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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

AFRICA

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Second ITF African Civil Aviation Conference held in Lomé

Lomé, capital of Togo, was the venue last month for the ITF's Second African Regional Civil Aviation Conference. Six countries in the Region had sent delegates and the participants included a significant number of female trade unionists. Leading officials of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and the Togo national centre (CNTT), as well as the Togo Deputy Minister of Transport addressed the formal sessions of the Conference; Frank Waldner and Ben Sharman of the US International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, co-sponsor with the ITF of the event, also attended and lectured to the participants, as did ITF Regional Representative Ben Udogwu, who had been responsible for the organizational work.

The general discussions were based on country reports incorporating the replies to questionnaires on working conditions and trade union organization and industrial relations that had been sent out prior to the conference and the meeting ended with the adoption of conclusions on employment security and trade union rights; occupational safety and health; and technological developments in civil aviation. The delegates expressed their complete confidence in the ITF's Civil Aviation Section and pledged themselves to the ideals of the international trade union movement, while calling on African affiliates generally to play a bigger rôle in the work of the ITF.

The local Togolese civil aviation unions won praise for their warm hospitality and delegates thanked their hosts for giving them such a valuable opportunity to air their problems.

EUROPE

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ITF deputation granted hearing by European shipping ministers

Ake Selander, ITF Assistant General Secretary and Brian Laughton, Secretary of the ITF's Special Seafarers' Department headed a deputation of European seafarers which gathered in Paris on 26th January 1982 on the occasion of the Second Regional Conference of Ministers on Maritime Safety for the purpose of bringing home to the ministers the seafarers' concern that any new regional agreement on inspections of substandard ships should not be regarded as a substitute for action against flag of convenience ships, and that any improved port inspection standards must be backed up by the necessary manpower and other resources.

The deputation was received in the morning by the French Minister of the Sea, Louis Le Pensec, and later on were granted a hearing before all the ministers taking part in the conference. The ITF Assistant General Secretary read a statement (see Supplement) and expressed the hope that in the context of port state control governments would pay more attention in the future to the economic and social conditions aboard substandard ships. He also underlined the need for governments to ratify maritime conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and to take positive action with a view to facilitating the adoption of further ILO standards for seafarers in the economic and social field.

Seafarers from Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom participated in the Paris demonstration.

LATIN AMERICA

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3rd Latin American Transport Workers' Conference held in Caracas

Over one hundred delegates from throughout Latin America assembled in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas from 16 to 20 November 1981 where they attended the 3rd Latin American Transport Workers' Conference. The Venezuelan Transport Workers' Federation hosted the Conference and one of the principal speakers was its President Humberto Hernandez, a life-long trade unionist who was to die so sadly barely a month after this important regional gathering. ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis participated and addressed the delegates at the formal opening session, as also did the President of the Venezuelan Confederation of Labour (CTV) and the Venezuelan Minister of Labour. The conference had been organized by ITF Regional Director Medardo Gomero and it was thanks to his capable administration that the participants were able to deal so effectively with a very heavy agenda in the time allotted to them and that the Conference was such an outstanding success.

Delegates reviewed the situation of the trade unions in the various countries in the Region and expressed concern at the restrictions on trade union freedoms that existed in so many parts of the sub-continent. There was a valuable exchange of information on pay and conditions of work in the Latin American transport industry and special attention was devoted to the position of women transport workers, with discussions centring on equal rights and opportunities and the participation of women in the trade unions.

The business concluded with the discussion and adoption of resolutions on a wide range of subjects. Principal among these were resolutions calling on ITF affiliates worldwide to persuade their respective governments that they should have no dealings whatsoever with the dictatorships in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Guatemala; urging the ITF to institute measures of solidarity with affiliates in and the working people of El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua; and expressing

support for Chilean dockers, who had been deprived by decree of their right to permanent employment, and demanding the release from gaol of four of their leaders. The meeting deplored the plight of Latin American seafarers on f-o-c vessels and this was reflected in resolutions calling on the ITF Special Seafarers' Department to consider the introduction of a minimum wage for seafarers from the Region serving in these vessels and seeking an intensification of the Campaign in Latin America and an increase in the number of ITF Ship Inspectors. Several resolutions with special reference to the interests of women transport workers were also adopted, as was a resolution recommending Latin American dockers' unions to impress on their governments the need to ratify the 1973 ILO Dock Work Convention.

The delegates paid tribute at the close of the meeting to their Venezuelan hosts, thanking them for the generous hospitality extended to them throughout their five-day stay.

SOUTH AFRICA
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South Africa charges Seychelles mercenaries with hijacking

All 45 mercenaries, who took part in the recent abortive coup in the Seychelles, were arrested earlier this month by the South African police and formally charged with four offences under the Civil Aviation Offences Act. They have since been released on bail and will stand trial in the Natal Supreme Court on 10 March. The South African government's action comes more than a month after its original decision to charge - and then with the lesser offence of kidnapping - only five of the mercenaries, who had hijacked an Air India Boeing from Mahé airport to Durban. This led to fierce criticism from the international community, not least from the ITF.^{x)}

^{x)} see ITF Newsletter No. 12, 1981, page 137

TRADE UNIONS

INTERNATIONAL
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AFL-CIO rejoins ICFTU

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) formally rejoined the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions on 1 January. The procedure

was set in motion by the AFL-CIO Congress last November, when it voted in favour of a return to the ICFTU, which the American unions had left in 1969.

FRANCE

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French unions merge in new Federation

Three French FO trade union federations - those of public service and transport workers, dock and allied workers, and merchant navy officers and ratings - met in Pradet (near Toulon) last November where they each held their separate two-day Congresses before dissolving and merging the following day in the French Federation of Public Service and Port, Maritime and Transport Workers, FO. It is hoped that the merger, plans for which were laid some three years ago, will enable the new Federation to defend more effectively the interests of its combined membership. Good wishes for its success were brought to the founding Congress from other French transport workers' unions, who will continue to work closely with the officials of the new Federation, which will be led by Yves Lequoy (formerly of the public service and transport workers, and a member of the ITF Executive Board), who will have as his deputy Jean Duniau (formerly of the dock and allied workers).

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

FRANCE

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Strike of Air France and Air Inter flight deck crews

As mentioned briefly in our last issue (pages 144 and 146), Air France and Air Inter pilots and flight engineers staged a two-day strike shortly before Christmas in protest at Air France's decision to purchase 12 Boeing 737s and operate them from 1983 with 2-man flight deck crews. New negotiations have now begun with the companies on the crew complement issue and if these fail to make any headway further industrial action will be taken. The ITF has already passed on thanks to those aviation affiliates who, by refusing to operate substitute services, helped make the protest strike an outstanding success.

UTA flight deck crews were to have taken part, but prior to the strike date the flight engineers and pilots' unions reached agreement with the company guaranteeing three-man operation of its aircraft for at least the next ten years.

Shorter working week for Paris bus and Metro workers

Under a new agreement signed on behalf of 36,000 underground and bus workers in Paris the working week has been reduced to 39 hours from 1 January and will be further reduced by one hour from 1 December 1982. The number of rest days will also be increased by 6½ days on 1 January and 1 December to give a new total of 104 days per year. It is estimated that the shorter working week and other measures that are to be taken to improve services will lead to the creation of an extra 1,830 jobs.

GERMANY

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4.8% increase for dock workers

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) has signed a new one-year agreement on behalf of the country's dock workers. This gives a 4.8% increase in pay and allowances and a rise in holiday pay from 300 to 500 DM (holiday pay will not now be revised before 1985).

GREAT BRITAIN

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Senlac sit-in continues

Officers and ratings began a sit in on the SENLAC car ferry in Newhaven on 5 January in protest at British Rail's plans to axe the Newhaven-Dieppe Sealink service after it failed to reach agreement with its French counterpart, the French National Railways (SNCF), which operates two of the three ferries on the route, on a new pooling agreement. Withdrawal of the SENLAC would have meant the loss of all 200 jobs on board the vessel and of 40 jobs at the Newhaven terminal. The sit-in, which is still continuing, has the backing of the ITF's three British maritime affiliates - the National Union of Seamen, the Radio and Electronic Officers' Union and the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association.

On 7 January, the MNAOA, angered by British Rail's failure to consult its workers on planned reductions in its ferry services, called a strike throughout Sealink UK. The strike progressively tied up virtually the entire fleet and was only called off after talks at Sealink's London Headquarters produced an agreement that the redundancy notices to the Senlac officers would be withdrawn to allow time for further negotiations; that a three-month consultation period would be introduced for officers under threat of redundancy at Harwich; that the union would be given information on company reorganization plans;

and that plans for further vessel withdrawals would be put on ice for three months. Sealink has indicated that it is prepared to introduce an automatic three-month consultation period in the event that further redundancies become necessary.

A subsequent meeting in Paris between Sealink, the SNCF and French and British maritime unions over the future of the Newhaven-Dieppe route has failed to provide a solution. Meanwhile, NUS General Secretary Jim Slater has said that the union will fight Sealink attempts to sell off British ships as part of what the union fears could become a sweeping rationalization programme.

Thomas Cook staff get five per cent pay rise

The ITF-affiliated Transport Salaried Staffs' Association has negotiated the following substantial improvements for its members employed by Thomas Cook: five per cent pay rise from 1 November 1981 (with the possibility of a further salary review in six months if the company's trading position improves); shorter working week of 37 hours; increased annual leave entitlements for junior staff and lower management grades.

Improvements have also been obtained in respect of London Weighting,^{x)} with the Inner London allowance being increased from £1,050 to £1,142 and the Outer London allowance raised to £486 (from £444).

x) the special cost-of-living allowance applied to those working in London with its higher living costs

Pay rise for tanker drivers

Tanker drivers employed by Shell, Esso, BP and Texaco have all accepted an 8.1 per cent pay offer. Drivers with the only other major oil company - Mobil - were awarded an 11 per cent increase last May.

GREECE
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New pay agreement narrows pay differentials

A new pay agreement for officers and ratings on cargo vessels over 4,500 tons deadweight has been concluded by the ITF-affiliated Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation (PNO). The agreement narrows pay differentials - ratings get a 22% increase, while officers' pay (with the exception of that of chief engineers - they get 6% for the first five months of the agreement, followed by 3% for the remaining seven months, plus 4.33 daily wages per month for Saturdays spent at sea) rises by 19%. An allowance of 20% of basic now applies for Sundays spent at sea and leave will be at the rate of 8 days per month worked, giving

an annual entitlement of 96 days' paid leave. Other improvements include: a daily subsistence allowance of 300 drachmas (up 50 drachmas) and an increase in the allowance paid to certificated ratings from 1,500 to 2,500 drachmas.

PORTUGAL

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Dock strike called off

Members of the ITF-affiliated Portuguese Dock Workers' Federation called off an eight-day strike on 26 January after accepting a pay offer of approximately 20 per cent.

The ports of Lisbon, Leixoes, Oporto and Setubal were affected by the strike, as were the Atlantic islands of Madeira and the Azores.

SWITZERLAND

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New agreement for Swissair ground staff

The Civil Aviation Section of the ITF-affiliated Swiss Public Service Workers' Union (VPOD) has signed a new collective contract for its ground staff members with the national carrier Swissair. Improvements include: 7.3% cost-of-living allowance from 1 January; minimum annual leave entitlement of 4 weeks (previously staff under 29 had only 3 weeks 3 days); 4 francs per hour allowance for regular Sunday, Public Holiday and night shift work; and improved stand-by allowances (15 francs - 20.00-08.00; 20 francs - 08.00-20.00; 35 francs - Sundays, Public Holidays and free days between 08.00 and 20.00).

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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We hope to be able to give details in our next issue of the international campaign launched by Amnesty International to publicize the issue of "disappearances", i.e. when opponents of dictatorships are simply made to "disappear" and relatives and friends are kept in ignorance of their fate. The ITF has given general support to the work of Amnesty in its efforts over the twenty years of its existence to combat the violation of human rights around the world, and earlier this month affiliates were asked to help ensure that the working group of the UN Commission on Human Rights that was set up specifically to deal with the issue of "disappearances" - its future existence is under some threat - was allowed to continue with its vital work.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Australia: as part of a cost-cutting exercise, Qantas has lowered the retirement age of its ground staff from 60 to 55. The airline has about 20 pilots on one year's and 100 cabin staff on three months unpaid leave.

The Finnish trade union confederation SAK celebrates its 75th anniversary this year.

Greece: a strike by ground staff personnel of almost all the foreign airlines in Athens was called off after substantial concessions were won on pay and fringe benefits.

Following the failure of the various parties to agree on the terms of a new National Understanding, pay rises in the Irish Republic for 1982 will now be determined at industry and company level.

Italian railway workers have reached tentative agreement on a new 3-year contract raising pay by 650,000 lire this year and 600,000 lire in 1983, and providing for automatic quarterly cost-of-living adjustments.

After two protest strikes by members of the ITF-affiliated Dockworkers' Union of Nigeria, a phased timetable for the registration of all dockers has been agreed.

By 1985, all Norwegian workers will get five weeks' annual leave. The current entitlement of 4 weeks will be raised by one day on 1 May.

Portugal: public transport workers in Lisbon staged a series of phased strikes in the first week of January in support of demands for a 30 per cent pay rise.

Spain: Iberia airline pilots have cancelled a one-week strike after reaching agreement with the carrier on the disputed question of salaries for 1981.

United States: a federal judge has found United Airlines, which enforced a no-marriage rule on female flight attendants between October 1965 and November 1968, guilty of illegal discrimination.

Zimbabwe: railway firemen struck at the beginning of January in protest at delays in submitting a pay claim to an industrial tribunal.

OBITUARIES

Adam Chisik, one of the leaders of the Israeli Sea Officers' Union and an ITF Ship Inspector in Israel, died on 27 December, aged 55, while on ITF business in Lisbon.

Tom O'Brien, the newly-elected Vice-President of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, died in November.

PERSONALIA

Erkki Aurtova has been appointed director of activities of the Finnish Engineer Officers' Union.

Jan Berghout has been appointed Director of the Department of International Transport Administration and Goods Transport of the Dutch Ministry of Transport and Public Works, with effect from 1 January 1982. Brother Berghout has been a leading Dutch transport trade unionist for a great many years and at the time of his government appointment was Vice-President of the Vervoersbond NKV and chairman of the road transport workers' section of the Vervoersbonden FNV. (He was also acting president of the Vervoersbonden FNV from 1980 to the autumn of 1981.) He has been a member of the Committee of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section since our Miami Congress and has successfully represented transport workers' interests at various sessions of the ILO. ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis has sent Brother Berghout warmest good wishes for success in his new function.

Knud Christensen has been appointed to succeed Thomas Nielsen as President of the Danish Trade Union Confederation LO when the latter retires next month. Finn Thorgrimson, formerly of the Danish Transport and General Workers' Union (SiD), will follow Christensen as vice-chairman. The 1983 LO Congress will be asked to confirm these appointments.

Donald Opmeer has succeeded W.Ch.van Zuylen as president of the Dutch Seafarers' Federation FWZ. Brother Opmeer has been the union's vice-president since 1967. A reception was held for the outgoing president Brother van Zuylen towards the end of last year. Brian Laughton, Secretary of the Special Seafarers' Department, attended on behalf of the ITF and presented Brother van Zuylen with an ITF plaque as a mark of our esteem and gratitude to a trade unionist who had given a lifetime of devoted service to Dutch and through the ITF to the world's seafarers.

T.I. ("Tas") Bull, Federal Organizer of the Australian Water-side Workers' Federation and former ITF Ship Inspector in Australia, is 50 on 31 January. Brother Bull also serves on the ITF Fair Practices Committee. All his friends in the ITF extend their best wishes to "Tas".

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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|--|-----------------------------------|
| Seafarers' Section Maritime Policy Committee | - Copenhagen, 22-23 February 1982 |
| Railwaymen's Section Conference | - Luxembourg, 23-25 February 1982 |
| Executive Board | - Sydney, 16-17 March 1982 |
| Seafarers' Section Training Committee | - London, 21 April 1982 |
| Seafarers' Section Conference | - London 22-23 April 1982 |
| Road Transport Workers' Section Conference | - Stockholm, 18-20 May 1982 |
| Travel Bureau Section Conference | - Stockholm, 14-16 June 1982 |

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY ITEM IN THIS NEWSLETTER MAY OBTAIN IT ON REQUEST FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ITF

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ITF SUPPORTS SOUTH AFRICAN DOCKERS' FIGHT FOR UNION RECOGNITION

In a cable to the General Manager of South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H)²) ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis has affirmed the ITF's support for its affiliate, the General Workers' Union of South Africa, and has called on him to reconsider his decision not to grant the GWU recognition as the official representative of shore-side dockers in South Africa. Similar messages have also been addressed to SAR&H from ITF affiliates worldwide.

The GWU has met with very considerable opposition from the company and the South African police ever since it started to press for recognition as the representative of South African shore-side dockers, who are employed by the state-owned South African Railways and Harbours. The dockers had been impressed by the GWU's success over the past few years in organizing stevedores, winning recognition for these members from the private stevedoring companies and improving their pay and conditions, and thus encouraged a substantial proportion of the SAR&H workers in East London and Port Elizabeth decided to join the GWU, followed by growing numbers of their fellow workers in Cape Town and Durban.

As soon as it had won a sizeable membership, the GWU approached the SAR&H management requesting talks. It was met with a curt rejection and an assertion that the workers' needs could be met by the "Black Staff Associations" - this is totally unacceptable to the dockers, who believe that the associations are under management influence. It is from this time that the intense harassment of the SAR&H workers dates. Scores of dockers have been threatened with dismissal or arrest, detained by the Railway Police for questioning and told that unless they joined a black staff association they would be replaced by workers recruited from the Bantustan ("homeland") of the Ciskei. Some of them have even had their homes searched by the police. But the most provocative action of all was the summary dismissal on 7 January, without explanation, of Jeremiah Tolwana, Chairman of the GWU members' Workers' Committee in Port Elizabeth.

There is good reason to believe that the SAR&H management is using this strategy to goad the GWU members into taking industrial action. This is expressly forbidden by law on SAR&H and so would attract "legal" reprisals. So far, the workers have refused to be drawn, and have continued to proclaim their open allegiance to the GWU, which they regard as their legal and moral right. Indeed, far from hiding their membership, they have insisted that the union provide the management with their names.

x) text attached

The GWU believes that the SAR&H, as the largest single employer of black labour in the country and an institution owned by the state itself, has a duty to set an example in the matter of trade union recognition. The union is ready at any time to enter into negotiations that would pave the way for a harmonious working relationship with those who employ its members. As recognition is central to good industrial relations, it is to be hoped that the union will not have long to wait for a positive response.

Annex

OUTGOING CABLE TO:

GENERAL MANAGER
SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS SAR
JOHANNESBURG 2000

GRAVELY DISTURBED AT MANAGEMENT AND POLICE PRESSURE AGAINST MEMBERS OF GENERAL WORKERS UNION IN PORT ELIZABETH AND EAST LONDON STOP CLEAR EVIDENCE OF ATTEMPTS TO DEPRIVE SAR&H PORT WORKERS OF THEIR RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AS LAID DOWN IN BASIC ILO CONVENTIONS .87 AND 98 AND TO COERCE THEM INTO JOINING BLACK STAFF ASSOCIATION WHICH GREAT MAJORITY REJECT AS NOT INDEPENDENT STOP GENERAL WORKERS UNION HAS DEMANDED MERELY DISCUSSIONS WITH MANAGEMENT WITHOUT ANY PRECONDITIONS AND SEEKS HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP SUCH AS THAT EXISTING WITH PRIVATE STEVEDORING COMPANIES STOP MANAGEMENT HOSTILE RESPONSE OF SUMMARY DISMISSAL OF UNION CHAIRMAN IN PORT ELIZABETH AND THREAT TO IMPORT UNORGANIZED WORKERS FROM CISKEI TO REPLACE UNION MEMBERS PLUS POLICE ACTION OF DETAINING UNION MEMBERS FOR QUESTIONING ARE BOUND TO RAISE FEELINGS AND COULD INDICATE INTENTION TO PROVOKE INDUSTRIAL ACTION WHICH WOULD BRING STERN REPRISALS STOP WORKERS ARE SIMPLY DEMANDING BASIC RIGHT TO BE REPRESENTED BY UNION OF THEIR CHOICE AND GOOD RELATIONS IN YOUR PORTS WILL BE IMMEASURABLY IMPROVED IF YOU RECOGNIZE THAT RIGHT AND DEAL WITH THEIR UNION ON OPEN AND FAIR BASIS STOP AS INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZATION FOR DOCKERS UNIONS THROUGHOUT FREE WORLD THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION (ITF) HAS PLEDGED ITS SUPPORT FOR GENERAL WORKERS UNION AND URGES YOU GIVE YOUR IMMEDIATE PERSONAL ATTENTION TO SITUATION NOW ESCALATING TO DANGER POINT BUT NOT YET BEYOND SAVING
HAROLD LEWIS GENERAL SECRETARY ITF+++

S T A T E M E N T

by the Seafarers' Unions of Europe

to the

Second Regional Conference of Ministers on Maritime Safety,

Paris 26 January 1982

The seafarers' unions of Europe, the great majority of which belong to the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), warmly welcome any efforts at inter-governmental level to improve safety standards at sea and in port. It is the seafarers who are the most tragic victims of a failure to apply the optimum safety standards and recent disasters have underlined the fatal hazards they face.

They are therefore concerned that the Second Regional Conference of Ministers on Maritime Safety should produce an effective safety inspection system for application to foreign ships calling at European ports. Anything less than the rigorous enforcement of the highest safety standards will be a betrayal of the trust which the international community, and seafarers in particular, have granted them.

It is essential that considerations of false economy and 'diplomacy' should have no place in the Ministers' thinking. Safety cannot be bought cheaply at the cost of lives and limbs. Some states, especially those offering a flag of convenience, may well be gravely embarrassed as port-state control bites; that is the price they have to pay for their irresponsibility.

The Ministers must also go on to tackle the question of flags-of-convenience as a whole. There is no solution to 'sub-standard' shipping for so long as the world's merchant fleet is dominated by owners flying false colours.

Flags-of-convenience are designed precisely to avoid obligations of every kind. If they fail to give the shipowner the free hand he prizes, then they cease to be 'convenient'. This issue cannot much longer be evaded by the European governments which see their national fleets shrinking by the day, as their owners go under to the competition from the flag-of-convenience owner who can hire-and-fire as he likes, who can cheat and exploit, who can switch flags at a whim and who in general enjoys a 'freedom' from legal and moral restraints which is unparalleled.

The seafarers' unions welcomed the adoption of ILO Convention No.147 and of other international instruments which enhance safety at sea. They have also given their full backing to the Committee on Shipping of UNCTAD in its efforts to end flags of convenience. They now call on the Governments of Europe to take immediate and effective steps to help eliminate flags of convenience by denying their use, directly or indirectly, to their nationals and by insisting on a genuine and beneficial link between ship and flag.

The seafarers' unions are eager to join with the European governments in an effort thus to bring back to the shipping industry the honesty and legality which it presently so lamentably lacks.

This statement is made with the support of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) of 133-135 Great Suffolk Street, London SE1, and the Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Community of 31-41 rue Montagne aux Herbes Potagères, B-1000 Brussels.