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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

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ITF Executive Board meets in Salzburg

The ITF Executive Board met on 15 and 16 March in Salzburg, Austria, at the invitation of the Austrian Railwaymen's Union. A meeting of the Management Committee also took place in Salzburg on 14 March.

The Board unanimously agreed to co-opt Jim Hunter (National President of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers) on to the Board to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement from office of Don Nicholson. Johnny Grönberg (President of the Swedish Transport Workers' Union) was also co-opted on to the Board in succession to Bertil Gustavsson, who is no longer president of the union.

The Board examined in detail a report on the ITF's activities since it had last met in October 1982 which included items on the settling of the El Al dispute, the hijacking of a Libyan aircraft to Malta and the dumping at sea of nuclear wastes. The Board was also informed of the outcome of the European Seafarers' Conference held earlier in the month as well as of the latest developments in the dispute between the South African General Workers' Union (GWU) and South African Transport Services (SATS). \* It further took note of recent developments in Ghana, Pakistan, Japan and Argentina and received extensive reports from ITF Regional Representatives Medardo Gomero (Latin America), M S Hoda (Asia) and Ben Udogwu (Africa) on general developments in their respective regions.

\* see item elsewhere in this Newsletter and NL Supplement No 2.

The Board gave detailed consideration to the ITF's present financial situation and went on to confirm its approval of the budgets for 1983. It also formally approved the submission of certain documents to Congress (these will be sent out shortly to all affiliates) and decided to set aside funds from which a measure of assistance could be given to affiliates in developing countries unable to meet the total cost of representation at Congress.

The Board approved applications for affiliation (subject to the satisfactory completion of any remaining formalities) from five unions in Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Portugal. The General Secretary also reported that an application had been received from the Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Trasporti FILT-CGIL. Since there had been no time to undertake any of the preliminary formalities, a decision on the application was deferred until the Board's next meeting.

The next meeting of the Board will take place on 18 and 19 October 1983 in Madrid immediately prior to Congress.

#### INTERNATIONAL

##### Steering Committee meets in Bavaria

Drivers and trade union officials from road transport workers' unions in Austria, Germany and Switzerland had been invited to take part in the meeting of the Steering Committee of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section held in Aschau (near Munich) at the end of last month under the chairmanship of Peter Küng of the Swiss Transport and Commercial Workers' Union. The three-day meeting discussed a whole range of issues connected with international road haulage and there was a lively exchange of experiences and information among the drivers present. The drivers were particularly appreciative of the part played by the unions in dealing promptly with difficulties as they arose.

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TRANSPORT

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UNITED STATES

Airline deregulation has been a "disaster" says Air Florida chairman

Donald Lloyd-Jones, chairman of Air Florida, has described plans to deregulate Britain's airline industry as a step towards "disaster", adding that the airline industry in the UK would go the same way as that in the US if the Conservative government insisted on pursuing an open skies policy.

Mr Lloyd-Jones attributed the rapidly accelerating losses of nearly all US carriers in recent years to the fares war unleashed by deregulation. Air Florida itself grew substantially in the early days of deregulation but has reported appalling financial results in the past four years.

The Air Florida boss said that "any honest person looking at the US experiment must conclude" that quality has declined, many destinations were less well served than before deregulation and fares were lower only on a few popular routes. He said that even if the much-heralded economic upturn materialized in the United States and demand picked up, deregulation "has been a disaster and will continue to be a disaster".

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TRADE UNIONS

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INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International issues May Day appeal on behalf of imprisoned trade unionists

Amnesty International has just issued this year's appeal on behalf of workers and trade unionists who, because of their activities in support of their fellow workers, are likely to spend May Day 1983 in prison. Amnesty's necessarily selective list of prisoners which accompanies the appeal has a wide geographical distribution and includes many workers and trade unionists serving prison terms, as well as others who are detained without trial, subject to banning orders or who have simply "disappeared" and whose situation is giving cause for concern.

Amnesty has further singled out three trade unionists - representative of many hundreds of others worldwide - known to have been killed by governments or with the complicity of governments. They are: Ana María Martínez of Argentina, a trade unionist and supporter of the Socialist Workers' Party, who was three months pregnant when she was abducted by the security forces (she was subsequently found buried in a Buenos Aires suburb); Juan Ramón Olivares Pérez of Chile, a former leader of CUT (the main trade union confederation before the 1973 coup, now banned), who disappeared in November 1980 and whose body showed signs of maltreatment when it was identified by his father two days later (Olivares had been shot by the Chilean secret police in mysterious circumstances that, to Amnesty's knowledge, have still not been satisfactorily explained) and a 23-year-old Indian radical student leader Peddi Shankar, who had been helping organize tribal people and poor farmers in Maharashtra state when he was shot dead in an alleged "encounter" with the state reserve police (witnesses stated that he had in fact been shot in the back by the police without him or his four companions having fired a shot).

Eight special appeal cases have also been selected for action on International Labour Day. They include a Peruvian peasant leader Florencio Torobeo and Alberto Altesor Gonzalez of Uruguay, a former railway worker, both with potentially life threatening health problems that are being aggravated by the extremely poor prison conditions in which they are known to be held. Also listed is Jiri Gruntorad, a Czech and Charter 77 signatory, who when he has completed a four-year term for producing and distributing uncensored material will be subject to official police surveillance for a further three years. Others on the list include a Pole, Tadeusz Kolodziejcki, a former Solidarity regional official and worker at the Ursus tractor factory, who is serving five years for organizing a sit-in strike at the factory and who is believed to be gradually losing his sight; and a Port Elizabeth branch official of the Motor Assemblers' and Component Workers' Union of South Africa, who is subject to a two-year banning order (effectively preventing him from working at General Motors where he was previously employed), although he has not been charged with any offence.

## EUROPE

### Trade Unions urge EEC governments to take measures to reduce jobless

At a shadow summit in Brussels - immediately prior to last month's economic summit of EEC Prime and Foreign Ministers in the same city - leaders of trade unions in the member countries of the Community meeting under the auspices of the European Trade Union Confederation decided on an eight-point plan for economic recovery designed to boost jobs. The trade union plan calls on the member countries of the EEC to introduce and coordinate substantial investment programmes to stimulate economic growth, as well as to take measures to reduce working hours and promote increased industrial democracy. The trade unions are also demanding that special attention be paid to the needs of youths and women - two groups that have been hit hardest by the current recession.

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## SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

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## DENMARK

### Railwaymen win pay increase

Central pay negotiations conducted on behalf of Danish railwaymen have resulted in the renewal of their collective agreement, which runs from 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1985. This provides for a general increase of 4,800 kr to be paid in four equal instalments on 1 April and 1 October 1983, and 1 April and 1 October 1984, together with a 1.33% increase in basic rates on each of these four dates. The social partners have also agreed that 0.6% of this total amount should be set aside to meet special needs (enabling some railwaymen to move up a grade) and a "wage drift" clause has also been negotiated to ensure that rates of pay do not fall behind those in the private sector.

### New agreement for ships' catering personnel

Negotiations on behalf of ships' catering personnel were concluded last month. Under the agreement signed by the ITF-affiliated Danish Ships' Catering Personnel Association the monthly rates of all grades (chief steward, cook, messman and stewardess) were increased by 467 kr from the first of this month. A further increase of 467 kr takes effect on 1 April 1984.

### GERMANY

#### Drivers back union demands for shorter hours and more time off

Long-distance lorry driver members of the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) took part in a two-day nationwide "action campaign" last month aimed at winning the support of fellow drivers for union demands in connection with the renewal of the basic agreement for the category. Active union members went to rest stops, border crossings and other places where drivers congregate to talk to them and distribute union leaflets. The campaign was an outstanding success with nine out of ten of the drivers questioned saying that they would back to the hilt union pressure for a cut in driving hours, more time off and a loading and unloading ban.

OeTV Vice-President Siegfried Merten has castigated the employers for their delaying tactics (in the first round of negotiations on 25 February the employers declared that they could not possibly agree to a new agreement before the end of the year!) and for refusing to concede that union demands were reasonable.

### GREAT BRITAIN

#### Railwaymen receive 1982 pay increase

Six months late, British Rail workers have finally received the six per cent pay increase for 1982 recommended by the Railway Staff National Tribunal last September (see page 101 of September issue of the Newsletter). All the productivity issues that have delayed payment of the 1982 award have now been resolved to the satisfaction of the management and the three rail unions, thus clearing the way for the railwaymen to receive their award.



### NUS critical of North Sea safety standards

The ITF-affiliated National Union of Seamen has launched a recruitment drive in a bid to strengthen its campaign for improved safety standards in the industry. Describing last year's accident figures (there were 15 deaths and 41 serious casualties) as "appalling", National Secretary Ron Spruhan has called for an increase in the number of safety inspectors (there are currently only 32 inspectors covering nearly 100 installations) to ensure that safety regulations are rigorously implemented. The union would also like to see inspectors given powers to visit rigs without prior notice to check on safety measures.

The union is also concerned at the number of foreign workers (about one in six) employed in the British sector of the North Sea. Many of them are employed on low wages, undercutting NUS-negotiated pay rates, or are improperly trained and qualified and therefore undermine safety standards.

### JAPAN

#### Dockers strike over job security

On 18 April, dockers at more than sixty Japanese ports staged a one-day strike, halting all export cargo, following the breakdown of annual negotiations. A ban on the handling of containers for overseas shipment - imposed the following day - was lifted after a few hours when agreement was reached with the employers on measures to protect jobs from the inroads being made by containerization.

### SOUTH AFRICA

#### Port Elizabeth dock strike ends

The strike of Port Elizabeth dockers employed by South African Transport Services (SATS) ended on 10 February after some five months when the dockers decided to accept their dismissals and collect the wages due to them. Their union, the General Workers' Union (GWU) has issued a statement explaining their action. The statement appears as an Annex to this issue of the Newsletter.

Meanwhile, ITF dockers' unions in Australia, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands have demonstrated their support for the GWU by delivering messages to SAFMARINE vessels visiting their ports (SAFMARINE is the largest South African shipping company). Whatever the outcome of the Port Elizabeth dispute, the burden of their messages - that South African dockers should be free to choose their own union -

still holds true. It is clear from the GWU statement that the struggle will continue, if possible on a broader basis.

\* see also Supplements to ITF Newsletters of January, March, May, June, August, September and October 1982 for full background details.

#### General Workers' Union wins improvements for stevedores

The ITF-affiliated General Workers' Union has recently negotiated new collective agreements for 1983 on behalf of stevedores employed by private stevedoring companies in the ports of Cape Town, East London, Port Elizabeth and Durban. A number of substantial improvements have been secured, including: weekly guarantee: increased from 34 to 36 hours (Port Elizabeth - 36.1 hours); pay: basic daily rate of stevedore hand - R 16 (East London and Port Elizabeth), R 16.5 (Durban), R 17 (Cape Town); public holidays: gazetted and non-gazetted Public Holidays paid at Saturday/Sunday rate in Cape Town and East London (stevedores at Port Elizabeth receive R28 for gazetted Public Holidays); leave pay: 3 weeks at weekly guaranteed wage; annual bonus: 5 times daily rate, paid second week in December; sick pay: amount equivalent to daily wage paid daily for 24 days in a cycle of two years; overtime rate: stevedore hand - R 2.82 per hour (East London and Port Elizabeth), R 3 (Cape Town).

Stevedores in Cape Town are paid extra for night shift work and also receive an inconvenience allowance if they work at the container terminal, while in both Cape Town and Port Elizabeth a R 1 allowance applies for handling dirty, toxic and bulk cargoes, and also frozen, maize and fruit shipments.

#### Number of black South Africans paid poverty wages by British firms doubles in two years

The number of black South Africans paid poverty wages by British owned companies operating in the Republic has doubled since the Conservative government decided in 1980 to stop publishing a blacklist of the firms involved. According to Department of Trade figures, 2,000 black South Africans were employed at wages below the lower poverty level in June 1982, compared with 1,000 workers two years earlier.

Labour MPs are to press in parliament for action to ensure that British firms abide by the 1977 EEC Code of Practice which recommended that firms with interests in South Africa pay an initial minimum wage at least fifty per cent above the minimum level required to satisfy the basic needs of workers and their families.

Last year, thirteen British companies failed to report on their South African employees' pay, while three large companies which did report gave details of pay that fell below the lower poverty level.

#### UNITED STATES

##### Union victory on 50-mile container handling rights

The National Labour Relations Board has ruled that the ITF-affiliated International Longshoremen's Association is justified in demanding the sole right for its members to handle all containers with cargo of more than one shipper originating from or for destinations within an area of 50 miles from East Coast and Gulf ports. The court has declared the union's container handling rules a legitimate means of protecting jobs on the waterfront and the clause will come into effect on 18 April.

The container handling rules were adopted through collective bargaining in 1973 but, except for a six-week period in 1981, have not been implemented because they have been under court injunction.

The welcome decision on the rules has enabled negotiations for a new three-year IIA contract to be concluded nearly six months ahead of schedule. The agreement, which runs from 1 October next, gives longshoremen an increase of \$1 per hour in each of the three contract years on their current basic of \$14. Boston now negotiates separately, although it is likely that a similar agreement will be reached for that port.

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#### NEWS IN BRIEF

ARGENTINIAN workers mounted a general strike on 28 March in a protest over low pay and government economic policy. Trains, buses and Metro services in Buenos Aires and the major cities were halted for the duration of the stoppage. All national and most international flights were also cancelled.

FRANCE: the retirement age was reduced from 65 to 60 at the beginning of this month.

The GERMAN government has bowed to union pressure and rescinded a decree - in force since last May - under which seafarers, while in German waters, were obliged to pay VAT on their daily victualling allowance and on ship-to-shore telephone calls.

+ see ITF Newsletter No 6, 1982, page 66 for details.

The ITF-affiliated Radio and Electronic Officers' Union is currently seeking the backing of British maritime unions for its campaign against government plans to operate certain vessels without radio officers (see also page 27 of last issue).

GREAT BRITAIN: the strike of T and G members employed by the Port of London Authority at Tilbury's enclosed docks is still continuing (see also page 30 of last issue). The strike is being actively supported by workers at the grain and container terminals.

GREECE: Olympic Airways staff staged a 48-hour strike late last month in support of demands for pay rises and improvements in conditions of service.

INDIA: busmen in New Delhi struck on 23 March to back their demands for higher pay and better working conditions.

Following protracted negotiations, the Italian government, employers and trade unions have signed a new master agreement under which workers will be compensated for inflation of up to 13% in 1983 and 10% in 1984, with provision for additional compensation to protect real wages should these figures be exceeded. Other improvements relate to a cut in working hours and job creation measures.

Drivers of rail buses operated by the LUXEMBOURG National Railways (CFL) agreed to suspend a planned go-slow after the CFL Board of Directors undertook to re-examine a controversial restructuring plan that would have involved job losses, demotions and irregular working hours for those drivers kept on.

PAKISTAN: Karachi port workers began a go-slow at the end of last month when negotiations with the local dock labour board became deadlocked.

PANAMA has announced plans to hold public inquiries into major casualties involving ships under its register. The costs will be met out of a three cents per net ton "casualty levy" plus a sliding scale of charges under which vessels in the high risk bracket (such as tankers and lng and lpg carriers) will have to pay \$850 per year. Other vessels will be charged between \$300 and \$500.

PORTUGUESE rail unions called off an eleven-day rail strike on 9 April when the government agreed to meet their pay demands.

VENEZUELAN dockers called off a five-day strike at nine key ports on 8 April when a government minister promised that special bonuses due at the end of March under the dockers' collective agreement would be paid out.

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OBITUARIES

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Modolv Hareide, Norwegian Director-General of Shipping and Navigation from 1972 to 1978, died on 6 March 1983, at the age of 74. Hareide was a well-respected figure in maritime circles in his native Norway and led his country's delegation to conferences of the International Maritime Organisation (then known as IMCO) on a number of occasions. He also presided over the 62nd (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva in October 1976, at which a number of key seafarers' Conventions were adopted.

A W Korbijn, former road transport secretary of the Dutch Transport Workers' Union FNV, died on 31 March, at the age of 76.

Ake Strömberg, the immediate post-war President of the Swedish Ships' Officers' Association, has died, at the age of 82.

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PERSONALIA

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Alfons Hildgen, former President of the Luxembourg Federation of Railway and Transport Workers (FNCTTFEL), celebrated his 70th birthday on 20 March.

Ben Kok, until recently General Secretary of the Dutch Transport Workers' Union FNV, is retiring at the end of April on health grounds. Kok is also the former chairman of the union's civil aviation section. He served the ITF for over twelve years on the Committee of the ITF Civil Aviation Section and was also his union's representative on the Ground Staff Technical and the KSSU/ATLAS Committees. He was co-opted on to the ITF Executive Board in March 1979 and will continue to serve as a Board member until Congress in October.

David P Taylor of the United States has been appointed a Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Office.

Lech Walesa, leader of the banned Polish independent Solidarity trade union, has been awarded an honorary doctorate by Harvard University.

Heinz Wittkopp, urban transport secretary of the German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV), retired at the beginning of March after a union career spanning twenty-five years. Wittkopp is a member of the Committee of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section and also serves as a deputy member of the Railwaymen's Section Committee.

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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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Flight Deck Technical Committee - Paris ... 24-25 May 1983  
Fishermen's Section Social Policy Sub-Committee -  
Bremerhaven ..... 13-14 June 1983  
ITF Flight Operations Officers/Flight Despatchers Working  
Group - London ..... 7 September 1983  
Cabin Crew Technical Committee - London ... 8-9 September 1983  
ITF Congress - Madrid ..... 20-28 October 1983

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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ICFTU 1983 MAY DAY MANIFESTO

On the occasion of the time-honoured May Day, which is both a day of struggle and is celebrated as Labour Day, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), to which 134 workers' organisations from 94 countries on 5 continents are affiliated, notes that over the last few years the world situation has become even more complicated than before. The current situation is generally grim and in numerous regions of the world it is catastrophic.

In the 24 OECD member states, there are at least 30 million unemployed. In the developing countries, the number of unemployed and of those who have no regular employment amounts to hundreds of millions.

The annual average growth rate of the world economy, which was 5.5 per cent per year in the 1960s, fell to 4.3 per cent in the 1970s and has just plummeted to zero!

It has been forecasted that the volume of world trade will drop by 5 per cent in the course of this year.

Many Third World countries are in debt to the tune of 600 thousand million dollars, and most of these countries are no longer able to pay the interest on the loans contracted.

Every single day, about 40,000 children die of hunger in the world - a world which produces enough food to feed all the men, women and children in it but which increasingly shows its cruel inability to distribute the food produced to those who are in greatest need of it.

Today more than ever, it is incumbent on the international community as a whole to assume its responsibilities with regard to the disastrous world situation.

The international free trade union movement has regularly made concrete proposals to extricate the world from catastrophic economic conditions and avert the real danger that the multiplication of anarchical situations constitutes today.

The ICFTU calls its previous positions to mind and, in view of the OECD Ministerial meeting in the beginning of May and the World Summit in Williamsburg at the end of May, calls on the governments to concert their policies. The ICFTU stresses the absolute necessity of making substantial progress in reforming the international monetary system and international trade. Interest rates must be lowered, exchange rates stabilised and energy policies stepped up. Development assistance must effectively reach 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of the industrialised countries and food must be ensured to every man, woman and child in this world.



The 13th World Congress of the ICFTU, to be held from 23rd to 30th June, 1983 in Norway, will take stock of the economic and social situation when it has discussions on the theme of FULL EMPLOYMENT AND AN END TO POVERTY. The Congress will also decide on the policy to be followed by the free trade unions over the next four years.

The two other themes of the forthcoming ICFTU Congress are TRADE UNION RIGHTS and PEACE, SECURITY AND DISARMAMENT.

Fundamental trade union rights are workers' inalienable rights, and the free trade union movements' task is more relevant than ever in today's world where, in many places, violations of human rights are the order of the day, with trade unionists often being the first victims. Since 1980, about 80 well-known trade unionists have been the victims of political assassinations. Thousands of trade unionists have been thrown into prison or forcibly confined in mental hospitals. Under almost all the repressive regimes - in several Central American and Latin American countries, in the Soviet Union, in Poland, Turkey, South Africa, etc. - trade union rights are subjected to restrictions or are even utterly denied.

Not a day passes without the ICFTU intervening in any part of the world whatever, in order to protest against the measures taken by governments which do not implement the international conventions on freedom of association. Recently, we witnessed the banning of freely established trade unions, partial limitations of freedom of association, and saw trade union rights being gradually whittled away, trade union premises being ransacked and organised workers' property being confiscated.

All of us, workers of the whole world, must back each other up and unite our efforts in a strong International in order to support all those in numerous countries who risk their lives and pit themselves against the obstinate resistance of their governments and employers in order to defend trade union freedom and rights, without which harmonious coexistence between the various constituent parts of society is not possible. Democracy is a whole - either it exists or it does not. In a country where the workers are denied fundamental rights, democracy does not exist.

Observance of human rights, fair distribution of the fruits of production and development and peace under conditions of collective security, are the sole foundations for the future of humanity and are even more essential because the build-up of nuclear and conventional weapons, their destructive power and their sophistication make a threat that could lead to total annihilation hang over us, in East and West, North and South.

That is why the ICFTU put the theme of "Peace, Security and Disarmament" on the agenda of its World Congress in June. Following the appeal made by the Executive Board at the end of 1981 for the immediate resumption of disarmament negotiations, the Congress delegates representing some 85 million workers and their families, will take stock of the current state of these negotiations and will decide on action to be taken by the trade unions.

BREAD, PEACE AND FREEDOM! This has been the watchword of the ICFTU since its foundation in 1949. On 1 May, millions of workers from all climes will gather together to demonstrate for the objectives contained in this watchword.

Those objectives are worthwhile! Let us unite, and success will not be long in coming.

Long live May Day! Long live free trade unionism!

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SOUTH AFRICA: STATEMENT BY GENERAL WORKERS' UNION (GWU) ON  
THE PORT ELIZABETH SATS WORKERS' STRIKE

On 30 August 1982 the Port Elizabeth dockworkers employed by South African Transport Services (SATS) embarked on a go-slow in order to force their employers to recognise the General Workers' Union (GWU). These workers had been organised by GWU members in the private stevedoring industry and their decision to "go-slow" was the culmination of a year-long dispute between the workers and management.

When the SATS dockers in East London and Port Elizabeth joined the GWU, they instructed the union to write to their employer to request a meeting between SATS and the GWU. This the union did on numerous occasions over a period of more than a year. At no stage did SATS agree to meet with the GWU. Their reaction instead was to call in the railway police and the security police who interrogated and assaulted and generally attempted to intimidate GWU members. In particular the management attempted to force the workers to join the Black Staff Association, a "union" formed by the management and under its strict control.

The workers did not ask for a conflict with their employer -- they merely asked for the right to be represented by the union of their choice. They wished to talk and were willing to wait for more than a year in the face of intense management and police provocation. However, they were unwilling to join the Black Staff Association and were unwilling to turn their backs on the union of their choice.

The grievances of the SATS workers are similar to those of all other workers. Their wages and working conditions are poor and they wanted to improve these by uniting and negotiating. The government says that it has accepted the principle of freedom of association and has proudly advertised its labour reforms all over the world. However, when workers in the government

service joined the union of their choice the hollowness of the government's reforms were exposed. The government has also said that it has removed racial discrimination in the workplace and in labour legislation. Everyone knows this to be untrue and in SATS in particular it is shown to be completely false.

One of the major grievances of the SATS workers is that all black workers are by law classified as casual workers. A black worker might have been working for the railways for thirty years but because he is black he is classified as a casual worker. This applies to all 150,000 black railway workers and is a particularly clear example of the hypocrisy of the so-called reforms.

This is but one example of the grievances which the SATS workers wanted to discuss with their employer. But on 30 August the workers reluctantly accepted that SATS were not prepared to talk to them. They were then forced to use the only weapon available to them, their strength and unity. They embarked on a go-slow aimed at forcing their employer to talk to them. On 1 September 1982 the management called in the police who, using dogs, forced the workers into buses and police vans and removed them from the harbour.

Since then the workers have stood firm. They refused to reapply for work on an individual basis. The Minister of Transport said that he had appointed a committee to investigate the system of labour relations and the workers waited for the outcome of this investigation. This committee has never issued its report and the GWU is convinced that the committee was merely invented in order to deflect criticism directed at SATS.

The workers decided to end their strike on 10 February 1983. They had been without wages for almost six months; work on the docks was very slack; and the committee that was supposed to investigate the dispute had failed to report.

There are undoubtedly long term gains from this conflict. It is the first time in many years that the SATS workers have stood up to their employer and they have shown other SATS workers the way forward. The workers have, by their action, exposed the exploitation in the railways and ports and the hollowness of the government's labour reforms. The workers remained united and committed to the last and remain as committed to the trade union movement as they ever were. Their discipline and dignity will act as an example to all other workers.

But there is no denying the fact that the strike itself has been lost. The workers have lost their jobs; they have not succeeded in forcing SATS to recognise their union. It has been a difficult defeat to accept because it was not through lack of unity or through any mistakes made by the workers that the strike has ended in defeat. The workers were united and committed and yet it seems that the power of the employer and the government has been too great.

What are the lessons to be drawn from this conflict? That the SATS workers cannot be organised? That the SATS management is too powerful and that they will never be forced to give in to the legitimate demands of the workers? The GWU and the Port Elizabeth workers do not believe that these are the correct conclusions. But they do believe that SATS will not be defeated by a single union. Organisation of SATS will only take place if a number of unions devote some of their resources, experience and power to organise the SATS workers throughout the country. The experience in Port Elizabeth has shown that the SATS workers are -- like all other workers -- not intimidated by the power of their employer. It is now for the established unions to recognise the power and the dignity of the SATS workers, to recognise their willingness to take their place in the trade union movement, and to provide the unity which

.../

is a necessary precondition for the organisation of the 150,000 SATS workers.

GENERAL WORKERS' UNION  
CAPE TOWN  
FEBRUARY 1983

Note: South African Transport Services (SATS) is a state corporation. Its largest component is South African Railways, which owns and operates South African ports - though stevedoring operations are conducted by private companies.