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IN THIS ISSUE

Page

News and Views from the ITF

ITF mobilizes international support for striking British steelmen 2

Transport

Australian Arbitration Court supports union demand for a Radio Officer to be carried on the Sid McGrath 2

Irish judicial inquiry into loss of Betelgeuse ends 3

Canadian and US unions sign important new manning agreements 3

Scandinavian airline pilots seek safer aircraft seats 4

Trade Unions

ICFTU lodges formal complaint against government of Argentina 4

Danish radio officers adopt statements on training and radio safety on Greenland 5

Danish ships' engineers' union to merge with metal workers 5

OeTV wins representation for workers on Board of Directors of Kühne und Nagel (Germany) 6

TGWU wins negotiating rights for BP operating staff at Sullom Voe terminal in Shetlands (Great Britain) 6

Amnesty International calls for an end to suppression of human rights in Guatemala 6

Social and Industrial News

New rates of pay for Belgian inland navigation workers 8

Improvements for Sabena ground staff (Belgium) 8

French air traffic controllers decide not to re-impose work to rule 8

British shipowners refuse to re-open officers' pay talks 9

Lowestoft trawler officers' strike (Great Britain) 9

Award for Phillips Petroleum offshore workers (Great Britain) 9

British haulage men settle for 20 per cent pay rise 9

British tanker drivers accept new pay deal 10

New agreement for crews of Greek ocean-going cargo vessels 10

Spanish national dock strike 10

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<i>UTU strikes Long Island Rail Road (United States)</i>	11
<u><i>News in Brief</i></u>	11
<u><i>Obituary</i></u>	12
<u><i>Personalia</i></u>	13
<u><i>Forthcoming Meetings</i></u>	13

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

GREAT BRITAIN

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ITF mobilizes international support for striking British steelmen

A strike of British Steel workers began on 2 January following the rejection by the steelworkers' unions of a wage offer from the management which would have represented a substantial reduction in real wages and a further loss of jobs in an industry already threatened with mass reductions in the workforce.

The strike, which is still continuing, has the full support of the British trade union movement and the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), to which the steelworkers' unions belong. The ITF has lent its backing to the IMF call to secure the cessation of all steel exports to Great Britain for the duration of the strike and ITF affiliates have been asked to use all the means at their disposal to ensure that no steel is moved through their respective countries to Great Britain.

Their action has been outstandingly successful and supplies of steel to Great Britain have virtually dried up. What steel has reached this country is now impounded in the docks and will only be released when the strike has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

TRANSPORT

AUSTRALIA

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Arbitration Court supports union demand for a Radio Officer to be carried on the Sid McGrath

The ITF-affiliated Professional Radio and Electronics' Institute of Australasia has been encountering difficulties with the John Burke shipping company, which - in 1978 - obtained an exemption from the SOLAS requirement to carry a radio officer on the 2,414 grt Sid McGrath on the basis of an exemption granted some years earlier in respect of another of its ships, the John Burke. (On this occasion, the exemption was granted on the grounds that the vessel was under 1,600 grt, although an unimpeachable source records the vessel as being of 1,661 grt.) The Institute imposed a radio blackout from Australian coast stations on the Sid McGrath's maiden voyage from Japan in June 1978 and another ITF affiliate,

the Federated Marine Stewards' and Pantrymen's Association, promptly agreed to withdraw its members from the vessel until assured by the Institute of the vessel's radio safety. The Institute was rightly unwilling to give any such assurance as long as there was no R/O on board, and the company took the matter to the Australian Arbitration Court.

On 22 August 1979, the Court issued its judgment -- after a trial period, dating from the end of the vessel's maiden voyage, with a R/O aboard -- directing the company to include such an officer as a member of the crew. The Institute is understandably pleased that the Court's verdict has fully vindicated its stance. Nevertheless, it regrets that, while the company agreed to carry a radio officer for the purpose of the tests, it failed to provide accommodation of a reasonable standard and a hard-lying allowance is being claimed for each man rostered to the vessel since July 1978.

IRISH REPUBLIC

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Irish judicial inquiry into loss of Betelgeuse ends

The Irish government inquiry into the Betelgeuse tanker disaster, in which 50 men were killed off Whiddy Island in Bantry Bay in January 1979,^{x)} has now concluded. The inquiry was the longest in Irish legal history and heard evidence for 71 days. It is expected to be some months before the official report of the investigation into the fire and explosions aboard the Total tanker as it ballasted at the Gulf Oil terminal is published.

x) see ITF Newsletter No. 2 of 1979, page 20

NORTH AMERICA

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Canadian and US unions sign important new manning agreements

Two ITF affiliates - the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association and the Seafarers' International Union of North America - have signed breakthrough agreements with the El Paso Marine Company to man three Liberian-flag LNG carriers with American officers and ratings. The unions interpret the agreement as a vote of confidence in the skills of US merchant seamen and a clear rebuttal of the much-heard argument that US crews have priced themselves out of the market. Undoubtedly, El Paso's experience with its three sister US-flag and US-manned LNG carriers influenced the company to hire more American crews.

Meanwhile, the Seafarers' International Union of Canada and the Canadian Merchant Service Guild (also affiliated) have entered into a three-year contract with the Maple Leaf shipping company of Vancouver to provide 108 officers and ratings for three Pa bulk carriers, one of which operates between British Columbia and California and two other **new** buildings due to join the fleet later this year. The Great Lakes shipping company, Hall Corporation Shipping Ltd. of Montreal has purchased the Li chemical tanker BIRK from Odfjell of Norway and is now operating the vessel, renamed the COASTAL TRANSPORT, with Canadian crews from these two unions.

SCANDINAVIA

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Airline pilots seek safer aircraft seats

The Danish and Norwegian pilots' associations have written to the Scandinavian Airlines System asking the company to give urgent consideration to the question of replacing present aircraft seats, which pose a serious fire hazard, with seats made of flame-retardant material. The pilots stress that both parties are equally concerned about the safety aspects and that there is no question of SAS being reluctant to undertake such a replacement. British tests on aircraft seats which - like those used by SAS - have polystyrene foam upholstery, have shown that, when set alight, they flare up immediately, producing flames of up to 12 metres in height and temperatures of between 1,000°C and 1,200°C. The pilots say that what is now needed is detailed research aimed at finding a suitable replacement material.

TRADE UNIONS

ARGENTINA

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ICFTU lodges formal complaint against government of Argentina

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has lodged a formal complaint with the International Labour Office against the government of Argentina, which it accuses - in promulgating a new law restricting freedom of organization and collective bargaining - of blatantly contravening ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98. The new legislation, which came into effect on 15 November, has led to the forcible disbanding of the national centre (the CGT), now outlawed. Legal recognition may be conferred only on provincial and regional organizations, although these are subject to severe restrictions on their freedom of action, and, again according to its provisions, trade union officials must have the approval of the employer before they may be elected. Trade union property has also been placed under the control of the state.

DENMARK

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Radio officers adopt statements on training and radio safety on Greenland

The 15th Ordinary Congress of the ITF-affiliated Danish Radio Officers' Association, held on 4 and 5 December 1979, adopted statements on the training of radio officers and radio safety on Greenland. The first statement established that the introduction of a general certificate for radio officers had failed to provide the improved instruction in practical radioelectronics necessary for officers to be able to locate and rectify faults in the modern radio equipment they use. It also noted that a training course leading to the proposed state examination for radio electronics officers was - according to the Maritime Training Institute - unlikely to receive official funding. The statement therefore advocated that an official state certificate in radio electronics be introduced, using some existing training courses and modifying others. The statement called on the union's executive to approach the Institute and ask it to introduce a trial course on these lines.

The statement further suggested that the executive committee should approach the Danish Shipowners' Association with the request that an in-service training committee be established for the purpose of enabling certificated radio officers to gain additional qualifications.

The second statement emphasized the importance of radio safety on Greenland, where adverse weather conditions and the widely-scattered population posed serious problems. It was essential that coastal radio stations should have both radio-telephony and radiotelegraphy capable of operating on both low and high frequencies. The statement advocated a more tightly knit network of stations to avoid the radio "blackouts", which prevent radiocommunications at certain times.

Notwithstanding, the authorities had closed many stations and had based its radio safety services on a limited number of stations, through which advanced transmitters and receivers are remote-controlled.

The meeting therefore called on the authorities to re-open the stations it had closed down before it was too late.

Ships' engineers' union to merge with metal workers

The ITF-affiliated Danish Engine Crew Union (Maskinbesaetningsforbund) is to merge with the Danish Metal Workers' Union. An extraordinary Congress of the Maskinbesaetningsforbund will be held in the spring and the formal merger is expected to take place later this year, with the Engine Crew Union forming an independent section within the Metal Workers.

GERMANY

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OeTV wins representation for workers on Board of Directors of Kühne und Nagel

The provincial court in Bremen has ruled that the 3,800 plus employees of Kühne und Nagel in the German Federal Republic have a right to representation along with shareholders on the Board of Directors of the Forwarding Company, which has its administrative headquarters in Bremen and which although nominally having no employees effectively controls the forwarding activities of Kühne u. Nagel. The case was taken up two years ago by the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) after Kühne und Nagel had refused to allow employee elections to the Board to proceed as laid down in the 1976 Law on Co-Determination (Mitbestimmungsgesetz).

GREAT BRITAIN

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TGWU wins negotiating rights for BP operating staff at Sullom Voe terminal in Shetlands

The ITF-affiliated British Transport and General Workers' Union has won full negotiating rights for 170 operating staff below the rank of foreman at BP's Sullom Voe terminal in the Shetlands. The union is now seeking to bring pay rates more nearly into line with those of its members at the Occidental terminal at Flotta in the Orkneys, where a senior operator currently earns £12,000. BP has already agreed to backdate any settlement to the beginning of the year.

GUATEMALA

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Amnesty International calls for an end to suppression of human rights in Guatemala

An Amnesty International mission, including Dan Gallin, general secretary of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations, visited Guatemala in August 1979 to investigate the alarming upsurge in the country in recent months of kidnappings, "disappearances" and political murder of trade unionists, academics, lawyers, peasants, opposition politicians and church leaders. Meetings were held with high-ranking government officials, including the Vice-President of the Republic, and Fernando Alvarez de Miranda, a former President of the Spanish Cortes and a member of the mission, was able to hold separate talks with the president of the Guatemalan legislature. Meetings also took place with representatives of the threatened groups.

"Disappearances" - frequently followed by torture or mutilation and often leading to death - and political murder have been long-term problems in Guatemala. But with the recent emergence of a new semi-clandestine death squad calling itself the Ejército Secreto Anticomunista (ESA), which has published lists of persons whom it has "tried and sentenced to death", matters have taken a turn very much for the worse. Some of the persons named by ESA have been assassinated and the bodies of murder victims are discovered daily throughout the country, bearing marks of violence. According to Amnesty's own monitoring of a variety of sources, including the Guatemalan and the international press, there have been well over 2,000 such deaths in the past 18 months. Leaders and supporters of political parties intending to contest the 1982 elections and active trade unionists have been among the prime targets for intimidation and assassination.

The mission's report finds that "to be a trade union leader or active member of a trade union in Guatemala today means risking one's life". From July 1978 to October 1979 -- that is the period during which the present government has held office -- 12 trade unionists have been assassinated and a further 9 kidnapped. Systematic union-busting tactics used by both government and employers include long delays in granting official recognition to trade unions, the cancellation of the legal status of unions that oppose government policies, massive dismissals of active trade unionists, the creation of "yellow" (company) unions, and false plant closures, whereby a plant is closed down and a new non-unionised labour force engaged when it re-opens with another name. As a result of these activities, the National Confederation of Workers (CNT) has lost 21 out of a total of 56 affiliated organizations between 1978 and 1979.

The report concludes that the government should do everything within its power to ensure that tension in the country is alleviated and that those clauses of the Guatemalan Constitution which protect the rights of trade unionists and members of political parties are duly observed. Guatemala should also stand by its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 on basic trade union freedoms. The report urges full and fair investigation of all charges of elementary rights abuses and calls on the Guatemalan government to give wide publicity to any steps taken to extend the presently limited rights of its citizens. The mission has also asked the government to invite the Organisation of American States to visit Guatemala to investigate allegations that the authorities are unable or unwilling to put an end to the current situation of uncontrolled violence.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

BELGIUM

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New rates of pay for inland navigation workers

The ITF-affiliated Belgian Transport Workers' Union (BTB) has negotiated new monthly rates of pay for its members in inland navigation, which came into effect on 1 December 1979. Skippers rates of pay now range from 26,310 to 38,599 B frs, depending on the size of vessel and type of navigation; certificated mates receive 28,033 B frs on vessels up to 1,000 tons and 28,525 B frs on larger vessels and uncertificated mates 27,294 and 27,539 B frs respectively.

Able seamen now have a salary range of 22,627 to 25,575 B frs, depending on size of vessel and type of navigation, and ships' boys with more than one year's service get from 19,950 to 22,160 B frs.

Improvements for Sabena ground staff

Major improvements in pay and conditions have been obtained by the ITF-affiliated Belgian Metal Workers' Union for ground staff employed by the national airline Sabena. These include: a revised salary structure; a reduction in the working week from 40 to 38 hours without loss of pay with effect from 1 October 1979 (this to be granted in the form of $\frac{1}{2}$ day's leave every 2 weeks or 1 full day every 4 weeks); and an end-of-year bonus of 14,000 B frs for 1980. Sabena has agreed to enter into negotiations next year on a possible further reduction in working hours.

FRANCE

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Air traffic controllers decide not to re-impose work to rule

The unions involved in the recent work to rule by air traffic controllers have held a series of meetings with the French Minister of Transport and, although they have not yet been able to negotiate a satisfactory settlement, have nonetheless decided not to reimpose industrial sanctions^{x)}.

x) see ITF Newsletter No. 11, 1979, page 128 and No. 12, 1979, page 136 for earlier details

GREAT BRITAIN

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Shipowners refuse to re-open officers' pay talks

The General Council of British Shipping has refused the request made by the merchant navy officers' unions - in an effort to improve their 1979 pay settlement^{x)} - that talks should be re-opened on the possibility of consolidating existing pay supplements into basic rates. The shipowners now regard the pay round as concluded and the one way now open for the unions would be to seek to persuade shipowners to proceed with consolidation of the extra money on a company by company basis.

x) see ITF Newsletter No. 12 of 1979, page 137 for details of offer

Lowestoft trawler officers' strike

Skippers and mates on trawlers operating out of Lowestoft have been on strike since the beginning of the year, seeking fall-back pay of £20 for both ranks. The owners' latest offer, which has been rejected by the ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association, is £15 for mates and £17.50 for skippers. As the dispute shows no signs of reaching an early conclusion, officers on board North Sea oil safety stand-by vessels based in Lowestoft - also MNAOA members - have been asked for their support.

The local owners' association has agreed to discuss changes in the method of paying trawler officers, who are currently remunerated according to the net value of the catch, but negotiations will not begin until the end of January and any settlement would not be implemented before March. Early in the dispute, the owners' association undertook to recognize the union, but this offer is now understood to have been withdrawn.

Award for Phillipps Petroleum offshore workers

The ITF-affiliated Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs has secured an arbitration award for 80 Phillipps Petroleum offshore workers at Great Yarmouth, under which they receive: 11.4% salary rise; 17% increase in shift pay (to £1,017); 35% increase in the bonus rate paid for working offshore (to £1,283). Additional money (of between 6.5% and 13%) has been obtained following the company's agreement that full pay increments will be restored. All increases have been backdated to July 1979.

Haulage men settle for 20 per cent pay rise

In negotiations with the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union, the Road Haulage Association has agreed to raise the basic rate for drivers of the heaviest goods vehicles to between £76 and £78 per week, with corresponding increases of approximately 20 per cent for those driving smaller lorries^{x)}.

Subsistence rates and holiday pay have also been improved. Negotiations are still continuing in the London Metropolitan area, which has a later settlement date.

x) see ITF Newsletter No. 10 of 1979, page 113 for earlier details

Tanker drivers accept new pay deal

Texaco, Esso and BP tanker drivers have now accepted broadly similar pay offers of around 22 per cent. Shell drivers are currently being balloted and are expected to accept the company's latest offer.

GREECE
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New agreement for crews of ocean-going cargo vessels

After months of hard bargaining, the ITF-affiliated Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO) has signed a new one-year agreement, backdated to 1 October, on behalf of the crews of ocean-going cargo vessels over 4,500 dwt. Under the agreement, officers' rates are increased by 20 and ratings' rates by 25 per cent; the 40-hour week comes into force on 1 September 1980; overtime rates are improved by 5.5% from 1 October 1979 and by 11% from 1 September 1980; the bonus rate for Sunday work is raised from 15 to 16 per cent; the daily subsistence allowance is increased to 180 Drs (previously 125 Drs); and annual leave goes up by 5 days to 55 days. Sample new monthly basic rates are as follows: chief engineer - Drs 45,480; chief mate - Drs 29,754; AB - Drs 18,369.

SPAIN
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National dock strike

Ports throughout Spain were paralyzed by two national dock strikes called by the trade unions representing the country's 13,500 dockers^{x)} for 21 and 27/28 December in protest at government plans to hand over the running of the harbours to private enterprise.

x) including the ITF-affiliated Transport Workers' Federation of UGT

UNITED STATES
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UTU strikes Long Island Rail Road

The ITF-affiliated United Transportation Union called a strike against the Long Island Rail Road last month after failing to reach agreement with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which operates the commuter line, on the terms of a new three-year agreement for its members, who had been working without a contract since 31 December 1978. UTU picket lines were observed by members of the sixteen other unions with members working for Long Island, and four of these subsequently joined the strike.

A federal emergency board has now been appointed to investigate the dispute and make recommendations for a settlement. Meanwhile, normal working has been resumed.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Formal plans have been drawn up for the amalgamation of the Seamen's Union of Australia and the Marine Cooks', Bakers' and Butchers' Association.

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

Because of British Rail's cash-flow problems consolidation of the remaining £2 per week of an existing pay supplement will not take place until March, although payment will be backdated to 1 January 1980. The three rail unions have reluctantly agreed to the delay.

British Airways engineers and maintenance workers, including members of the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union, refused to report for shift duty on three successive days earlier this month in support of a 25 per cent pay claim.

Ground staff members of the Greek Federation of Foreign Airline Employees staged a 48-hour strike late last month in support of demands for higher salaries and improved allowances and pensions.

Irish workers staged a further national protest on 22 January with the aim of persuading the government to revise the current PAYE income tax system.

The Irish national transport authority (CIE) has been found guilty, under the 1977 Employment Equality Act, of unlawfully discriminating against women seeking employment as bus conductors. Following an investigation by the Employment Equality Agency, the CIE has recruited 20 female bus conductors in Dublin and a number of women candidates have been accepted for conductors' jobs in Cork.

A general strike was called by Italy's three main trade union federations on 15 January to protest against the government's economic policies.

The Dutch government has imposed a two-month pay freeze to give itself time to draw up plans for dealing with the country's economic problems. Unions and employers had opposed any intervention by the government in wage bargaining as they viewed this as a threat to their autonomy.

TAP flight engineers in Portugal called off their strike on 20 December after achieving a new pay and conditions agreement (see ITF Newsletter No. 12 of 1979, page 137).

Ground staff of the Portuguese national airline TAP staged a 24-hour strike on 28 December in protest at the management's unwillingness to operate a job reclassification scheme agreed in August.

The United States government has decided to retain 60 as the mandatory retirement age for commercial airline pilots, although a study will be undertaken to determine whether the age limit should be raised in the future.

Mechanics and allied workers employed by the new US airline company Republic Airlines (formed by the merger of North Central Airlines and Southern Airways) have voted for representation by the ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

OBITUARY

George Meany, president of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations from its creation in 1955 until his retirement at the AFL-CIO Convention last November, died on 10 January, aged 85.

PERSONALIA

We extend our most sincere congratulations to ITF President Fritz Prechtl who has been awarded the Grand Medal of Honour for Services to the Republic of Austria.

Al Chesser retired at the end of 1979 from the presidency of the US United Transportation Union. He is succeeded by Frank A. Hardin.

Hardy Hansen has been elected president of the Danish Transport and General Workers' Union (SiD) in succession to the late Knud Ellegaard. Ib Schelde has been elected to the union's vice-presidency.

Emil Strasser retired as central secretary of the Austrian Transport and Commercial Workers' Union (HTV) at the end of last year, after almost nine years in office. Brother Strasser serves as his country's deputy on the Committees of the ITF Road Transport Workers' and Seafarers' Sections. He is succeeded in his union post by Walter Darmstädter, previously the HTV's Transport Secretary. Brother Darmstädter serves on the Committee of the ITF Seafarers' and Inland Navigation Sections and is also a substitute member of the Dockers' and Civil Aviation Section Committees.

Jack Wrighton has retired from his post as divisional secretary of the British Transport Salaried Staffs' Association. He is succeeded by Valentine Birnie.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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ITF ad Hoc Committee on ICAO Annex I	- London, 5-6 February 1980
Cabin Crew Technical Committee	- Frankfurt, 14-15 February 1980
Asian Seafarers' Conference	- Hong Kong, 28 February - 3 March 1980
Executive Board	- London, 18-19 March 1980
Fair Practices Committee	- London, 22-23 May 1980
ITF 33rd Congress	- Miami, 17-25 July 1980

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