the court proceedings as a mockery of justice and what amounted to a show trial by which the government had attempted to cripple one of Africa's strongest and most independent trade union movements. The General Secretary was asked to organize a concerted action among affiliates designed to ensure the prompt release of Ayoub and his fellow prisoners and the immediate restoration in full of trade union rights in Tunisia. In response to the Board's request, affiliates have been contacted and urged to make strong representations to the Tunisian embassy or consular services, coinciding with demonstrations highlighting the plight of trade unionists in Tunisia; to enlist government support for the ITF stand, with governments being asked to make it a condition of the granting of aid to the Tunisian government that those imprisoned should be released and trade union rights restored; and to give maximum publicity to the ITF's condemnation of the trials in union publications and other news media.

Following a discussion of the plight of refugees at sea, with special reference to refugees from Indochina whose frail craft so often get into difficulties, the ITF Seafarers' Section was asked to continue and where possible intensify its efforts to ensure that ships' masters gave every assistance to refugees on the high seas. The Board also urged the ICFTU and the United Nations to explore urgently how it could most readily provide the maximum assistance to refugees and to countries and organizations aiding them.

ITF Vice-President Thomas Gleason raised the question of conditions in Long Kesh and other prisons in Northern Ireland, which had been drawn to his attention by relatives of Long Kesh prisoners during a visit to the United States. The Board adopted a statement agreeing to convey the representations made by Brother Gleason

^xAttached to this issue of the Newsletter

on his union's behalf to the trade union centres in Belfast, Dublin and London and to request their observations. It was also agreed that, if it was deemed necessary after studying the replies, the Management Committee should be authorized to consider the possibility of sending a delegation to Northern Ireland to investigate the situation.

The Board further decided, in accordance with Rule 3, paragraph 3 of the ITF Constitution, to suspend the National Union of Seafarers of India on the grounds that the union had acted against the Federation's interests by acting in such a way as to undermine the ITF Campaign against flags of convenience. Meanwhile, applications for affiliation were accepted from unions in Argentina, Fiji, Nicaragua, the Philippines and Venezuela subject to the satisfactory completion of any remaining formalities, and it was further agreed that an application for affiliation which had been received from the Fédération Générale des Transports et de l'Équipement (CFDT) in France should be considered at the next meeting of the Board.

The Board was of the view that it was in the best interests of European affiliates that the ITF should seek full representation on the Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Communities. The ITF's intention has already been communicated to the Committee in the hope that the ITF's membership can take effect from the beginning of next year.

Israel Kessar of the Transport Workers' Division of Histadrut (Israel) was co-opted to the Board to replace Y. Woschina who has now retired from his union.

The next meeting of the Board is to be held in London on 20 and 21 March 1979.

Safe manning standards sought by ITF Manning Committee

The Manning Committee of the ITF Seafarers' Section held a meeting in St. Michael's/Easton (USA) from 12-16 September 1978, under the chairmanship of K. Mols Sørensen (Danish Mates' Association). ITF Assistant General Secretary Ake Selander represented the ITF Secretariat. The task before the meeting was to establish criteria for safe manning for the guidance of the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, which is currently seeking to establish international standards on the safe manning of merchant vessels. Following lengthy discussions, a detailed document was drawn up which, if approved by the Section, will form the basis of our submission to IMCO. The document stresses the importance of giving due weight to considerations such as trading area; duration and nature of voyage; number, size and type of propulsion units; ship construction and shipboard equipment; watchkeeping arrangements; cargo handling needs in port; medical care; catering needs; and sanitary regulations. It further suggests that various socio-economic aspects of shipboard life affecting the safety of life at sea be taken into account when determining minimum scales and

that a joint IMCO/ILO approach to this area of the subject might perhaps be appropriate. Factors for consideration should include; working hours; peak work-load situations; limitations on human endurance and the need to safeguard seafarers' health; the ability to cope with on-board emergencies and to render assistance to other vessels in distress; responsibilities relating to environmental protection; observance of industrial safety and seamen's welfare provisions; conditions generated by the introduction of specialized ships or the carriage of dangerous cargoes; and the age and condition of the vessel. The paper also points to the need to define those shipboard activities that must be carried out in order to ensure that operation and maintenance of the vessel do not pose a hazard to the lives of seafarers, passengers, property or the environment, these activities to include the functions carried out by the deck, engine, radio and catering departments. In view of the importance of the good health of the crew to the proper functioning of the vessel, it is also suggested that ships above a certain size should carry a "marine physician assistant" or that a person forming part of the crew complement should be required to perform these duties.

Prior to the meeting, a symposium on maritime training was arranged by the ITF-affiliated International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (under ITF auspices) at the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies, Linthicum Heights, Maryland, where a proposed IMCO maritime training agency and the relationship between the master, owner and flag state were the main subjects for discussion.

ITF Fishermen's Section Social Policy Sub-Committee holds first meeting in Faroes

The first meeting of the ITF Fishermen's Section Social Policy Sub-Committee was held in Torshavn, Faroes on 10 - 12 October 1978 -- the first time, incidentally, that an ITF meeting has been held in the islands. The sub-committee had before it a heavy agenda, particularly in view of the need to prepare for the meeting of the ILO Committee on Conditions of Work in the Fishing Industry later this month.

The members of the sub-committee were agreed that wage-earning fishermen should be assisted to achieve regularity and security of employment through the introduction of an employment scheme operated by a statutory national labour board along the lines of similar arrangements in other sectors of the transport industry. The board would have a number of functions, including responsibility for the establishment of jointly-controlled registers of trained and qualified fishermen; recruitment and training; the provision of effective port-medical services; assistance with job placement ashore for fishermen wishing to leave the industry; redundancy and medical severance payments; and the facilitation of trade union representation on board registered fishing vessels.

A resolution on fishing rights was adopted by the meeting in which the ITF undertook to submit a formal proposal to the next session of the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference urging that special consideration be given during negotiations on fishing rights between coastal states to those countries and areas which are particularly dependent on fishing either because there are no other natural resources or because limited home markets and distances from other markets make manufacturing industry unviable.

The meeting also agreed that the ITF should prepare a text setting out fishermen's social objectives, for circulation to affiliates for comments prior to consideration at the next meeting of the sub-committee.

In preparing for the forthcoming ILO meeting, the sub-committee stressed the desirability of establishing international standards governing the working hours of maritime fishermen and the manning of maritime fishing vessels, which would be applicable to all crew members, including the skipper, and which would also take account of the special needs of young fishermen. With regard to medical services for fishermen, the sub-committee were of the opinion that criteria should be established for the provision of doctors at sea on the basis of one doctor per a given number of vessels in a particular fishing area. It also felt that training programmes for medical care at sea should be harmonized internationally, with special emphasis being placed on refresher courses, and that new international labour standards should be adopted on medical care for fishermen based on the recommendations of the Joint WHO/ILO Meeting on the Health of Seafarers held in 1973.

Road Transport Workers' Section Steering Committee looks ahead to next full Conference

The Steering Committee of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section met in Vienna on 19 October 1978 to discuss the agenda for next April's full Section Conference and to make preparations for the 1979 International Labour Conference when the texts of the new ILO Convention and supporting Recommendation on Hours of Work and Rest Periods in Road Transport will be finalized.

ITF railway staff prepare case for next session of ILO Inland Transport Committee

Last month's meeting of the ITF Sub-Committee on Working Conditions of Railway Staff, held in Stockholm on 26 - 27 October 1978, began preparing its case for submission to the next session of the ILO Inland Transport Committee. Subjects under discussion by the meeting included the ITF study on technological change on the railways and the professional training and re-training of railwaymen as well as an investigation into working conditions. The sub-committee's findings will be presented to the full Railwaymen's Section Conference next spring when a "catalogue of demands" will be drawn up for presentation to the ILO.

ITF participates in OECD consultation on multinational enterprises

On 23 October, the OECD Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) was invited to take part in an informal consultation in Paris with members of the Working Group on the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. This is a sub-group of the OECD Committee on International Investment & Multinational Enterprises, and consists of governmental representatives from the OECD member-countries.

The informal consultation was a follow-up to that held with the full IIME Committee on 11 April last (see Newsletter No. 4, 1978 - Supplement No. 2) and was designed to give the trade union representatives an opportunity of enlarging on and answering questions from the Working Group members on earlier submissions. One of the four main agenda items was the question of the application of the OECD Guidelines to groupings of companies such as the European airline groupings, KSSU and ATLAS; with the ITF being represented on this by Ove Johansson (Sweden), Chairman of the ITF's KSSU Committee, and Ken Golding of the ITF Secretariat, who acted as the Federation's spokesman. In his opening statement, the latter stressed the fact that decision-making on a variety of issues affecting airline employees was increasingly being shifted to group (i.e. multinational) level, and drew attention to the frustration being created for the civil aviation unions representing the interests of employees as a result of this trend.

Additional subjects discussed at the informal consultation -- all of which have a bearing on the airline grouping case -- were:

- (a) the transfer of workers, production, facilities and products from foreign affiliates in the context of negotiations or organizational activities;
- (b) the right of employees to be represented by trade unions; and
- (c) information to be provided to employees and governments in the context of the chapter of the OECD Guidelines relating to employment and industrial relations.

CANADA

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ITF seeks safeguards on rail redundancies

Earlier this month, ITF Railwaymen's Section Secretary Johann Hauf and Don Nicholson, national president of the ITF-affiliated Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (CBRT&GW) gave detailed evidence at a hearing called in Ottawa by the inquiry commission set up by the Canadian government to study the problem of redundancies and layoffs in industries within the federal jurisdiction. The two spokesmen expressed their strongest reservations at the possibility of redundancies and layoffs among railwaymen and stressed that full discussions with the railway unions must take place prior to any changes and their agreement sought. They also expressed the view that legislation was needed in the areas of industrial democracy and co-determination.

TRANSPORT

INTERNATIONAL

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UNCTAD deplures growing use of convenience fleets

In a policy paper published on 1 November, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development launched a vigorous attack on the inequitable shipping policies of the advanced western nations. They are principally criticized for dominating the transport of a much greater tonnage than they generate by their own trade (the developing countries export ninety per cent of tanker and a third of dry bulk cargoes and yet they own less than six per cent of the world bulk fleet, of which the western nations own an astonishing ninety per cent) and for maintaining this ascendancy by recruiting low-cost crews from the world's poorest nations and operating an increasing proportion of their fleets under convenience flags. The paper calls for action to be taken gradually to restrict and ultimately to phase out flag-of-convenience operations, which now account for over one-third of world tonnage and which UNCTAD is convinced are adversely affecting the development of the national flag fleets of the developing nations. It also rejects the argument that developing countries might be unable to operate tankers and bulk carriers as efficiently as their present owners.

Meanwhile, a further UNCTAD study released in October reveals for the first time the proportion of so-called open registry tonnage owned by the world's major shipping nations. It established that 78% of such tonnage is beneficially owned by three countries (United States - 31.7%; Greece - 20.7%; Japan - 9.2%) and one territory (Hong Kong 16.9%). A further sixteen per cent of convenience tonnage was shown to be owned by 12 countries. These include the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Singapore, Canada, Israel and the United Kingdom.

IMCO moves to protect ship masters

Following the wrecking of the Liberian-registered supertanker Amoco Cadiz off the French coast in March of this year, action was taken by the French government with the support of other interested parties -- prominent among them the ITF -- to set up an ad hoc working group within the framework of the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization which would examine ways in which ship masters might be afforded greater freedom of action when faced with hazardous situations when in the interests of safety they might have to ignore or disobey company directions governing their conduct.

The group's first meeting was held in London earlier this month and prepared the groundwork for an eventual international agreement which would enable ship masters to exercise their professional

judgement in situations where there was danger to the ship or the marine environment free from the constraints of dismissal or similar sanction which have traditionally been applied by owners and charterers in such circumstances. The next step will be for the United Kingdom government, with the assistance of the IMCO Secretariat, to draw up a draft resolution on the subject for submission to the next meeting of the group in July 1979, and thereafter to the IMCO assembly in November.

SCANDINAVIA
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Civil aviation unions reject pilot checks

The Scandinavian Transport Workers' Federation Congress held in Stockholm last month adopted a resolution regretting that in certain Scandinavian countries -- largely for reasons of cost -- checks on particular aircraft types are made by the pilot rather than by a properly qualified ground mechanic, which, in the meeting's view, adversely affects aircraft safety. The resolution calls upon the competent authorities to ensure that aircraft maintenance, regardless of aircraft type, is always carried out by qualified mechanics, who should preferably possess a certificate for the aircraft type(s) that they are required to maintain. The Congress expressed the opinion that the combination of pilot (responsible for flight safety) and ground mechanic (looking after safety on the ground) made for an ideal team and one in which the travelling public could have every confidence.

SWEDEN
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Seafarers oppose transfer of vessels to convenience registry

The decision of the Swedish Board of Commerce to allow two newly built vessels; the Bellman and the Taube, to transfer to a convenience registry has come under fierce attack from the ITF-affiliated Swedish Seamen's Union, which has written to the newly-elected Prime Minister Ola Ullsten asking the government, with which a final decision rests, to withhold its approval of the transfer. In the union's view, it is intolerable that the authorities should sanction the loss of 100 jobs previously taken by Swedish nationals, which would then go to cheaper, foreign labour. The owners of the vessels had sought permission to transfer them to a Liberian company of which they are part-owners.

TRADE UNIONS

GREAT BRITAIN

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Offshore caterers recognize unions

The Transport and General Workers' Union and the National Union of Seamen (both ITF affiliates) have won their struggle for recognition and bargaining rights with Scot Catering and Offshore Services of Aberdeen. Between them, the unions organize about half of Scot's 500 employees in the North Sea and they are expected to make an all-out effort to build up their membership in those fields where they have been poorly represented to date.

SPAIN

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Terrorist attack destroys ELA-STV office in Eloorio

The offices of the ITF-affiliated Spanish Transport Workers' Federation of ELA-STV in Eloorio were totally destroyed on 1 November by an explosive device apparently planted near the entrance to the union office, which occupies the ground floor of the building, by members of an extreme right-wing organization. In a statement issued by the union headquarters in San Sebastian, the attack was condemned as an attempt to provoke a direct confrontation between workers and anti-democratic forces. The union said that it wished it to be known that ELA-STV would not be deterred from its task of building up a strong trade union movement in the Basque country by this attack, which it views as an offence against each and every union member.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

CANADA

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Great Lakes dispute enters crucial stage

Members of the ITF-affiliated Canadian Merchant Service Guild have called off their strike on the Great Lakes after accepting the terms of a government-supervised contract. The strike, which halted all inland shipping, was called after mediation talks failed. Normal shipping operations will be resumed when the other union involved in the dispute with the Canadian Lake Carriers' Association approves the new contract.

FRANCE

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Seamen oppose employment of foreign catering staff on French passenger vessels

A three-week-old strike by 25,000 French seamen was suspended on 4 November when a settlement was reached with the assistance of government mediators in the dispute between the maritime unions and the Nouvelle Compagnie de Paquebots -- the only French passenger line -- which was planning to recruit "cheap" foreign catering staff for its three passenger vessels. The company has now promised the unions that it will not hire any more Asian personnel to supplement the 51 who already serve in its ships. Originally, it had been its intention to recruit 235 third-world seafarers for catering and cabin duties and to offer alternative employment to the French seafarers who would lose their jobs in consequence.

GERMANY

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Flat-rate increase sought for seafarers

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) has given notice of its intention to terminate the current wage agreement for seafarers on German-flag vessels which expires at the end of November. The union is seeking a flat-rate increase of 240 DM (120 DM for new recruits and uncertificated ratings with less than six months' seagoing service) as a means of improving basic rates and is asking that seafarers be allowed to draw the "seamen's pension" (a bridging payment made until the national pension age is reached) at 55 instead of at 58 as at present.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Train drivers lose claim for responsibility payments

The ITF-affiliated Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) has lost its claim for responsibility payments for all train drivers which has been the subject of arbitration since March of this year. The Railway Staff National Tribunal has ruled that the payments should be made only to the drivers of British Rail's high-speed trains, who would receive an increase of £3.14 per turn on current rates (equivalent to 25 per cent of the basic daily rate for each turn), giving increases of between £5.75 and £17 per week to men with the maximum number of hours on high-speed services. In addition, the Tribunal has recommended that productivity payments based on the performance of the railways should be made to all railway workers and that these should be consolidated regularly into basic rates. These payments are expected to amount to approximately £1.80 per week this year.

The decision comes as a bitter disappointment to ASLEF, which has consistently argued that the responsibility payments should apply across the board to all its members. Nor has the union ever favoured the introduction of "business performance" linked payments, as originally proposed by British Rail. An emergency meeting of ASLEF's national executive on 9 November rejected the award and called for a satisfactory offer, failing which it would be in dispute with British Rail. Meanwhile, the ITF-affiliated National Union of Railwaymen has welcomed the system of productivity payments rewarding railwaymen for their efforts to make the industry more attractive to potential business and private customers.

X see ITF Newsletter No. 3, 1978, page 43

Marconi Marine radio technicians receive improved pay offer

Marconi Marine has made an improved pay offer worth nine per cent (5% under stage 4 of the government's incomes policy plus a 4% productivity payment) to negotiators from the ITF-affiliated Radio and Electronic Officers' Union, which represents the company's 250 radio technicians^X). It is anticipated that the technicians will accept the offer, which also includes improvements in allowances and a shorter working week for regional office staff to bring them into line with employees at the company's head office.

X see ITF Newsletter No. 10, 1978, page 125 for earlier details

Milford Haven freezer trawlers blacked

The ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union is one of two unions currently blacking eight Humberside freezer trawlers operating out of Milford Haven because the trawlers' owners, Hamlings and Boyd Line, are employing skilled labour from outside the area to maintain and repair the vessels in contravention of a Milford docks bye-law stipulating that local labour should be used on visiting ships. Unless the unions receive written assurances from the owners within the next week, it is likely that T&GWU members will refuse to handle the Hull refrigerator ships' cargoes of export mackerel.

NETHERLANDS

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Union seeks fair rates for Turkish haulage drivers

By redress to the courts, the Dutch transport workers' federation (FNV) is seeking to compel the Dutch road haulage company Koops of Bunschoten to pay its 23 Turkish drivers according to the rates laid down in the collective agreement. Koops had employed the drivers via a Turkish company in order to be able to pay them the much lower Turkish rates. When they refused to be employed under these inferior conditions they were put on the "non-active" list.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Department of Employment has officially approved the pay award to British merchant navy officers, which was reported in the last Issue of the Newsletter (see page 125).

Mexican air traffic controllers called off their four-week-old strike on 1 November after agreeing to accept employment in the government service (see ITF Newsletter No. 10, 1978, page 126).

Portuguese marine pilots cancelled a threatened strike (see News In Brief In October issue of ITF Newsletter) after officials in the Portuguese caretaker government agreed to set up a national pilots' Institute to regulate their working conditions.

The Free Union of Gallician Fishermen is to merge with the Gallician fishermen's section of the ITF-affiliated Spanish Transport Workers' Federation (UGT).

Port branches of the Spanish Merchant Seamen's Union (SLMM) have decided to boycott ships carrying arms destined for Morocco and right-wing governments in Latin America and southern Africa following disclosures in the press of Spain's growing rôle in the international arms trade and opposition pressure for increased parliamentary control. The boycott embraces Spanish-registered vessels and vessels carrying a Spanish crew as well as arms transported by sea between Spanish ports where part of such shipments may reasonably be believed to be destined for the blacked countries.

PERSONALIA

Richard Müller has been elected president of the Swiss Trade Union Confederation (SGB) in succession to Ezio Canonica, who died last January.

Helga Kohler, president of the Women's Committee of the Swiss Trade Union Confederation, has been elected as the first woman vice-president of the SGB.

John F. Peterpaul, vice-president of the US International Association of Machinists and a member of the ITF Executive Board, has been re-elected chairman of the Railway Labor Executives' Association.

Fred Kroll, president of the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, has been re-elected RLEA vice-chairman and Ole M. Berge, the newly-elected president of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, has been elected on to the board for the first time in succession to former Brotherhood president Harold Crotty, now retired.

Kenneth Rathbone, editor of "The Telegraph", the newspaper of the British Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association, retired recently after twenty years spent editing MNAOA publications.

Heikki Santala has been appointed director of activities of the Finnish Radio Officers' Union.

Markus Sinisalo has been appointed director of activities of the Finnish Ships' Officers' Union.

Aage Sørensen celebrated 25 years' service with the Danish Engineer Officers' Association as organization secretary on 20 October.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ground Staff Committee | London 23-25 January 1979 |
| Sub-Committee on Transport Policy | Luxembourg, 29-30 January 1979 |
| Railwaymen's Section Conference | London, 3-4 April 1979 |
| Road Transport Workers' Section Conference | Stuttgart, 24-26 April 1979 |
| Civil Aviation Section Conference | Paris, 28-31 May 1979 |

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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